

FOREWORD

In September 1961, Colonel John H. Magruder III, director of the Marine Corps Museum in Quantico, Virginia, brought together two old associates from Nicaragua days, Lieutenant General Lewis B. Puller and Colonel William A. Lee, both USMC (Retired). In a two-session interview conducted by both Colonel Magruder and Colonel Roger Willock, Puller and Lee not only discussed their tour together as commander and second in command, respectively, of the Mobile Company, Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua, but also a wide-ranging variety of subjects which included small wars tactics, antiguerrilla activities, weapons, Puller's experiences in Haiti, Lee's experiences as a prisoner of war in World War II, and their mutual experiences on a particular patrol in Nicaragua in which they both earned Navy Crosses as well as decorations from the Nicaraguan government.

Mr. Benis M. Frank, Head, Oral History Section History and Museums Division, has proofed the transcript and has made only typographical corrections. The reader is asked to bear in mind that he is reading a transcript of the spoken rather than the written word. Both the interview tapes and the transcript are classified OPEN, which means that a potential user may read the transcript or audit the tape recording upon presentation of appropriate credentials.

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

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Brigadier General, U.S. Marine Corps (Retired)

Director of Marine Corps History and Museums

Signed:

29 November 1978

LIEUTENANT GENERAL LEWIS B. PULLER, USMC (DECEASED)

Retired Lieutenant General Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller, the only Marine ever to win the Navy Cross five times for heroism and gallantry in action, died October 11, 1971 in Hampton, Virginia, after a long illness. He was 73.

A colorful veteran of the Korean fighting, four World War II campaigns and expeditionary service in China, Nicaragua and Haiti, General Puller was one of the most decorated Marines in history.

The general's last active duty station was Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, where he was commanding the 2d Marine Division when he became seriously ill in August 1954. After that he served as Deputy Camp Commander until his illness forced him to be retired on the temporary disability list November 1, 1955, at which time he was promoted to lieutenant general.

A Marine officer and enlisted man for 37 years, General Puller served at sea or overseas for all but ten of those years, including a hitch as commander of the "Horse Marines" in China. Excluding medals from foreign governments, he won a total of 14 personal decorations in combat, plus a long - list of campaign medals, unit citation ribbons and other awards. In addition to his Navy Crosses (the next-highest decoration to the Medal of Honor for Naval personnel), he holds its Army equivalent, the Distinguished Service Cross.

He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and his fifth Navy Cross for heroism in action as commander of the 1st Marines, 1st Marine Division, during the bitter fight to break out of Korea's Chosin reservoir

area. The latter citation, covering the period from December 5 to 10, 1950, states in part:

"Fighting continuously in sub-zero weather against a vastly outnumbering hostile force, (the then) Colonel Puller drove off repeated and fanatical enemy attacks upon his Regimental defense sector and supply points. Although the area was frequently covered by grazing machine gun fire and intense artillery and mortar fire, he coolly moved among his troops to insure their correct tactical employment, reinforced the lines as the situation demanded and successfully defended his perimeter, keeping open the main supply routes for the movement of the Division.

"During the attack from Koto-ri to Hungnam, he expertly utilized his Regiment as the Division rear guard, repelling two fierce enemy assaults which

severely threatened the security of the unit, and personally supervised the care and prompt evacuation of all casualties.

"By his unflagging determination, he served to inspire his men to heroic efforts in defense of their positions and assured the safety of much valuable equipment which would otherwise have been lost to the enemy. His skilled leadership, superb courage and valiant devotion to duty in the face of overwhelming odds reflect the highest credit upon Colonel Puller and the United States Naval Service."

Serving in Korea from September 1950 to April 1951, the general also earned the Army Silver Star Medal in the Inchon landing, his second Legion of Merit with Combat "V" in the Inchon-Seoul fighting and the early phases of the Chosin reservoir campaign, and three Air Medals for reconnaissance and liaison flights over enemy territory.

General Puller also fought with the 1st Marine Division in the World War II campaigns on Guadalcanal, Eastern New Guinea, Camp Gloucester, and Peleliu, earning his third Navy Cross and the Bronze Star and Purple Heart Medals at Guadalcanal, his fourth Navy Cross at Cape Gloucester, and his first Legion of Merit with Combat "V" at Peleliu. He won his first Navy Cross in November 1930, and his second in September and October 1932, while fighting bandits in Nicaragua.

Born June 26, 1898, at West Point, Virginia, the general attended Virginia Military Institute until enlisting in the Marine Corps in August, 1918. He was appointed a Marine Reserve second lieutenant June 16, 1919, but due to the reduction of the Marine Corps after World War I, was placed on inactive duty 10 days later. He rejoined the Marines as an enlisted man

on the 30th of that month, to serve as an officer in the Gendarmerie d'Haiti, a military force set up in that country under a treaty with the United States. Most of its officers were U.S. Marines, while its enlisted personnel were Haitians.

After almost 5 years in Haiti, where he saw frequent action against the Caco rebels, General Puller returned to the United States in March 1924. He was commissioned a Marine second lieutenant that same month, and during the next 2 years served at the Marine Barracks, Norfolk, Virginia, completed the Basic School at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and served with the 10th Marine Regiment at Quantico, Virginia. He was then detailed to duty as a student naval aviator at Pensacola, Florida, in February 1926.

In July of that year, the general embarked for a 2-year tour of duty at the Marine Barracks, Pearl Harbor. Returning in June 1928, he served at San Diego, California, until he joined the Nicaraguan National Guard Detachment that December.

After winning his first Navy Cross in Nicaragua he returned to the United States in July 1931, to enter the Company Officers Course at the Army Infantry School, Fort Benning, Georgia. He completed the course in June 1932, and returned to Nicaragua the following month to begin the tour of duty which brought him his second Navy Cross.

In January 1933, General Puller left Nicaragua for the west coast of the United States. A month later he sailed from San Francisco to join the Marine Detachment of the American Legation at Peiping, China. There, in addition to other duties, he commanded the famed "Horse Marines." Without coming back to the United States he began a tour of sea duty in September 1934, as commanding officer of the Marine Detachment aboard the USS Augusta of the Asiatic Fleet. In June 1936, he returned to the United States to become an instructor in the Basic School at Philadelphia. He left there in May 1939 to serve another year as commander of the Augusta's Marine detachment, and from that ship, joined the 4th Marine Regiment at Shanghai, China, in May 1940.

After serving as a battalion executive and commanding officer with the 4th Marines, General Puller sailed for the United States in August 1941, just 4 months before the attack on Pearl Harbor. In September he took command of the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, 1st Marine Division, at Camp Lejeune. That regiment was detached from the 1st Division in March 1942, and the following month, as part of the 3d Marine Brigade, it sailed for the Pacific theater. The 7th Regiment rejoined the 1st Marine Division in September 1942, and General Puller, still commanding its 1st Battalion, went on to win his third Navy Cross at Guadalcanal.

The action which brought him that medal occurred on the night of October 24-25 1942. For a desperate 3 hours his battalion, stretched over

a mile-long front, was the only defense between vital Henderson Airfield and a regiment of seasoned Japanese troops. In pouring jungle rain the Japanese smashed repeatedly at his thin line, as General Puller moved up and down its length to encourage his men and direct the defense. After reinforcements arrived he commanded the augmented force until late the next afternoon. The defending Marines suffered less than 70 casualties in the engagement, while 1400 of the enemy were killed and 17 truckloads of Japanese equipment were recovered by the Americans.

After Guadalcanal the general became executive officer of the 7th Marines. He was fighting in that capacity when he won his fourth Navy Cross at Cape Gloucester in January 1944. There, when the commanders of two battalions were wounded, he took over their units and moved through heavy machine gun and mortar fire to reorganize them for attack, then led them in taking a strongly-fortified enemy position.

In February 1944, General Puller took command of the 1st - Marines at Cape Gloucester. After leading that regiment for the remainder of the campaign, he sailed with it for the Russell Islands in April 1944, and went on from there to command it at Peleliu in September and October 1944. He returned to the United States in November 1944, was named executive officer of the Infantry Training Regiment at Camp Lejeune in January 1945, and took command of that regiment the next month.

In August 1946 General Puller became Director of the 8th Marine Corps Reserve District, with headquarters at New Orleans, Louisiana. After that assignment he commanded the Marine Barracks at Pearl Harbor until August 1950, when he arrived at Camp Pendleton, California, to re-establish and take command of the 1st Marines, the same regiment he had led .at Cape Gloucester and Peleliu.

Landing with the 1st Marines at Inchon, Korea, in September 1950, he continued to head that regiment until January 1951, when he was promoted to brigadier general and named Assistant Commander of the 1st Marine Division. That May he returned to Camp Pendleton to command the newly-reactivated 3d Marine Brigade, which was redesignated the 3d Marine Division in January 1952. After that, he was assistant division commander until he took over the Troop Training Unit, Pacific, at Coronado, California, that June. He was promoted to major general in September 1953, and in July 1954 assumed command of the 2d Marine Division at Camp Lejeune. Despite his illness he retained that command until February 1955, when he was appointed Deputy Camp Commander. He served in that capacity until August, when he entered the U.S. Naval Hospital at Camp Lejeune prior to retirement on 1 November 1955.

As already mentioned, the general holds the Navy Cross with Gold Stars in lieu of four additional awards; the Army Distinguished Service Cross; the Army Silver Star Medal; the Legion of Merit with Combat "V" and Gold Star in lieu of a second; the Bronze Star Medal; the Air Medal with Gold Stars .in lieu of second and third awards; and the Purple Heart Medal. His other medals and decorations include the presidential Unit Citation Ribbon with four bronze stars; the Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal with one bronze star; the World War I victory Medal with West Indies clasp; the Haitian Campaign Medal; the Second Nicaraguan Campaign Medal; the .Marine Corps Expeditionary Medal with one bronze star; the China Service Medal; the American Defense Service Medal with Base clasp; the American Area Campaign Medal; the Asiatic-Pacific Area Campaign Medal with four bronze stars; the World War II Victory Medal; the National Defense Service Medal; the Korean Service Medal with one silver star in lieu of five

bronze stars; the United Nations Service Medal; the Haitian Medaille Militaire; the Nicaraguan Presidential Medal of Merit with Diploma; the Nicaraguan Cross of Valor with Diploma; the Republic of Korea's Ulchi Medal with Gold Star; and the Korean Presidential Unit Citation with Oak Leaf Cluster.

COLONEL WILLIAM ANDREW LEE, USMC (RETIRED)

Colonel William Andrew Lee, USMC, was born November 12, 1900 at Ward Hill, Massachusetts. He enlisted *in* the Marine Corps *in* May 1918 and served until August 1919. He again enlisted *in* September 1921 and served until May 6, 1935, at which time he was appointed a warrant officer. He received a temporary appointment to Captain *in* January 1941.

From 1935 until June 1939 he was leader of a howitzer platoon and assistant platoon leader at the Marine Barracks, Quantico, Virginia. On September 4, 1939 he was detached for duty *in* the Far East.

He holds the Navy Cross, the Navy Cross Star (1930 and 1932); the Victory Medal with France Clasp, the Second Nicaraguan Medal and the Nicaraguan Cross of Valor.

During service *in* Nicaragua, Captain Lee, then a Gunnery Sergeant, participated *in* more than 20 battles against superior bandit forces and established himself as almost a legendary figure for his daring courage and excellent leadership both as a Marine and as an officer of the Guardia Nacional of Nicaragua.

In one engagement at San Juan, Lee with one other officer and 18 enlisted men attacked and defeated more than 300 bandits armed with Lewis guns, Thompson sub-machine guns and rifles under the command of the notorious bandit chieftain, Pedron Altamirano.

He served with the Marine Detachment, American Embassy, Peiping until the outbreak of war on 8 December 1941 (China time), when he became a prisoner of war. Repatriated *in* September 1945, Major Lee's first assignment was to the Rifle Range Detachment at Quantico where he was

first executive officer and then designated commanding officer. In June 1947 he was transferred to the Marine Barracks, Camp Lejeune and assigned as commanding officer of Headquarters and Service Battalion. In March 1948, Lieutenant Colonel Lee was put in charge of the Camp Lejeune rifle range. He retired on 1 August 1950 and was advanced to the rank of colonel because of decorations received *in* combat.

U.S. MARINE CORPS ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Interviewees: Lieutenant General Lewis B. Puller, USMC (Ret)

Colonel William A. Lee, USMC (Ret)

Interviewers: Colonel John H. Magruder III, USMC, and Colonel Roger Willock, USMC

Place and date of interview: The Marine Corps Museum, Quantico 25-26
September 1961

Tape 1

Puller: So I just turned it in when I left Lejeune, and I got a receipt for it, naturally, because I knew somebody else was going to steal it when ...so to prove when anything did come up. And if I can ever find that receipt I'm going to try to get it back and I'll give it the museum up there because I carried that thing since Haiti, and it was one of the old-time ones we had Quite different to get now.

Q: Grips and all in a different size, yes, sir. Puller: You know, straight grips on them.

Lee: Now general, do you remember the paymaster aboard the ship coming down from Managua? When we pulled out? Was it Williams?

Puller: Richards.

Lee: Richards. Well he was a general, was he not?

Puller/Lee 2

Puller: That's right.

Lee: General Richards. ..

Puller: Paymaster of the Marine Corps.

Lee: ...Paymaster of the Marine Corps, took my pistol away from me on the trip coming down from Managua to Corinto. And when he got back to the States, he had that pistol framed--put in some sort of a little pedestal with a name plate on it. And I was notified down here, that if I went up to Marine Corps Headquarters I could be presented with that weapon. And the day that I was supposed to go up there, Price wouldn't let me go. So I went up 2 days later and I've never seen or heard tell of that weapon since.

Puller: Oh, somebody's got it among their mementos.

Lee: I'm just saying ... but no, that might be something. You can't mistake the weapon because I heated up the hammer and burnt the spur of the hammer up.

Puller: Yes. You say you couldn't cut the hammers off because they would effect the shooting qualities of the pistol.

Lee: No, I never said that. I said you couldn't grab it fast enough.

Puller: Oh, well that's it. I thought you said the quality. You meant. ..I thought that you meant. ..Well it

certainly would effect the shooting qualities of the pistol. .You couldn't grab the hammer in a hurry.

Lee: Yes. (laughter)

The thing is, general, you can take that hammer and cut it down so it's just a sliver, and it will still kick that firing pin enough to set it off, but you can't cock it.

Puller: Yes, I see what you're talking about now.

Lee: We got that cleared up after many years. (laughter)

Q: Well gentlemen, speaking this afternoon on behalf of the " museum and for Colonel Magruder, we have asked General Puller and Colonel Lee if they would care to discuss some of their experiences in Nicaragua, 20, 25 years ago.

Let us not forget that General Puller is the holder of five Navy Crosses, two of which were won in Nicaragua. Like-wise Colonel Lee was the recipient of two Navy Crosses, and both of these gentlemen were given the highest awards for the Nicaraguan government--the Cruz de Valor.

I recall several years ago at Basic School in Philadelphia Navy Yard a course we had in small wars. At that time General Puller, then Captain Puller, delighted to tell all of us of some of his experiences in Nicaragua, particularly an engagement northeast of Jinotega, for which he was awarded his second decoration. Present at that engagement, of course, was Colonel Lee who was second in command, and a first lieutenant in the Guardia at that time.

I selected this as a typical engagement in the area under consideration of being that of a mobile force operating more or less independently from a supply base, at least a hundred miles from a supply base in which the difficulties of supply and evacuation of casualties was most pronounced. Now at the time of this incident, generally speaking, was in the fall of 1932 in early September, at which time General Puller who was then in command of the Mobile Detachment sent out from Jinotega--to the best of my knowledge--had discovered a trail used by bandits in their series of thrusts from the northeast towards the southwest, headed toward Jinotega. He made a reconnaissance in force in the general area, and returned to Jinotega to mount out a patrol. The patrol at that time was composed of two officers and 40 enlisted Guardia. In addition to General Puller, of course, was Colonel Lee, second in command.

About the 26th of September the patrol was fired on as it was moving northwest from the bank of the Auyabal River. I would like to point some of these out on the map and then ask the officers here, using an enlargement we have, if they would care to elaborate on what happened at that time. Now to orient yourself, of course we have Corinto here on the coast and Managua, and going inland here to Jinotega, and here in the general area in San Pedro del Norte up here, approximately 80 miles in this direction.

As I understand it, general, you had been making a large reconnaissance in force in the direction of Mount Kilande,

and it was at that time that you had knowledge of increased bandit activity, and you returned to Jinotega to load out and then mount out and then proceed generally in a northeasterly direction to surprise the bandits before they could make a sweep. Would you care to elaborate on that, sir.

Puller: Colonel, you are correct in what you've stated. I was in Nicaragua for 5 years. The whole time I was down in Nicaragua with the exception of 3 months, I was in command of Company M, which was a mobile company. And during that 5 years, the only assignment we ever had was to chase bandits. Now I firmly believe--and I think that the history will tell you-- if we had had three or more of like companies, we would really have accomplished something in Nicaragua. But what always happens in the Marine Corps is that we get dug in and garrison duty, and when you get through taking care of property and of barracks, all the men--because the Marine Corps is short of men at all times--become frozen. And the only sure way to accomplish something in a small war--and I also notice this from 5 years of service in Haiti, also--that you've got to keep moving. And in the future, I'm sure--because history repeats itself--that we'll be back in such places as Latin, American and Southeast Asia again. And I certainly hope that the commanders at that time, especially the Pentagon building that now runs things, will realize that what I say is true. Things have got to be kept mobile and you've got to have at least half of your command continually on patrol.

Now if I ever had been in a position of authority, half of the men would be on patrol for a week or several weeks duration. When they return, within an hour after they returned the other half of the command would leave, get underway. And by that time, by that system, you would accomplish 10 times as we have accomplished in the past.

Now I remember in 1919 when I was assigned to the constabulary detachment in Haiti. My first assignment after being in Port-au-Prince for several days, was to take a pack train from Port-au-Prince to Mirebalais and Lascahobas, a distance of about 70 miles. As I remember, the third day I was living at the Centrale Hotel. Captain Kelly, the adjutant of the Caserne Dartiguenave which housed a battalion of Gendarmes, called me up that evening at dinner and said, "Have you got a Springfield rifle? " Being a good Marine, for reason or other I can never understand, I did not have a Springfield. He said, "Never mind. Borrow one from one of the officers living in the Centrale Hotel. Tomorrow morning at 4 o'clock there'll be a Gendarme mounted with a horse for you. When he gets there, go down to the Quartier Generale, pick up a pack train, take a supply of ammunition and shoes to Lascahobas and Mirebalais and return. The next morning I was waiting on the porch of the hotel when the Gendarme rode up. Thank goodness when I was a kid my father was a great horseman and always owned a saddle horse that he kept in

perfect condition. He taught me how to ride when I was four or five. I remember when I was seven, I could gallop a full-grown horse and jump. So they was taking this pack train for a round-trip of 140 miles, as far as horsemanship went, meant very little to me. When we arrived at the Quartier Generale, I had previously asked the man, the orderly if he spoke English. He understood that amount in English but no more, and I remember he said, "No." When I rode up to the Quartier Generale I could see there were about 25 men present. As I rode up and dismounted, a sergeant stepped forward and gave me several pieces of paper, and I could see he wanted me to sign them. I said to him, "Do you speak English?" He understood that amount of English and said, "No." I then turned to the 25 men and said, "Do any of you people speak English?" All of them replied, "No." I then looked at the papers that I was to sign and I saw they were receipts for 27 mounts complete with saddles and blankets and bridles. Also 75 pack mules complete with pack saddles. Also 30 cases of Springfield ammunition, 45 cases said to contain so many pair of shoes. I signed the receipt, motioned. ...Now remember I had only been in Haiti 3 days, and my command of Creole in 3 days--although I had learned 30 days--was quite little. I had earned ten words of Creole a day, my first 3 days ... or thereabouts. I made motions to my men to put the packs and secure the packs on the pack saddles. I managed to get 'urn into single file: we rode out of the streets of Port-au-Prince,

up over; Butlersville Hill, named for General Butler, one of the greatest generals we ever had--if not the greatest.

All during this trip, 50 miles from Port-au-Prince to Mirebalais our first stop, I used one of the words that I had learned the first day in Haiti, "vite, "meaning to hurry; the same word in French. I beat at those damn pack mules all the way into Mirebalais and arrived there shortly before midnight. Not being able to speak a word of Creole, I wondered what would happen if we were attacked by the Cacos. At that time--this was in the fall of 1919--there were plenty of bands of Cacos numbering several hundred pillaging the country. Along about an hour before dark we ran into a band of them, about 200, head-on. I could give no command but, "Charge!" So we charged--the 27 of us and 75 pack animals; the pack mules and all charged. My only casualties were several pack mules with bullet holes in them; no men were hit. We managed to kill a half a dozen or more Cacos. Upon arrival in Mirabalais that night around midnight, the sergeant of the guard informed me that he could speak no English. About 10 minutes after he showed up, a Lieutenant Weedoe appeared on crutches, having been shot through the foot the previous week in a small engagement of the Cacos. I said to Weedor "Will you please find out from the sergeant of mine what the hell he's been so perturbed all day long about. He's practically given me hell from the start."

Weedor talked to the sergeant awhile and began to laugh, and he said, "He's been trying to tell you that the pace that

you have maintained, your animals will be worn out before you return to Port-au-Prince."

I said, "All right. Tell him this for me. Tell him that we'll camp here tonight in your compound. I want you to feed my men. I want the sergeant to thoroughly cool our animals out. What sore backs we have he can do his best for them. I want breakfast 4 o'clock in the morning. I'll clear, 15 minutes after which we'll go to Lascahobas with half of the ammunition and shoes that I brought you. Give me your receipt for your share of the supplies after telling the sergeant of mine what I told you to."

The sergeant then practically threw another fit. And Weedor said, "He's just reiterating the fact that you're gonna ruin all your pack animals."

I said, "Well, we're going anyway."

We cleared Mirebalais the morning before daylight, arrived in Lascahobas about midday--for it was only 20 miles. The captain there was Captain Powers, constabulary officer, a first sergeant in the Marine Corps. I got the receipt from him, used him as an interpreter again, and said, "Tell this man that we're leaving Lascahobas and returning to Mirebalais. Tell the sergeant to return to Mirebalais at 3 o'clock this afternoon."

About 8 o'clock that night we rode into Mirebalais. I used Weedor again as an interpreter and explained to my sergeant that we would clear Mirebalais the following morning before daylight for Port-au-Prince.

That night about 7 o'clock--I'd made better time that day because we had no loads on our pack mules--we rode into Port-au-Prince. And as I was riding into Port-au-Prince a car drove up alongside me, I turned my head, and it was Colonel Walter N. Hill. He said, "My God, Puller! Have you been to Lascahobas and Mirebalais and returned to Port-au-Prince in 3 days?"

I said, "Yes, sir."

He said, "You made the quickest trip that any other wagonmaster has ... pack mule train driver has ever made, and you are permanently assigned to run pack trains." He said, "How are your pack animals?"

I said, "Fine, sir!"

He said, "They better be fine, because I'll be over to the corrals in the morning at 8 o'clock to inspect them."

I said, "Very well. " And I went to the corrals in the Caserne Dartiguenave. To greet me there was a Sergeant Brown; also several of our lieutenants.

He asked me to have a drink, which I was badly in need of, and accepted.

And he said, "Have another drink."

And I said, "No. I don't feel so well."

He said, "What's the matter?"

I said, "Colonel Hill will be here at 8 o'clock tomorrow morning to inspect these animals, and I have quite a few sore backs."

He said, "Don't worry. I'm the best veterinarian that the old 7th Cavalry's ever had; and I can cure any sore back overnight."

I said, "Look here, fellow. I'll bet you ten dollars you can't."

He said, "Well you've lost. You just as well pay me now."

I said, "I'll give you ten dollars in the morning if you clear up these backs."

I left then and went back to the Central Hotel, and went back to the Caserne Dartiguenave the following morning at 8 o'clock. Much to my surprise the sergeant had all the pack mules and the riding animals that I took on that patrol with me ... at least he only had the correct number.

He said, "Every back is cured. Take a look."

I said, "Yes, there are no sore backs, but these aren't the animals I used."

He said, "Colonel Hill won't know the difference; so don't talk too much and you'll go a long ways in this outfit or any military outfit."

Colonel Hill then drove up, walked down the line, and he said, "I can't understand. You haven't got a single sore "As back in the outfit." And says, As I told you yesterday afternoon, you've got the permanent job of running pack trains."

I ran one more pack train to Mirebalais and Lascahobas, returned, and the same thing happened with the first assignment with a pack train. I was in the Central Hotel having my dinner, the bell rang--telephone bell rang--I was summoned

to the phone, Captain Kelly was on the phone again. He said, "Puller, get hold of Lieutenant Freeman." He says, "He has your mess funds for you."

I said, "What mess funds?"

He said, "You're assigned to Company A," which was also a mobile company. He says, "You will take it to Mirebalais in the morning." He says, "You'll go down to the railroad station, stopping by the Caserve Dartiquenave first, picking up this company of 100 men, two native officers. Go by train to Croix des Bouquets, from Croix des Bouquets you'll march over the mountains to Mirebalais ." He said , 'You should get into Mirebalais sometime midnight tomorrow."

So I contacted Freeman, got the funds and in those days the Gendarmarie Haiti who was permitted ten cents a day cash, and you bought all your food locally. I marched the company to a railroad station, we got on the train. When we got to Croix des Bouquets we were immediately surrounded by a hundred girls and women. So I just took it for granted that these gendarmes of mine lived in Croix des Bouquets, but I later on found out that these were marching laundresses for these soldiers of mine.

We formed the company, had the reports, got into single file, started to march over the mountain into Mirebalais. On the trail that day I realized that something had to be done in that kind of a country and that kind of warfare, that was a bit different from what was in ~force in the gendarmerie at that time. We had the old Navy drill: two sections to a

company, and you'd form a hollow square any time anything happened. So on their way to Mirebalais I divided the company into, not two sections, but into three sections. I held school on the trail. I was fortunate enough to have one English speaking officer named Bruno (B-r-u-n-o), who was a Jamaican Negro, although a Haitian citizen. And he was very smart, comprehended anything I told him, and got it over to the men. And as I said I divided the company into three sections instead of two.

On the way out I taught them three simple maneuvers. I had the music of the company, the bugler, to march beside me. One blast meant that the company turn right, hit the deck, and took up fire. Two blasts meant that you turn left, hit the deck, open fire. Three blasts meant that the first section deploy across the road or trail that they were on; the other two sections remained stationed until further orders so that they could either move to the right or to the left flank.

I further used that system 10 years later in Nicaragua and found out it worked perfectly. Your small wars, where the enemy invariably ambushes you is a question of split decisions. In fact, you have to move so fast in order to inflict damage on the enemy that I devised a system of blasts on bugles to give all orders so it would be done immediately. .. for anybody to give decisions. And it worked perfectly. On the way to Mirebalais the column was held up. I had had some trouble because these hundred women immediately mixed with the hundred men I had, and I noted just soon as we

got underway the men took their packs off and gave 'urn to the women to carry. I didn't mind the packs, but I hated for them to carry the rifles. So we got this straightened out. Sometime late that afternoon the column was held up. I walked back to find the trouble; I found that one of these girls had given birth to a child. The child was born. And I asked Lieutenant Bruno what should be done. He said, "Don't do anything. Just come on. Leave her."

I said, "We can't leave ~ If the woman belongs to one of the men in this command, we can't leave her."

He says, "Several of the other women will remain with her. They'll come into Mirebalais tomorrow."

So anyway, even though I had many misgivings, I did as Bruno suggested--we went on into Mirgbalais. The following morning at reveille, one of the men came around and, through Bruno, said the child had been born, his mother had come in during the night, and he wanted me to see the child. The mother was standing there, and the only difference I noticed in the baby and any other baby was that it had a small smell of fish about it, which anyone in the vicinity could detect. I inquired why the fish odor, and they said it was customary to grease all newborn babies; so the only thing they had was gun oil, which in those days--as the older Marines will remember--was fish oil. And they had thoroughly greased this little baby in gun oil. Within 2 or 3 days the father returned to me and said he wanted me to be godfather for his child, and the

child was to be baptized the following morning at 5 o'clock in a church at Mirebalais. I accepted with pleasure, went on over with Bruno the following morning at the appointed time, and a priest baptized the child. After it was over I gave the priest five dollars, told him to burn the necessary candles, and mention the boy's--my godson--name in his prayers. The priest informed me that I had better get somebody to mention me in his prayers, so I gave him five more dollars. And by the way, this boy, if he's alive today, has the name Lewie Puller.

Well, any time you want to continue, go ahead.

Q: All right, sir, if you're ready, would you care to conduct this?

Puller: Now, do you want me to jump now from Nicaragua to Haiti. No, Haiti to Nicaragua.

Q: If that's convenient to you, yes, sir.

Puller: All right, fine.

Lee: General, before you do start in, if you want any dates or any names on your report, here's your report right here now.

Q: Well we can always dub that in later. We can fill the dates in as far as the historical record is concerned--the facts. But it's your reminiscences that are important here

in the way you tell the story and, I mean ... you start off with why you were in Jinotega in 1932, what was the particular reason for it, and why you maintained the patrol that led up into this particular aspect.

Puller: Now how long are you going to work here this afternoon? Because I can work tonight--all day and night.

Q: At your service, sir.

Puller: Well what "I'll do: I'll go ahead and talk about 10 .or 15 minutes longer and then let Lee take the floor.

Q: Very well, sir. And maybe later on this will become a joint session where you say something and Colonel Lee. ...

Puller: You can cut and splice.

Now what I want you all to remember is that what I said at the luncheon table there today, if we get off base, just interrupt us and ask a question. Cut this machine off and then we'll get back. ... (interruption)
I might add that I mentioned this Haitian boy's name was Lewie Puller. I'd like to add that his actual name is Lewis Puller Francois.

The main thing I learned in Haiti on small wars ... besides, as a decision that had to be made instantly was the value of night training. I had previously stated that the biggest trouble with American troops in Korea was the fact that they had had sufficient night training. The average American

today is night blind. I think it's due entirely to the fact CI that electric lights come on just as soon as the sun goes down. I noticed that when I got to Haiti, I was night blind.

Ten years later I was in Nicaragua and I also discovered I was night blind. But after a few months being away from electric lights, I could see just as well at night as a native could. I remember in 1952 when I had a brigade at Camp Pendleton, California, I took all electric lights out of the man's tent, also the officers' tent. I immediately had a congressional investigation--the Congress caused the investigation--because the boys wrote home, told their parents that the reason that they hadn't written them was that General Puller was a beast of a man and had taken all the electric lights out; not only taken the lights out but had prohibited them writing home. Which was just an excuse for not writing.

Now this is the kind of training that the American armed forces must undergo if we are going to be successful in a war with the Russians. I especially want the American people to .

realize that in our last war in Korea, the South Koreans were trained and armed by the Russians and Chinese. The North Koreans were trained and armed by the Russians and Chinese. The South Koreans were armed and trained by we Americans, and I can fully state that this training and arming were defective. And I certainly hope that from now on--and there'll be many, many cases--when we take over the arming

and training of allies that we'll follow the Russian's and Chinese methods and not our own. We'll have to do that best if we are to be successful. I would like to mention again about the camp followers of the Haitian soldiers. It was the best laundry system that I have ever seen devised-- much better than the American laundries. I remember my first day in Port-au-Prince, Haiti in the Caserne Dartiguenave there, we had a battalion of gendarmes. We marched to the parade ground at 4 o'clock in the morning and drilled 4 hours with a short break at the end of each hour. In that climate down there it's not necessary to state: at the end of 4 hours our uniforms were saturated. We marched back to the Caserne at the end of the 4 hours; there were hundreds of women waiting the battalion. Each woman had a bundle of clean clothes on her head. The battalion was dismissed, the soldiers immediately stripped, a woman--his woman--handed him a complete change of uniforms. He changed immediately without taking a bath. The woman picked up his discarded clothes and left the Caserne to return the following morning with a clean batch of clothing. As I stated before, it's the greatest system I've ever seen devised.

After serving in Haiti for 5 years and having commanded Company A for most of this time, I returned to the United States for schooling, and in 1928 went to Nicaragua. My orders were for the constabulary detachment, and I was delighted. The same thing that I had learned in forty

engagements Haiti I put into effect in Nicaragua, and I found them good with the exception of a few changes I made. I realized that the trouble in Nicaragua was that the average patrol--they have both constabulary and Marine patrol--made roughly 15 miles a day; whereas the bandits, the so-called Army of liberation, would travel 30 miles a day. So I did my best to travel thirty-two, and I had a great deal of success in that.

In 1929 I received a letter from Colonel Lee, then Gunnery Sergeant Lee, that he was returning to Nicaragua, had put a request in for the assignment to the Constabulary Detachment and would appreciate my help. I immediately sent Lee's letter as an enclosure to my letter to the chief of the Constabulary Detachment recommending that Lee would be assigned to the Constabulary Detachment, and in fact that he would be assigned to M Company, the company that I then commanded. I had known Lee previous during '28 in Nicaragua, and felt highly of his capabilities.

I used to joke with him a lot after he joined me. When he joined me he had been sitting around in the barracks of the United States. He's quite a large man and his weight has increased to 226. After 60 days with me, with a diet of a lot of rice and beans--mostly beans because most of the time we'd run out of rice--with a wild steer every day or so, I had him down at the end of 60 days to 176. He stayed with me over 4 years from then on, and his weight never increased.

And during this next 4 years we averaged 20 days out of each month on the trail patrolling and we'd average 30 miles a day.

The Nicaraguan Indian is closer to nature than the Haitian, and in my opinion is a much better soldier. He has more physical stamina, he is more intelligent, he's closer to way back, he's especially a good field soldier, he had a lot of the attributes of a North American Indian naturally.

I'm not used to talking, so I think I'll give the floor to Colonel Lee. I might state before I do that this is the second time that I've seen Colonel Lee since we left Nicaragua on January 3, 1933. I remember going down from Managua to Corinto to board ship. Lee made this trip with me; we sat in the same seat on a railroad train going down and also in the same car on the train was many of my other friends, constabulary officers. And at this time the thing that saddened me most than anything else: here were at least a hundred constabulary officers going back to the United States with the same ranks they held in the Marine Corps after years of active duty as officers in the Constabulary Detachment. And the Constabulary Detachment, where I saw it in both Haiti and Nicaragua, was the best schools that the Marine Corps has ever devised. And why all of these officers were not immediately commissioned in the Marine Corps is something I have never had explained to me.

But anyway, Lee is one of the few former non-coms in the Marine Corps that I have been able to actually do something

about. At the beginning of the Second World War, in fact a month before Pearl Harbor, I wrote a letter to the Commandant of the Marine Corps--then General Holcomb--recommending that Lee ... stating in my letter that the war was about to commence, and recommending Lee for promotion to the grade of captain in the Marine Corps. Lee got this promotion, and later on was promoted to colonel, and has since retired as a colonel. And as I said before, it gives me a great deal of satisfaction to actually have been able to have done some- thing for Lee, who had so deserved the promotion that he ever got.

I'll introduce now Colonel Lee. That will relieve me for awhile. Colonel Lee.

Lee: You can cut that off.

And I want to thank you for one thing, general. I never knew that you wrote that letter.

Puller: Well you go to Headquarters some day, and if it's not on your file it will be on mine. I saw it up there about 6 years ago when I retired.

Lee: Well I certainly want to thank you.

Puller: Yes. And Frank C. Shepherd--you know him--he wrote the letter for me; he was my sergeant major. And it went in a month before Pearl Harbor ... maybe 2 or 3 months.

Lee: I never knew that.

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Puller: And in fact I think I've got that letter somewhere in my files at home and I'll hunt for it there. If I can't find it there, then the next time I go to Washington--if they haven't thrown my file in the wastepaper basket--I'll get it out of that file and send you a copy of it. You see, a month or so before Pearl Harbor, Holcomb said that in the event of war, his plan was to commission non-coms and warrants, so go ahead and recommend them. So I sat down and recommended you for a captain. Of course, I knew you were in Peking and I said, "Oh, Christ! I'm going to write this letter anyway. But poor old Lee probably will never get it because those goddamned Japs will cut his throat before you get home, fellow." (laughs)

Lee: I'll tell you one thing: I never could understand why in the hell ... you see, the ones that I went in there with, everyone of the youngsters that I went in there, including the young Vandegrift, were taken out of there; and I was left there.

Puller: Well Vandegrift's old man was assistant Commandant at that time.

Lee: I know. (cross talk)

Puller: The old man was long since dead.

Lee: You can run them right down the line ... Fred Beans and the whole bunch.

Puller: Let me tell you something about ... well it was shortly after I got back from Korea. I was ordered to Washington; I was on the west coast. I had a brigade out there at Pendleton. I was ordered to Washington to sit on a board. Well while I was sitting on the board, about six of us on the board were in a hotel in Washington--I've forgotten the name of the hotel--but the Marine Corps would send a car each morning to pick us up and take us down to work, see, at the Headquarters. Well, I think it was the first morning we were going to work and we drove by Arlington Cemetery, you know, going to Headquarters, and I noticed the grass needed cutting badly in Arlington Cemetery. And one of these riders with me was General Anderson, later on the Quartermaster General of the Marine Corps; and Andy and I were sitting together and I said, "For Christ sake! Don't the American people think enough to keep their grass cut in a national cemetery?" speaking of Arlington, see.

And Andy said, "Lewie, don't you know the occupants of Arlington don't vote?"

Oh, and you want to know why in the hell you didn't get out of Peking when Archie Vandenberg got out. Your dad was long since dead, see, and Vandegrift's dad was the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps.

Lee: Yes. But he come in 6 months after I did. All of those that came in with me got out.

Puller: Yes.

Lee: Everyone of them.

Puller: Well, they thought that you wanted to continue in Peking.

Lee: The old boy that was there, his. ...

Puller: You never knew I wrote that letter, huh?

Lee: No.

Puller: Well I certainly want to find a copy in my papers. I think it's there ... or in the papers in Washington. I'm gonna make a special trip up there to get it from Washington if I can't find it.

Lee: The old boy that was in command up there, you take Colonel Robertson was in command. He left the command and hiked right straight down to Shanghai to get the boat. The boat was coming by Chinwangtao, but he was afraid he wouldn't get on it fast enough. Things were hot and furious up there. And then Ashurst came in and took command.

Puller: You know, I was in Peking when Ashurst passed through ...I mean I was in Shanghai in the 4th Regiment when Ashurst passed through Shanghai on his way to take over Peking. And I told him then to give my best wishes to you, and he probably forgot it or something. Did you know I was in Shanghai then?

Lee: No, I didn't know that.

The other thing that went with it is that Ashurst said that he would ... I asked him what he was going to do when they closed in on him. He said he was going to fight; he was going to put them out. When the chips were down.

Puller: Well he had orders concerning it.

Lee: Yes, I realize that.

Puller: I would have gotten off a couple shots anyway. What is it the French call it, token resistance?

Lee: A demonstration.

Puller: And at least they lugged all the goddamned mortar shells I had over to the Japanese legation.

Q: Well, Colonel Lee, you got the Cosmoline laid off the machine guns there on the dock.

Lee: I was going to tell you the same thing. we stood under the boiling hot shower bath there and took the machine guns out of the boxes and got the Cosmoline hosed off with hot water; loaded those, and the radio came in to comply with demands.

Puller: You give them a little bit of your gas now.

Lee: I thought we just ... the thing that you're particularly interested in is in that one patrol.

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Q: Yes, sir, and the things leading up to it: why were you there and what was the principal threat ... the Sandino rebels and/or bandits coming down there; and why was it that you just happened to be up in this particular locality when they hit you. And what tactical principles did you use. I think it's quite interesting as it was a problem of fire and movement. You were working out of Malagapa, weren't you?

Lee: Out of Jinotega.

Q: I mean Jinotega.

Lee: Yes. That thing is I was trying to do is to refresh my memory on the whole of it. And I'll make a try at that one patrol and see how well I can bring it out.

Q: That also includes cutting back to the fall when you were ambushed on two or three times and had to fight your way all the way back there.

Lee: That was the thing that was in my mind.

We were ambushed three times on the way back, were we not?

Puller: That's right. No, twice.

Lee: Twice, I believe. That's right.

The first time was the ... when we were hit we came back and stayed overnight in that banana grove at the bottom.

Puller: That's right. Buried another man there.

Lee: . . . and then we buried that man in the banana grove. Then the following day around noon or a little after, as I remember, we were hit on the side of that mountain coming in. And then the next time we were hit was down in the Cimarron.

Puller: I think you're getting a little ahead of yourself, because it took us 5 days to get out. And I think the evening of that first contact we were unmolested, and right after the contact we buried this music I was talking about. And the next day we weren't touched. And the next day we weren't touched, the next day we were ambushed, and then the next day we were untouched, and the day before we got out we were ambushed again. See, you remember it was 5 days.

Lee: Five days coming back. That is right.

And we were ambushed ,on the third day and on the. ...

Puller: Fourth day. No, we were ambushed on the second day and the fourth day. The fifth day we marched out of there-- we got down in the plains ... Jinotega.

Lee: That's where I lost that one day as things were going.

Puller: It was 5 days getting out. I remember that.

Lee: Five days getting out.

Puller: That's right. It don't make any difference, anyway.

Lee: No. But the thing is, I was trying to get it more or less straight in that.

Puller: Any time you want a drink of water I'll refresh you.

Lee: Well, I'm choked with a seventeen collar.

Puller: Yes. My God! In 60 days I had you from 226 to 160. (cross talk)

Lee: You know that my weight just stays right along there, that same line.

Puller: From then on.

Lee: Yes. Well, no. I went up a little bit when I started, drinking in Peking, but it came right back down as soon as I got in prison camp.

Puller: I imagine it did.

Lee: I was on fish heads. Well, the heads were all right if there was something on them. They took the eyes out.

Puller: Did they use those for delicacies?

Lee: It was a delicacy to me. Normally I weighed 142 pounds when I came to the United States.

Puller: I imagine so. God!

Lee: I said I'd get back if I had to crawl back.

Puller: That's the only reason you got back, too.

Lee: Yes.

Puller: And it's my idea that most of the boys that died out there just gave up all will in the fight to live.

Lee: I saw not one but many of them do the same thing: just lay down and die with their own mental process.

Q: Now colonel I'd like to see how your coming through, colonel, if I could.

Lee: General, if there's something in there that you want to ad lib. ...

Now, general, it's certainly a pleasure to be with you again after all these years and after all that you've gone through and some of the things that I've been through. I want to bring up some of the patrols that we had in Nicaragua. There's one patrol in particular that happened back in '32, along towards September--I believe it was--the last of September in '22. I remember that special patrol that you took out through the northern area where we made a feint through the Pantasma Valley, and you and your patrol headed on up towards the northern area. I believe that that patrol was the one that gave you the inkling of what we call the corridor to Sandino's empire. Now thinking back over the years, I remember that trail as being around about 15 yards wide, cut down in some places where it was nearly a grass lawn. Now to

come out of a virgin wilderness onto a trail 15 yards wide devoid of brush where the grass and timber had been removed, it looked like a velvet carpeted highway leading to the north. We trailed that passage up as far as La Pavona, and that is where Colonel Puller picked up the patrol early one morning, made a short reconnaissance, come back and headed north. That's when we knew we were underway. We travelled for 2 days on that patrol and never saw a human being, never saw a habitation. On the morning of the third day we were coming through a small valley between two high mountains. We saw two scouts on the hill; we knew that we had been sighted and we knew that a patrol was ahead of us. We followed that trail up until we came into what was known as the Linda Lougar. I believe that that quipe had a name; I believe they came back over into the quarre area and in turn ran into the Coco River. It was around noon when the first indication that we were running into ambush. Our natives had scouted out the trail in the woods around. We found many fresh tracks ahead of us, both animal and human. And I remember there was two shots fired which was an indicator of a warning shot. The point of the patrol spread out, made its advance, no line was found. The ground then gave way to the river. We unlimbered a Lewis machine gun from one of the pack mules and carried that forward to the river, the distance of round about 300 yards. Still no line was discovered, no fire opened. We got to, the river, we repacked the gun; and at that point Colonel Puller

forged ahead, took to the river on the double--it was about knee deep--and from there the ground made a slight rise into a series of small wooded hills with heavy underbrush. The trail made one slight S turn and then was practically straight a distance of around about 75 or 80 yards.

Colonel Puller had one man ahead of him who was a music. The first fire that was opened took that man from about his knees to about his shoulder. He must have had at least 20 shots in him certainly didn't come from rifle fire--it was an automatic weapon. The patrol immediately deployed under the first burst of fire. And as I found out later, there was about four men hit in that first burst. The general himself hit the deck just at the time when a burst of automatic fire cu through one of the trees, just about 3 or 4 inches over his head. We examined that after the wounded were taken care o later on in the afternoon. And that was about as narrow an escape as a man could have and clear the region to tell about it.

As the movement developed, we found a strong firing line on the right of the trail. There was another firing line stationed above that on the left of the trail, so that the firing was coming from both right and left. In the heavy foliage it was almost impossible to tell where the firing was coming from other than the smoke from some of the automatic weapons~ in by dynamite bombs. The Guardia mad the movement towards the left flank and also towards the right. The point was thoroughly pinned down. After I had

been hit--I don't know how long I was on the ground--but it must have been somewheres around 2 or 3 minutes. ...

Dave: I have to change the tape.

End of Tape 1

Tape 2

Q: You all set, Dave?

Dave: Yes, sir.

Lee: When I picked myself up off the ground, I found that there was a heavy firing coming in from three directions, and that was the immediate front, both from the left and the right flank, and it was being answered in proper Guardia style. We let loose with everything there was in the book. Went down the trail about 25 yards, got the Lewis machine gun and came back into position. We opened up about three or four bursts with that Lewis machine gun, and the bandit fire stopped immediately--just as if it was on command by prearranged signal. The captain jumped out of his position, made a move forward, and we actually believe at the time that we saw the bandit leader and his two armed bodyguards cross the trail. The bandits were pulling out of there in all directions. We made a circle of the area to see if we could pick up a trail to find out what direction they were headed in. It was impossible to pick up a trail where anyone group had moved: they scattered in all directions towards the north.

Some of them scattered towards the south. The first thing that we did: We counted the wounded. I believe that we had five wounded in that group. One man was mortally wounded, his scalp had been grazed by a machine gun bullet, his hat was riddled. He died the next morning. The other man who was carrying a sawed-off shotgun loaded with buckshot had his rifle hit in the stock and in the magazines. The magazine exploded, throwing the gun into around about seven or eight parts. Those pieces were picked up and carried back for future reference to patrol leaders.

Now on the way back we had 2 days of heavy going. The trail was heavy in mud; we had to come through a lowland, and we had men that were wounded that had to be cared for along the way. The second day out of our ambush position we decided to head back towards Jinotega to our home base, not only for ammunition but to take care of our wounded. The bandits had anticipated this move or it watched our movement through the preceding day, and set up an ambush ahead of us in a very cleverly devised contour in the land--the road running through a horseshoe formation of small broken ridges. The surprise that they got when they opened fire was that the Guardia closed in on them before they had an opportunity to even move. The best they could do was to open one burst of fire and then take to the brush. And when I say take to the brush, I mean scatter in all directions. It was impossible to follow a man in that terrain, and there's no such thing as organization

other than being notified of an assembly point a certain distance from there. They cleared there in such a hurry that they left their dynamite bombs on the ground, they left some of their ammunition pouches placed in front of them where they'd scooped out the grass and leaves; and we even picked up ... I believe there was either two or three weapons that were left behind. That shows you the haste and the fright that they evacuated their position in.

We picked up on that contact, made another day and a half in our progress towards Jinotega when we were ambushed in a piece of ground in the Cimmaron. Now that, again, was a set-up in a broken terrain, heavily wooded, with a shallow stream running between two horse's heads of terrain; that is a sharp depression in the ground. When those men of the point. ... At that time I was pretty well all in. I was jiggling along at just about the center of the column. The general was leading the column with four Guardia. And the first indication of an ambush, as I remember it, was an over-whelming thunder from what we would imagine would be around about ten dynamite bombs being thrown into one section at one time. That was handed, you might say practically, to the general and four men. How they ever got away from it I don't know because the contents of a dynamite bomb is around a half to a full stick of dynamite packed tightly in a rawhide sack about 8 to 10 inches long, and it's surrounded with everything from broken glass, staples, horseshoe nails, pieces of flint,

and small pieces of pot iron that were broken out of the big sugar refinery ... let's see, what would you call them?

Q: Kettles?

Lee: Kettles. The sugar refinery kettles. About ten of those went off on the point at the same time. I believe, in looking over the situation and thinking about it, that maybe the only thing that saved those men in the point was the fact that the underbrush favored the screening of the position that they were in. It is one of those things that happen in engagements that you can come out and talk about afterwards.

We bedded down that night at Tomayunca, came across on the plains the next morning, and when I got there there was a plane waiting to take me to Managua. That was one of the little niceties that we had arranged in our patrol that neither one of us would ever come back into town wounded; and if we got wounded in such a way that we couldn't make it back to town that we would know where each other stood.

Q: What were the total number of enemy casualties would you say in this bandit band. I understand there are estimated to be about a hundred and fifty bandits. With how many casualties?

Lee: That, again, is what I wanted to bring out ... is in the patrol itself. At the highlight of the patrol it was impossible to tell just how many there was in the occupied

position. The only way that we could make an estimate was to cover the terrain where the bandit firing line actually existed; and there you would pick up two or three cartridges here, you'd pick up a hat full over here where there was an automatic weapon. You'd see where another man had cut the brush out to position his rifle on a forked stick that would be cut off about 6 to 8 inches above the ground. And in that way you could make a very close estimate of the number of men that were actually in that ambush position.

But, the thing is, they always carried a group of machete men which were called the Moloterros. They were organized just as soundly as any Guardia unit that ever went against them. They had their jefe or chief, they had an absolute life or death rule over the individual in the unit. He was recruited for the purpose of so-called patriotism in banditry, which we call highway robbery. They were just out-and-out open thieves and they were schooled in the art of blackmail and kidnapping, and they collected their revenue from the coffee haciendas and the big fincas-- through that medium. Their food was gleaned off the country by demand; they didn't have to go in and tell one of the farmers there to loan them so much or give them so much of this--they demanded that he bring it to them. And it was brought, or his family and his houses and everything that he owned would be wiped out. And through that medium they were able to live off the country in a style, you might say, higher than any

patrol by virtue of the fact that the food was fresh and cooked by the people of the sections that they went through. The same way with the clothing: We never found a bandit shot or left behind on the trail that had soiled clothes or worn out clothes; they were always well clothed ... felt hats. And their equipment was equal to ours--a Krag rifle, and in some instances their ammunition was in better shape than ours by virtue of the fact that it was of a later date, both for the 30-40 Krag which was made by the Remington and the automatic weapons which was made at the Frankfort Arsenal. Much of it was dated on the 1927 Frankfort Arsenal bobtail bullet, which was a far better bullet than we were using.

Now coming back onto the scene, that puts--you might say--a double line. Then the third line back was the ones that held the equipment and held the animals; they were the camp followers and the cook. So it's almost impossible to estimate how many men supported on the firing line of 150 to IBO men.

The reason that it was hard to tell just exactly how many men were wounded: if you didn't actually find a blood spot on the ground, there's no way of estimating that there were so many men wounded unless you found so many blood spots. You can't say there were so many men killed in action unless you actually see the men being taken out or count them on the ground.

In this particular instance there was two machete companies or platoons that were being pulled forward at different

times from the command of the men that were on the firing line. The chatter was a continual chatter and it was easily heard and it was easily understood. The purpose of the voice during the firing was not only to boost the morale of the firing line but it was also a factor of bringing off the wounded, and especially if there was an important sub-jefe that was down or needed more ammunition or needed help.

Q: Generally speaking in all that English.

Lee: Did you cut that thing? .

Q: Yes, sir.

Generally speaking, did they leave their dead or did they take them with them?

Lee: They take everyone they can get their hands on. The thing is: That is a ritual with the Indian; that is, they never leave their dead when they can possibly carry them out. Very, very seldom do you ever get one.

In Monday morning quarterbacking at one phase on your bandits, did you ever see a poorly dressed bandit?

Puller: No.

Lee: No, I never did.

Puller: They go down the damn road and if a man was better dressed than he was, they'd change clothes.

Lee: There's one thing: They had the best of everything; that is, their mules, their clothing, hats; even the pictures they took amongst themselves and it would circulate back. You could get a hold of it. They even had shined boots and puttees and shined holsters.

Puller: They had a better propaganda machine than we did.

Lee: Much better.

Believe me, it was right in Jinotega the same as all the rest of it.

Puller: What was the name of the Mexican general down there?

Lee. Oh, Heralte? No.

Puller: That's the commander that worked for him.

Escamillo

Lee: Escamillo; General Escamillo.

Puller: Oh, Escamillo told us one day, he said, "Now you're doing a pretty good job up there in Jinotega, but you should start from the town first and clean that out and then go in the hills."

Lee: Well he told me the same thing. And you know who he told me to shoot first? (pause) The German right on the corner.

Puller: Yes.

I understand he shoved off from there before the war started and made quite a name for himself in Latin America as an agent.

Lee: Escamillo?

Puller: No, no.

Lee: You mean the German?

Puller: Yes, yes. I understand he got to be a bigshot in South America.

Lee: Gillke.

Puller: Not Gillke. The young man; that's the one I'm talking about.

Lee: Who?

Puller: The young man. You know, a nice looking chap; he was younger than we were--you and I.

Lee: I know who you mean now.

Puller: I've forgotten his name.

Q: Well now, what did he get out of ... was he doing this strictly for hire or auto shop. ...

Puller: He had quite a big store down there. He was in business, but in addition to being in business he was an agent for Hitler.

Q: He was working for the German government.

Lee: Oh, yes.

Puller: He might have been an ex Army officer or an Army officer as far as I know. I know he told me he was in the ... last 2 years the 1st World War he was in the German Army.

Yes, Escamillo told me, he says, "You're doing a pretty good job up there but you should start in Jinotega itself and clean that out and then go to the hills."

Lee: That El Greco he told me, he says, "The first thing that I should do," he says, "is to take a shotgun and go down and shoot Gillke, right in the back. "

Q: Do either of you gentlemen remember the Red American writer that came into Nicaragua from Mexico?

Lee: Yes, yes he came down across there. Got into Jinotega ...

Puller: He came on the same trail that Lee was talking about from "Mexico.

Lee: And then he wouldn't cross. ...

Puller: That trail was known as The Old Incas Trail. And .the Incas, before the Spaniards came to Mexico had a road running right down through Latin America.

Q: Well what was he doing? Was he working ... The Spanish war hadn't started, of course, then.

Puller: He was an out and out Communist.

Q: Communist.

Lee: He came down there to see Sandino and to give Sandino a world spread of Communism.

Puller: He raised one aim in the streets of New York; that's how they could afford to buy this Newark-Frankfort arsenal-ammunition. Carleton Beals.

Q: Carleton Beals.

Puller: Carleton Beals was his name. I understand he's dead now.

Lee: He wouldn't tell us where this road ... he came over this road, and he wouldn't tell us where it was.

Puller: He made speeches in the biggest cities of the United States and then passed the hat and raised money for Sandino. And approximately 30 years ago they raised considerable funds in the United States. They were working against _____

These goddamn people just haven't got sense enough to take care of their own affairs, and their big brother's got to do it for them. And except they're doing it now in the wrong way; you just give them all these political leaders a lot of money.

You take Ghana. That bastard that came down here and were received in the White House the other day gave a dinner party in New York City that cost him \$57,000. One dinner party, \$57,000. Before he left Ghana to come to the United States, he gave orders and purchased out of American aid funds enough marble to build a marble palace for himself in the jungles of Ghana, but still our aid continues to flow. Now it seems to me Mr. Kennedy would have gotten hold of him and said, "Now look here, you black son of a bitch, if you expect any help from the taxpayers of the United States, you will revoke these orders for the purchase of marble." Can you imagine a nigger that lived in a nipa shack all his life building a marble palace? Well Christ! The damn jungle will grow up over it!

Lee: Sure.

Puller: They won't even keep it free of jungles. They can't.

Q: General, as I recall there was a world of difference between the overall conduct of operations in Haiti as against Nicaragua; to wit, in Nicaragua seemingly many of those in authority--amongst the American forces--seemed to have one foot at home because of the geographic proximity to the United States, whereas in Haiti, seemingly, most of the officers on duty there devoted all their attentions to getting the job done. Do you feel that you wish to elaborate on that or comment on that?

Puller: You gonna turn that on? .

Q: Yes, if you wish it. Yes, sir, otherwise we'll just speak off the cuff. Do you want it on or off?

Puller: I don't care. I'm fully retired now; they can't put the finger on me.

Q: Put it on and we can lock it up if.

Q: We can clip it later, general.

Q: All right, and it's all agreeable.

Puller: Let the colonel ask his question again.

Q: Yes, sir. As I recall, you had once remarked--unofficially, not on the witness stand--that in your opinion there was a world of difference between the American conduct of a affairs in Haiti as against Nicaragua; that specifically in Haiti the officers had both feet on the ground, they were there, they remained in Haiti; whereas in Nicaragua there was a great tendency for an officer, figuratively speaking, to have one foot in the United States because it was constant interference from Washington into the conduct of the Nicaraguan campaign. That was the difference.

Puller: Well this was caused mostly by the fact that in 1919 our State Department in foreign countries had a freer hand than they had later, 10 years later, in Nicaragua. For

years and years, not only the military but the State Department officials on the scene were given authority to go ahead and do as they saw fit, and they were backed up by Washington. Ten years later in Nicaragua, the slow paralysis in the way our government is run had set in, and our officials were no longer being backed up. I remember when I first arrived in Haiti, the orders down there were: the prisons are filled; we don't want any more prisoners. That was an order from an American minister in Port-au-Prince. That was an order from a brigade commander in Port-au-Prince. Now just 10 short years later in Nicaragua, if an American Marine got in trouble with a native, he was automatically court-martialed.

Now as far as the military difference in Haiti and Nicaragua were concerned, there were practically no officers in Haiti that had distinguished themselves overseas. They, had no medals. This was a chance in Haiti for distinction and to get somewhere in the Marine Corps, and they were ambitious. Ten years later in Nicaragua, most of the heroes of the AEF for the Marine Corps had been promoted. They had won medals; they had had the distinction; they had had honors. And when they got down to Nicaragua and found out they had to fight a small war, they weren't interested. And besides ... I had mentioned paralysis seeping in, it had in the military 10 years later in Nicaragua, and most of the officers in Nicaragua believed that the place for promotions was not on the battlefield but in the Navy Department in Washington; and .

this concept is not for the betterment of the Marine Corps. Every officer and private non-com in the Marine Corps should know that the way for promotion and glory is on the battlefield--not serving in Washington on a staff. Today the orders from the Navy Department are that you will not be selected for general unless you have done staff duties. For years and years in the Marine Corps the man that was promoted regardless of what rank he was promoted to, was for combat soldiering--not staff duties. And personally I don't think that we have a military organization today that we used to have.

Now I remember reading Dr Southall Freeman's books, and Lee's lieutenants he makes this statement: that a good captain, a good company commander, doesn't necessarily make a good general. But in all of his military studies, he had never read of a good general who had not been a good company commander. That's the answer to it, gentlemen. (pause)

To add a little bit to what Colonel Lee stated: When he stated that one of the approximately 60 combat contacts that we made with the enemy in Nicaragua, that he actually had--on the second day going back to Jinotega--that he didn't feel very well. Lee has under estimated it considerably. When I saw Lee during this, the first time I saw Lee during this contact, he was lying in the trail what appeared to me, the top of t side of his head knocked in. I remember putting my hand in this wound, and it certainly felt to me in my excitement,

that the top of his head was knocked. Previously when I called to him, one of the Guardias called back to me and says, "Captain, the lieutenant is dead." I returned to Lee as soon as I could and found him in this condition lying in the open trail. I, with the assistance of one of the Guardias, pulled him over to the side to get him out of gunfire. Later on he got a bullet through his arm. His hair today, is still parted where a machine gun bullet or rifle bullet had ricocheted off of his head. Lee has about the toughest head that I have ever encountered. When he stated that on the second day he didn't feel so well, I remember he had over a hundred miles to walk, and he walked every step of that distance out; although he and I had sworn that neither one of us would leave the other one. Now this policy still continues in the Marine Corps.

I was in the Korean War, we lost practically no Marines who surrendered to the enemy. We not only brought our wounded out, we brought our dead out. I can see our trucks returning from the reservoir now, Chosin Reservoir, piled high with dead and wounded men who were roped to the running boards of all of our trucks and other vehicles. And the examples set by the individual Marines, bringing out their dead and wounded from the Chosinn Reservoir is outstanding, and when the true history is written of the Korean War, it will be found that nothing has ever happened in our previous history of this country, the United States, that can even approach it. (Soft talk) Anything up there, they learned it.

In Haiti and Nicaragua and Santo Domingo they didn't leave a goddamn soul up there. All the Marines that were left in Korea, where the men had fallen in crevices and that kind of stuff, and nobody knew they were there and couldn't see them. But, when a column was coming out there and a man was wounded, you could see the body, the column halted and they put this man aboard; and if they couldn't get him on a truck, goddamn it, they carried him. You could see a 130 pound Marines out there carrying 175 pound man.

Lee: You think, when my time was in, I put in for retirement. When I retired, the Korean War was just starting; it was the first phase of it. When I got my discharge I headed right straight through to Washington. They told me up there at the Commandant's office that when they wanted me they'd send for me. I waited a week and went back up there.

Puller: The Marines in Korea were thoroughly imbued. The first thing that they were not to leave their wounded and dead; and goddamn it, they didn't leave 'em. Now I would never want to leave the wounded man, but I have doubts about leaving a dead man because you figure I could do so much more against the enemy by doing something. But those kid Marines, by God, brought everybody out.

Q: That must have been your most frustrating experience, I think, in Nicaragua, knowing full well that the enemy would

deliberately ambush you when you were too far away to send an escort back with your wounded that you'd have to return the whole show. Of course, it must have been pretty tough to take.

Lee: That is so. But you also realize that when a man is shot through the stomach, unless he can be immediately put on a operating table in a hospital with the best sanitary conditions available, he'll die in at least 3 days. You can tell a man whose intestines have been perforated, within an hour or two; and when you start bringing a man out on a stretcher whose intestines have been perforated, knowing that he only has a short time to live, and no one will ever realize what it is to handle a heavy man on an improvised stretcher, realizes what it will mean. You not only take four men to carry a stretcher, you've got to have four men standing by as a relief; and especially in a rough country like Nicaragua, we not only would have four standing by, we'd have an extra four.

Q: Do you have any questions, John?

Q: Well I was just wondering how much of an influence this limitation actually had on your operations there, the problem of caring for your wounded. Did it particularly effect your patrol operations to any great extent?

Puller: Oh, no doubt about it. It was a distinct handicap. But, the good of it outweighed the disadvantage a thousand times. Every Marine knew that he could trust the man on his right and left. And the only reason in the world that I made the statement awhile ago, when the true history is written of the 1st Division's conduct in Korea it will go down as the greatest thing that's ever happened in the United States of America; because nothing has ever happened like it before, especially the love of man for his brother.

Q: There's no doubt about that.

Puller: I sincerely pray that some day this true story will be written.

Q: This may be a sensitive subject, Colonel Lee, but I'm sure that.

Puller: Oh, goddamn it, turn that off a minute, will you.

Q: Yes. {interruption}

Puller: They were just trying to do the best they can ,with no support, or very little support. And whether they accomplished something or not is _____(?) But they got the word down there: you looked after your brother man, see.

Q: Right on! Right. .

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Q: Well, we had the same thing on Tarawa where the troops that were on the beach there in the lee of that wall, finally what got them moving was the fact that there were other Marines on the reef that were catching hell and ... come on, you guys, It's up to us to.

Q: Take the heat off.

Q: ...take the heat off the shore.

Lee: That's right.

Well, I'll tell you very frankly that if I was in Nicaragua and I had a Springfield rifle with a telescope on it, there would never have been a patrol operate in that area down there unless it was a patrol in force. The ten and fifteen men patrols that went out, they never would have returned to their base. I could have laid up on a side of the hill there and taken patrol after patrol.

Q: Why didn't they do it?

Lee: ...and any other man that could shoot could do the same thing.

Puller: Well, goddamn it! The enemy does do it.

Now you take when we landed on Cape Gloucester, I wondered why so many of our men were shot through the head and chest. Most wounded, you see, are shot through the leg--lower part of the body. Well I wondered why so many of our Marines were

killed and badly wounded by being shot through the head and chest. Well when we finally picked up our marbles and went forward, practically all the Japanese had telescopic sights on their rifles.

Q: They were all up in palm trees .

Puller: No, I think this thing has been overrated about palm tree operations. I don't think a man gets in a palm tree; not very many of them. They have a few snipers up all right, no doubt about it. But a man stays on the ground.

But Lee, the telescopes that we had on our rifles, we never attempted to give them more than one to a squad; there weren't enough to go around. And the telescopes ... you had to zero them in every 24 hours, see.

Lee: It's the ones we had.

Puller: ...where the Japanese scopes were made as a part of that rifle, see. And you'd zero it in when you were issued the rifle, and it would be good for months afterward. But our scopes weren't that way, see; our scopes were temporary scopes.

Q: What I was asking, general, was: Why in Nicaragua weren't the Marine patrols ever decimated as Colonel Lee just indicated that they would have been if he'd been on the other side. Didn't they have anybody. ...

.

Puller: They would have been decimated by the Japanese or Germans.

Q: Well is it the fact that the Nicaraguans were not really trained as soldiers and didn't have the ability to follow through?

Puller: That's right.

Q: They could fire their first wad, and if they didn't kill you then then all they could think of was running.

Puller: That's right.

Lee: They didn't have any motive in killing the Guardia in the gang that was down there. What they were out for is loot.

Puller: Oh, no. If we'd been fighting the Japanese or Germans in Nicaragua, God! They would have. ...Well, we saw what happened in Korea, even in North Korea.

Q: Sure, sure.

What about aerial evacuations: Did you ever have any of your wounded evacuated by air from the patrol actions?

Puller: Well, Lee was a case of it right there. We came back ... he marched a hundred miles before he could get to a plane, though. But a serious ... If Lee hadn't been the man he was, was able to march that hundred miles, evacuation

was out of the question. Now if we had had 'copters down in Nicaragua, we could have made a great use of them.

Q: Yes, sir.

Puller: But any kind of a plan, you've got to build an airstrip before you can land.

Q: Well Jinotega, then, was the only real incidence of. . .

Puller: Oh, no.

Q: ...wounded being evacuated under fire.

Puller: Oh, no. They wasn't under fire.

Q: Quilali

Q: I mean Quilali.

Puller: Quilali was . . .

Schilt made six or seven trips in there. And the only way in the world they had an airstrip was there to use as a street. And they knocked down one row of buildings on one side of it, leveled it off.

Q: I've got a map here which I would like to ask a question about on that, because we're having a ... the general's seen some of these dioramas that we've got down below--these little models of actions--and this here is a more or less a rough sketch. The plane is just in here for size; it's not the actual scene that'll be depicted. But this was suppose to show the Schilt

plane in the street there at Quilali. Now since this was done and Colonel Lee more or less went around the indicated these changes here that we noted then, this actual photograph has turned up. Now what I would like to find out here is: Was this photograph taken before the fight, do you know, and do you know the street?

Q: Colonel, do you want to cut it?

Q: That doesn't say, but is this the street here where the runway was made? Do you know? Were you there? .

Lee: The street runs this way.

Q: How does this photograph orient with this sketch as we've got it with this settlement? There's been some question. as to whether.

Puller: Let him put this on the track there for your dive-bombing ... Not your dive-bombing but any kind of bombing. Let me talk about 5 minutes on that, will you?

Q: Yes, sir. (pause)

Puller: In the early fall of 1919 I was a company commander in the Gendarmarie in Haiti stationed at Mirebalais. The brigade commander, about 15 officers came out to inspect. Among these officers was Major Geiger who was the senior Marine aviator in Haiti at that time. We wore the same uniform as the Constabulary officers of the Marine officers.

I was a company commander, Brigade commander, General Russell, mistook me for a Marine officer; and he said, "Captain, are we doing everything we can down here."

My reply was, "We are not taking full advantage of aviation."

Geiger and General Russell both spoke up and said, "Why not?"

I said, "All the planes are in Port-au-Prince. We request a plane by telephone or radio. Often the telephone lines have been cut, and radio we can't get through. Anyway it's hours, sometimes days before we get a plane." I said, "An aerial target is a target of opportunity. You must engage it at that time. Why not build an airstrip at Mirebalais and every other town that's garrisoned in Haiti.

General Russell turned to Major Geiger and said, "Is that possible?"

I said, "I have 3,000 prisoners here in Mirebalais. I will prepare an airstrip. ..." Christ sake! A plane in those days didn't weigh as much as a Ford automobile did. I said, "I will prepare an airstrip. It's already leveled. The only thing you've got to do is to cut the grass. I will prepare it tomorrow; the following day a plane can land here."

Russell to Geiger: "Is that possible?"

"Yes, sir, I think so."

Major Osterman, who was then a major in the Marine Corps (General Osterman) ...' .Russell said, Osterman, that strip will be cleared tomorrow, a telegram will be in

my office. The next day there'll be a plane--maybe tomorrow O night--on that field. Geiger, you keep a plane continuously on the airstrip in Jinotega. We'll leave it on the spot.

The next day I cleared it, took 3,000 prisoners out over there to cut the grass in an hour, the telegram went into Managua, and the following morning there was a plane there and remained there. The balance of the time that I was in Mirebalais, it not only remained there but airstrips were cut all over Haiti--anywhere the Marine garrison was at, an airstrip was cut. And later on when the Marines practically were due and nothing but Gendarmes were there, the airstrips were kept up.

Q: Excuse me, general. I think you've just said Jinotega was the place where.

Puller: No. Mirebalais. .

Q: That was where the first airstrip was built.

Puller: Yes. In Haiti. Mirebalais. .

Lee: You'll have to cross that Jinotega out ... and Managua. It's Managua and.

Q: Port-au-Prince.

Lee: ...Port-au-Prince.

Q: Well now, general, looking at it--if we can--from your thoughts, at that time, without your knowledge of what aviation can accomplish now, what did you consider. ...

Puller: This is exactly what the Marines did.

Q: What did you consider, general, to be the principle mission that the planes at that time could perform, looking at it from your knowledge at that time, in 1919.

Puller: Bombing, strafing, and evacuation.

Q: Well now dive bombing as such had not come in. Were you thinking of what kind of bombing had been. ...

Puller: But, Lieutenant Sanderson and Weaver 2 weeks later were dive bombing and strafing in Mirebalais, Haiti.

Q: That was the first incident. ...

Puller: The beginning of the Marine Corps bombing and strafing.

Q: That was the first incidence of dive bombing of hostile troops.

Puller: Yes, sir. .

Q: Well, general, had dive bombing--to your knowledge--ever been discussed in theory back in the States, let's say, or if you ever heard of it before.

Puller: In the 1st World War it was used to a small extent by both us and our allies and the Germans. .

Q: That was a glide bombing, though, I think.

Puller: Yes.

Q: But it was not a steep dive in which you aim the nose of the plane at your target.

Puller: That's right, that's right.

But there's very little difference in it. You can glide a bomb, you can nose-dive a bomb. There's practically no difference in the two; it was jus~ a refinement. Even today, by our air forces, half or more of the bombing is still level bombing.

Q: Yes, sir.

Q: One of the things we're trying to establish is the first instances of dive-bombing as such, of a high-powered dive at the target, and. ...

Puller: Well, that came about with the development of a more powerful plan. In 1919 when this took place in Haiti that I'm speaking of, the engines were so weak that if you put a plane in a nose-dive , it would probably either fall apart or go straight in the ground; you couldn't pull it out. But, Lieutenant Weaver and Lieutenant Sanderson in the fall of .1919 were bombing in the vicinity of Mirebalais, Haiti.

Q: Were those the DH's, sir? Do you remember the kind of plane? .

Puller: I think they were the old DH's. They didn't amount to a damn. They were a 2-wing plane, one right above the other; it was one set back a little farther than the other one was.

Well now, the first plane that came and landed at Mirebalais was at this time, and a second lieutenant named Weaver, Buck Weaver, flew it out. I had been there for months then, constantly patrolling, and Major Osterman detailed me as his guide to fly with him so he could learn the country. I'd fly over and point out the marks on the map to him. Well, as per General Russell's orders, at the end of the week he was relieved by Lieutenant Sanderson. Well I not only continued on the same job and I flew with Sanderson ... in the meantime a truck load of bombs reached Mirebalais, and Osterman said, "Try bombs. II And Sanderson returned to Osterman, I was present and said, "We have no bomb racks.

Osterman said, "Improvise bomb racks."

Well I went with Lieutenant Sanderson. He asked me if I had any ideas. My reply was, "No, I never had even seen a bomb rack."

Well he said, "I got an idea." Well we had mail tent. We went to the mail tent and got two mail sacks. They use the same mail sacks for letters today ... and packages; they haven't changed a bit except for the lock on it. Sanderson got two mail sacks from the mail orderly, and then we went to the quartermaster and got four lengths of window sashing cord; they were both about 6 feet long ... I mean all four

of them were 6 feet long. From the quartermaster we went to a shoe shop. In those days every company had a cobbler; carried right on your roll, see. And we went to the cobbler and had him to secure two pieces of the window cord to the open ends of the sack. Then we went out to the airstrip ... Christ! It was only a couple hundred yards from camp. And Sanderson secured, with the use of nails and bolts, secured the closed end of the sack under the fuselage. And he found cleats out that, and put one cleat inside the cockpit. That would raise the mouth of the sack and secure it in the cockpit, see. Then we went and got a bomb--the bomb weights, I remember it weighed either 27 pounds or 32 pounds, I've forgotten which; that's all they weighed, that's the biggest we had, 27 or 32--put that in the sack and secured the open end by the piece of sash cord into the cockpit, and we flew over. And there was an old French fort built on a hillside over-looking Mirebalais; and we flew over the fort, and Sanderson says, "Unleash it when I hold up my right hand." We flew over--of course it was level bombing--we flew over and I untied the damn sash cord and I leaned over to take a look, see, and you could see that mail sack just do like that. The bomb floated out of there and we got a near miss ... didn't miss far. And that, as far as I know, was the beginning of the Marine bombing.

Sanderson stayed there a week and we went back that night and reported into Osterman, and Osterman says, "That's right. You can take off with one of those bombs in that mail

sack but don't land with it." And every week we'd go out. I flew the next week with Sanderson, and then I had to go back and do my own duties, I was getting sort of backwards in them. And we'd go over and fly all around the country, and ordinarily we wouldn't see anything to drop it on, see, so we'd come back and try to drop it in this fort. That was the only kind of bombing that you could do in those days.

Q: That was more or less level bombing.

Puller: Yes. And anyway it was level bombing because, as I said, these planes would fall apart.

Q: Well now in Nicaragua they did actually start dive-bombing there.

Puller: Oh, but see that was 10 years later.

Q: It was 10 years later.

Puller: And, my God! The planes that we had in Haiti just, had canvas wings.

Q: They were World War I veterans.

Puller: Yes, that's right. The wings were all covered with a canvas ... not even canvas heavy at that, with a coat of paint of them.

Lee: The dive-bombing that they did in Nicaragua, though, was diving down and pulling out. Now the dive-bombing that

we call dive-bombing today is when they come over here, we know where to come down or else just come right on over and head straight down. And the first that that was ever practiced was right here on this field; that is the old aviation field right out here, after they came back from Nicaragua, and that was around '34 and '35. Then it was picked up from there, and I believe that Sanderson was the one that took it to the air show in Cleveland and demonstrated it. The Germans picked it up and perfected it.

Puller: You write a letter to Sanderson; he's still alive and he's in Coronado.

Q: Yes, sir.

Puller: And he'll verify what I said.

Lee: Sanderson is the first man that winged over.

Q: And went straight down.

Lee: ...and went straight down after his plane right out here. And the outcome of it was where you come over and ...

Q: I remember that; they were dropping sandbags inside ~ circles, planted circles in the ground out there

Lee: They had a little dummy bomb with a shotgun shell in it that they did the same thing with it.

Q: Colonel Lee, you said that would be the first time that the science or mathematics of dive-bombing was seriously worked out. We had bombing tables, whatever could _____dive, and so forth--your sighting tables.

Lee: That's right. It was perfected right out here on this field and was demonstrated at the Cleveland air show, and I believe that was in either '34 or '35.

Puller: You know, after saying an aerial target is a target of opportunity, you get it then or you don't get it, see; tomorrow It s gone or 10 minutes from now It's gone. You've got to get it immediately.

Well, I left Haiti in '26. I went to Nicaragua in '28. .I'll be goddamned if they hadn't forgotten everything they learned in Haiti when I arrived in Nicaragua. The only planes they had were in Managua, where you needed a plane in Jinotega, a plane in every town you had Marines in, see. But they had forgotten all about it. Now the main reason that they had forgotten about it was that the aviation commanding officer didn't want to distribute his planes, see; he wanted to keep them all in his fingers, see. And that's the reason, see, this goddamn jealousy in the service.

End Tape 2

Tape 3

Puller: That night: by god, a telegram came out from a brigade commander, "explain in writing why open ditches,

are on the landing field in Jinotega. You will immediately take steps to fill these ditches. God, I remember the night that damn message got in there. Naturally I had the feeling you got to drain them. We can't put tile in; you've got to have open ditches.

Lee: And Miles Shaw was the one that started that aviation field out there. N. M. Shaw.

Q: You were serving under him your first tour down in Nicaragua.

Lee: Yes.

Q: Then you came back to the States for about a year, then went back and joined. ...

Lee: No. I came back on leave and it turned into an extended leave of around ... let's see. I was here for about 3 months ... and went back.

Q: Colonel Lee, would you say based on your experiences as a guest of the Japanese government--amongst your compatriots-- do you think that they behaved in captivity about the way you thought they would? In other words, the good Marines behaved properly in those circumstances, did not conduct themselves properly--fell apart? Did you notice any changes, any patterns?

Lee: I feel that there was a marked difference between the different organizations of Marines that were captured. And the training and the background of the unit that was captured reflected in the prison camp and it reflected all through the whole tour of the prison camp.

Puller: A question I would like to ask: Why were, percentage-wise, so many more soldiers captured than were Marines?

Q: You're referring to. ...

Puller: Our American Army, United States Army. Why, percentage-wise, were the Army captives so much greater than those of the Marine Corps?

Q: You're referring to World War II, sir?

Puller: No, Korea.

Another question I would like to ask: Why percentage-wise, of the prisoners captured, were so many more Army troops turncoats than Marines?

Q: There were no Marines.

Puller: That's right. Then put down zero.

Now that's what I want somebody to make a study of and tell the American public why.

Q: I presume it was the leadership instilled in them by the Marine officers and their experience in recruit camp.

Puller: Well I would certainly like to see it down in black and white. But you talk to the American civilians today and they don't know anything about it. You get back off the sea- coast and these American people still believe that the Army committed no sins, and they still think that the Army is the first line of defense.

And of course I now, now if I had been General Shepherd I never would have been Commandant because when I got back to the States I would have talked. And he not only wouldn't talk himself, he wouldn't let any Marine talk. Of course he had visions of being the Commandant and aimed to be Commandant.

No, I'd like somebody to write a book here on that and really put.

...

Q: Well General Edson served on a board that investigated all the prisoners in Korea and then came up with that Code of Conduct. He presumably committed suicide not long afterwards.

Puller: So did Forrestal. Except they say Forrestal was thrown out of Bethesda.

Lee: But a Marine in the old Corps didn't need a.

Q: Code of Conduct.

Lee: ...Code of Conduct. A Code of Conduct was handed him from the time that he.

Q: Went to boot camp.

Lee: ...started in boot camp until he left the Marine Corps regardless of how many years he served. The Code of Conduct was an unwritten code that was carried on. ... (cross talk)

Puller: I told you the answers to the Code of Conduct. Just like these Marines bringing out their dead and wounded. That's the unwritten. You can't put that kind of stuff in writing. I mean you're just wasting your goddamned time; nobody will read it anyway. But you get the whole outfit-- every private, every general--thoroughly imbued with it and you've got something.

Q: In my battalion when the Code of Conduct was first published, there was the feeling among the troops that this was a great insult.

Puller: Certainly it was.

Q: ...to them as men and Marines.

Lee: If I could see the picture clearly, why it was handed to the Marine the first day he started with a Marine uniform on and it was carried through in every post and every station that we ever served, both land and sea and air.

Q: Of course, during World War II, I mean the Japanese didn't engage in any of this so-called brain-washing to the extent that the Communists did.

Lee: The hell they didn't! They would take us in for hours at a time every straight day, and if we didn't conform to the regulations of the camp which all carried a penalty of death, we were taken out at the Battle of the Coral Sea at around 12 o'clock at night in temperatures that were around about 24 and 26 above zero and stood at attention until the whole outfit was down. And that was around about 5 o'clock the next afternoon.

Q: That was just an act of spite, you mean.

Lee: That is right. We knew that as soon as we received mass punishment.

Q: That there had been another U.S. victory.

Lee: ...that there was something over another hundred thousand Japs had been taken out of the picture. Every time that over a hundred thousand were wiped out, well we were just marched and stood at attention. Well you take a man in normal conditions and fed normal, well Christ, he could stand at attention for quite some time; but by God in a weakened condition with no food, you just can't make the grade.

The Coral Sea, the Battle of the Bismark Sea, everyone of the islands that were taken ... Christ! When Iwo Jima was taken you might say that we were starved for around 2 weeks. We just had barely enough food to keep us going. .

Q: What about when the atom bomb was dropped, the two atom bombs.

Lee: When the atom bomb was dropped there was a hush that came over the whole outfit, that is the whole Japanese outfit. We knew that something big had happened, but there was absolutely no way of telling what it was and we didn't know until around about 10 days after this.

Q: Presumably your treatment became more lenient as the end drew nearer, did it not?

Lee: No.

Q: They were just nasty right up to the last minute.

Lee: The thing is that we never knew that the armistice was signed until the night before. They changed all the administration--everything that pertained to the prisoners of war was marched out, and a group of English-speaking Japanese white-collared and blue-collared workers moved in--civilians. And the next morning there were these strangers speaking San Francisco English: college educated, University of California, Wisconsin. Well, everything's all right now. Christ! The banquet was on, new clothes brought in, we're friends now.

Puller: Did you know a Marine gunner named Sealy? You remember Sealy.

Lee: Sealy?

Puller: Yes. .

Lee: Oh, certainly! Certainly! I know him well.

Puller: Well I took Sealy with me in my regiment to Korea as my ordnance officer, regimental ordnance officer, and we had to unload in Kobe and transfer aboard LSTs. And Sealy took his goddamn rifle--or borrowed a rifle--and killed seven Japanese on the dock, that he swore to me he knew as soldiers right in the port tied up to the dock there in Kobe. And boy I ... because I liked Sealy and had known him for years, see, and I didn't give a fuck how many Japanese he killed, .war or not ... and boy, I sent _____ to take charge of Sealy because he would have killed every goddamned one of them if we'd stayed in Kobe long enough. He killed seven goddamed Japanese who he claimed were soldiers--dock workers--in Kobe when we were alongside the dock.

Q: Well we had that trouble in the 2d Division when we landed on the big island of Hawaii right from Tarawa. And of course, suddenly 90 percent of the population was Japanese, and the Marines weren't feeling particularly happy about being tossed up there on the ranch up there and told to build their own camp; and they still had to organize. Japs got in knifing parties there. In the beginning they had to restrict them to the base for about a week or two before they let them loose on the community.

Lee: Well Sealy ought to be all right with both the rifle and pistol. I taught him to shoot both of them.

Puller: You probably know he's dead, don't you.

Lee: No, I didn't know that.

Puller: Yes, he's dead. He had a heart attack and they retired him, and he lived in San Diego, and he spent about half his time coming to see me in San Diego--he lived there. Then about a year after I came to the east coast, I got a letter from Mrs. Sealy saying that he'd had another attack and died.

But that crazy bastard killed seven of them right from .the ship in Kobe. He walked to the side of the ship and picked out one of his old friends and bango!

Lee: That was Sealy, all right!

Puller: Well I was certainly relieved when I got off that ship because the captain of the ship knew there was something rotten in Denmark, see, and I was sitting there lying with Sealy.

Q: Well you carried three firearms all through.

Lee: Did what?

Q: Didn't you carry three firearms, you told me, all the way through the prison camp?

Lee: All the way through the prison camp.

Q: You got the Smith and Wesson weapon that we've got down there. Now what were the other two weapons?

Lee: The 20-gauge shotgun and the 3-barrelled shotgun.

Q: I can see how you could hide a pistol, but how you could maneuver two shotguns around through 5 years of prison camp, I'll be darned if I can understand.

Lee: Well I'll tell you, you can ask anyone that was there and they'll tell you how they come through. And I had a penalty of death reiterated; that is, that penalty was on me all the way through, but it was doubled when they took us from Korea into Japan.

Q: You mean from North China.

Lee: From Korea; from across the Shimonoseki Straits there at Pusan.

Q: Oh, they took you from North China to Korea, and then from Korea to Japan. .

Lee: Yes. That's right.

Q: Then through all these moves you kept all your artillery. .

Lee: That is right.

We came down through the entire length of Korea. We came up the North China on up into Mukden, and from Mukden down through the entire length of Korea, and then went through

the entire length of Japan From Shimonoseki we came up along .the inland waterway by rail. ..

Q: Uh huh, I know that route. .

Lee: ...to Sendai up into Tokyo, oh ...well, the ultimate was Hakodate. It was the main rail.

Q: You had to carry everything, didn't you? Lee: No.

Q: Did they ship your gear or. ...

Lee: They shipped. ...You see, I had a trunk. See I was an officer. I had a trunk with me. .

Q: But they respected that privilege.

Lee: Oh, yes! But the thing is: You see, that trunk was broken into by the Japanese, and such things as my alarm clock, all my ornaments removed from my blues; all my white shirts, white gloves, leather gloves, all the photographs ... God, I had two shoeboxes full of pictures--all that was taken. There was a thousand and one different things that was. ...

Q: But they saw your guns but didn't. ...

Lee: They had to see them.

Q: Who broke in, soldiers?

Lee: No! Officers. Oh~ God! A soldier. ..he wouldn't dare to break into a trunk any more than he would defy one of his officers. And the way the guards was kept, an individual would never have an opportunity to. But the officers were the ones that did the looting.

Q: Well I'm amazed! I would have thought that the mere possession of those would have qualified you for a 1-gun salute .

Lee: Well, it was just one of those things that happens, and so help me God ...well, the other thing is: every time that we moved the baggage, my trunks was always put on the bottom--all such things as that. We just had a shuffle in there when we had our baggage inspected, running from--we'll say--running from one station to another. We put the trunks out in two lines. Well the inspecting officers ... there'd be maybe three or four lieutenants, someone up here would be showing something to this group of inspecting officers to slow up this group here. The other group would move down ahead. And when they'd go through this line of trunks, we'd watch ... get the trunks down at the end. When they were coming down first on this line, we'd transfer it over into the other line under a blanket. They'd inspect this trunk here. ... You know, shove it back in there, so we'd take the guns and everything, put it back into that trunk, lock it, come down through this one, give this _____, put it back in there, push it back and forth. It's just one of those things in timing and getting away with it. So you stand there with

your heart in your mouth. You know what the hell the answer if somebody gets caught. It's alright to laugh about it now, but the thing is you just look off in the distance and you get by with it; that's the answer. If you don't, why, something else again.

Puller: Lee, as you know, I did a couple years in Peking. Tell me what procedure the Japanese used when they'd just walked in, say, "Boy, you got it?"

Lee: The thing is this, general: When ... let's see, about 3 weeks before they closed in, they sent me to Chingwangtao to receive the machine guns, ammunition, and the company property that was being shipped down by rail, to place it. So when the Harrison came in we'd be able to load the boat immediately. And I was positioning that stuff on the dock with 18 men ... 22 men it was. But back in Peking there was absolutely no knowledge of anything happening in either from the embassy or from the Marine division, battalion there, until Sunday morning when they moved up. And there was any number that you want to name armed, and the rest of them--the engineers--were building a barbed wire entanglement around the Marine compound in the American Embassy.

Q: This was the day before Pearl Harbor.

Puller: Sunday. .

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Lee: You see, it was Sunday morning over there; it was Saturday morning here--the 8th. You gain a day going across.

Q: Pearl Harbor was Sunday. ..was Monday your time.

Lee: No, it was a Sunday morning.

Puller: No, Lee, you're wrong.

Q: Pearl Harbor was on a Sunday morning and on this side of the dateline.

Lee: Yes, that's right. The other side it was a Monday morning on their time--on our time over there.

When they got up Monday morning there was a barbedwire fence around there. Down there at my place down there was nothing that stirred until around about 7 o'clock. And then there was a skirmish line, shoulder to shoulder, just ringed Camp Holcomb down there.

Q: Well you had been out hunting, hadn't you, that morning?

Lee: Yes. I'd been out hunting. We came back in, there was still no sign of any trouble or anything, just a destroyer ... it was a light cruiser, is what it was, up against the dock and just trained the guns over on the camp there. Then a very polite-speaking Japanese officer came in and informed us that the war had been declared by the United States on Japan. And we immediately got on the wireless, hit Tientsin to see what had happened; he says, "Comply with demands." That came

through C. A. Brown. And then he says, "Stand by for further orders from Pekin." So we got a radio not only from the embassy but from Colonel Ashurst in Pekin. And he says, "Under no consideration will a shot be fired." And he said, "Those are Marine Corps orders." Under no consideration will a shot be fired." So that was the way she stood right there. And, you know, there was around a million and a half Japanese in around the peninsula there. They had everything: artillery, the whole thing; aviation and all.

Puller: The biggest maneuver I ever saw in my life was in Shanghai. I got out of Shanghai in October before Pearl Harbor; I was almost 6 months overdue on my 2 years out there. Marine Corps Headquarters forgot about me, I guess. Of course I knew the war was evident, and I was just straining to get the hell out. And the only thing I could think about: Well don't be a goddamn fool for a fellow that's just gonna surrender out here and you'll be a prisoner of war for the war. Wire Washington and tell 'em, well goddamn it your 2 years has expired, and they'll order you out of here. I thought some clerk had forgotten about me, see. So anyway my orders didn't come until October, and I got out ... and just in time.

About 3 months before I left Shanghai all' the wives had been evacuated--families--and the officers had orders to move in the barracks. I don't know why they ever issued any such orders because I knew they were going to surrender, see. But

anyway they moved all the officers in the barracks, and we had a mess there for the battalion officers. And I was sitting in the mess, say, one day, and Christ! Here comes the officer of the day, Lieutenant Stokes, shakin' like a leaf. You couldn't even get out from him what the hell he was talking about. And he told me--I finally got it out from him what had happened--that he was the officer of the day and had been down to inspect the three sentries that we had on Soochow Creek--that separated us from the Japanese, our battalion sector--and the Japanese, there were thousands of them in our area.

And I thought, "Oh, Christ! The war has started." And I said, "Well what do you do?"

He said, "I can't do anything. I can't bite."

I said, "You didn't carry out your orders. You got machine guns down there emplaced and you was supposed to use 'em."

Well I wasn't the battalion commander; I was the battalion executive officer. Donald Curtis was battalion commander. And Stokes talked to me, see. Don Curtis had sat there and not said a goddamn thing. Well he says, "You take several men and go down there and find out what happened." (He couldn't make anything out of Stokes what ~ happened.)

I just told don, I said, "Well goddamn! The war has happened, that's all." So I went out to the guard house there and put three men in and myself, and I took four BARs

with us to shoot it out if something happened. Went on down there and the whole place was just as light as day. They had these Japanese trucks on the other side of Soochow Creek--the road ran right along Soochow Creek on both sides, see--they had these trucks with searchlights on them. And the whole banks there were just as light as day.

The Navy, about every 300 yards up and down the creek here, had brought enough boats in to run bridges across about every 400 yards. And the troops had marched in.

Well I arrived there, and fortunate enough I arrived where Japanese-speaking colonel was. Christ! It was the regimental headquarters. And he came over and said, "Major," he recognized me "we have come to your area with your colonel's permission to get some Chinese prisoners." And God! Right in the vicinity where I was he had several hundred Japanese soldiers. And Christ! They had about 500 Chinese rounded up.

And I said, "Well I got no such orders from my colonel, colonel."

He said, "They are the orders."

And what saved the day was Pyzik, who was the regimental executive officer--came up at that time--and he said, "The Japanese colonel is right. I came down to notify your battalion, Lewie."

Well I'll tell you right now: by God, the war would have started that night if Pyzik hadn't come there. He says, "My goddamn orders were and the whole damn battalion's orders were to open fire."

And goddamn it! Peck had known that for 3 days—that he gave those yellow bastards permission to come in his area, and he hadn't said a damn word to his commander, Donald Curtis. Why in the hell, by God, he adopted that attitude. ... because they could certainly have started there. If it hadn't a been for Stokes that was scared stiff, see, and Pyzick being there when I got there, the war would have started and it would have been a good thing because the only thing we would have lost was a thousand man regiment, and.

Lee: Which Stokes was that? Was that the.

Puller: Oh, no, not George the quartermaster.

Lee: Oh, the quartermaster.

Puller: No, no. Not the quartermaster.

Q: Thomas. He's the Naval Academy graduate.

Puller: Why in the hell Peck and all his staff officers he had in the regiment adopted any such attitude as that ... Peck was just ashamed to admit it.

Lee: Those Chinese just went out to a labor battalion ... that is, those that lived. (pause)

Puller: Well that thing was handled perfectly on the Japanese part. Those trucks rolled up there at a given time, the launches came right up and were present to run these bridges

across the creek. And the searchlights went on and they marched right across, and they had duck boards for those launches, even well up into the streets, see,

Lee: Well, general, you know the plains that run out where the rifle range at Pekin and the plains that run on down to, well, to Fengtai center. Well they put labor battalions in there and leveled that off as a parade ground which was around about I should say 18 miles in one direction and, well, 10 or 15 miles in the other.

Puller: Yes.

Lee: Took every tree, every Chinese house and ... you know, it was farm land there, and there was some rise and fall in the land. But they leveled that thing out for an aviation field and for a parade ground. And the entire expeditionary force that was supposed to invade Australia, the ultimate of it was where it landed the Malayan Peninsula and went down the peninsula to Singapore. They said there was a million and three-quarter men under arms that was reviewed that morning. And we were on a ... well, it was a roof of a tool shed where you could look right off in the distance. And the staff were on a pedestal that was built in a big army truck where they were up around, oh, I'd say 15 feet off the ground hanging onto a rail when they inspected those troops. But they were lined up just as far as you could see down one side and down the other. The damnedest sight I ever saw in my life! It

was more human beings, let alone people being under arms. It was more human beings, I believe, than I'd ever seen in my life. They were in mass formation.

Puller: I saw ... When the Japanese came down to Peking in '33. ...I only stayed in the States 9 days when I came back from Nicaragua; I went out to China.

Lee: I wish to Christ that I'd have gone out there!

Puller: Yes, you'd have missed out on the prisoner of war thing. Although I went to China and stayed 4 years after. I put 2 years in Peking and 2 years ... I went from Peking aboard ship out there. Put 4 years there and came back to the States and stayed almost three, then went back to 4th Regiment.

Lee: Yes, I was thrown into the FMF here and just couldn't get transferred out of it. You was just in the FMF and that was it--every of the maneuvers and every trip. I had the special weapons of that outfit.

Puller: What ever became of those people that came out of Nicaragua that day we did?

Lee: Well, they split up and just went everywhere. You mean the Marines.

Puller: Yes. I mean the Marines that were serving in the constabulary detachment.

Lee: Well, they brought us right up against the dock here with the Henderson; let us off.

Now you've seen Satterfield. And Donald McDonald went back to Nicaragua, Clark went back.

Puller: I've seen Clark. He was in Bethesda Hospital when I was up there.

Lee: He'd been back twice on a check-up. But he lives right there next to Leek.

There was another one that went back down there, that has the Schaeffer pen and Schaeffer pencil and ink concession down there. I think it was Ather.

Puller: Yes, I remember him.

Lee: Hamas come back. He bumped himself off when he come home. It was somewhere on the west coast.

Puller: Yes. I think it was San Diego.

Lee: I'm trying to think of a Pulver. I haven't seen him ...

Puller: Pulver is running a penitentiary somewhere in Indiana or Minnesota now. He had a son that's a captain in the Marine Corps; VMI graduate. I've ran into his son--not Pulver; I haven't seen him.

Lee: I was going to say his son went to VMI. I haven't seen him.

Puller: Now he's a captain in the Marine Corps now.

Lee: I'm trying to think of who else come through here.

Puller: Had a regiment in Korea. I was in Hawaii ... and it cost me 1,016 dollars to get to Korea. I spent 16 dollars to radio the United States commercially. I sent one to the Commandant, one to the Assistant Commandant, and one to Erskine, the division commander. Told them my 2 years in Hawaii was up; I had advance information I was going to the 1st Division and I'd like to go now ... for Korea. And the reason the thousand dollars came in--I mean the 1400 dollars came in--was that ... of course my family was with me in Hawaii. I had to borrow it there, and I had to pay for them for transportation from San Francisco--from home, see. Of course I got part of that back after I got permanent orders after the Korean War was over. Well anyway, that's what I spent--1,016 dollars--because I knew damn well I was through in the Marine Corps. The war came to an end and they gave me 2 years in the reserve duty, then they gave me 2 years in command of a Marine barracks; and I knew I was through, see. But I knew goddamn well if I got to Korea I wouldn't be through. So I was damn willing to spend that 1,016 dollars.

Well it worked out just like I knew it would. And God! I was flown back from Hawaii to San Francisco, got a plane down from San Francisco to Pendleton, and my orders was to

activate the 1st Marine Regiment. So I got there and reported in, and General Smith says, "Lord help you, Puller!"

And I said, "Well why is that, general?"

He was a brigadier then. And he said, "Well, you've got to activate this regiment of yours in 10 days; only 10 days you've got to be aboard ship. All reserves."

I said, "Well, they're going to be better than nothing!" .So I said, "Where are you going to put this regiment?"

He told me the area and that I'd activate them and then go out to the training area.

I said, "Well let me activate in the training area, general. You tell me I only got 10 days. And it'll take about 2 days to move. Let me go right to the training area today, and I'll go out there and I'll get the quartermaster and I'll get the mess hall set up."

He said, "All right."

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So I called Anderson up, the force quartermaster, and I said, "Andy, can't you meet me at the area the 1st Regiment's going on in?"

He said, "Yes."

I said, "Well have plenty of keys so you can get in the goddamn buildings after we get out there."

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So we went out there. Of course we had three mess halls--a mess hall for each battalion. Well two of the mess halls hadn't been used since the end of the Second War. Well of course they had camibalized those two mess

halls to keep the other mess hall going. But anyway, we scrounged around;
we got enough stuff and got the mess halls cleaned up. Goddamn it!

It was garbage, let's say, from a previous summer's training--reserve training. Well, I did the best I could and I thought I'd stop by Smith's office again that afternoon about 6 o'clock, and he wasn't there; I called him at his quarters. And he said, "Well, I got good news for you."

I said, "What's that?"

He said, "As a nucleus to build your reserves on you're getting four battalions from Pendleton, _____ battalions."

I said, "Well that's a help." So the next morning I was out to this mess hall area again at daylight and I got a detail of working men to do something about it. I came back that noon and see what more information he had.

He said, "I got some more good news for you."

I said, "What's that?"

He says, "You're getting 2,000 men from post and stations." And he said, "If these post and station commanders comply with the Commandant's orders, you'll really be fixed."

I said, "What are the orders?"

He said, "Men that have had previous combat training in one or more of the World War II operations will be given preference." And I got 2,000 of them and there wasn't a man that had been there in less than two landings. I activated that regiment. I didn't say a word. I had 41 staff non-comms over strength. I didn't say a goddamn word.

So when my casualties occurred, Christ! I just had 'em two banked up so they could step right in their places. And

it never has been a regiment like that that I took to Korea. And we were aboard ship in 10 days. And the only training I got: They started ... these stuff started coming in from Washington, see, and also from General Smith what I'd do in 10 days training. I said, "Oh, the only thing I'm gonna do," I'm a great weapons man, "the only thing I'm gonna do is to actually fire every weapon I've got."

Lee: I was just gonna say, "Just shoot your weapons."

Puller: Well you know what happened with those three battalions that came from Lejeune? I surveyed every damn rifle ... no, I take it back. I surveyed every automatic weapon, BAR's, Thompsons, and pistols--I surveyed everyone of 'em. I surveyed 67 percent of the rifles, and those boys were supposed to be battle ready that came from Camp Lejeune, that great FMF.

Lee: I can tell you very frankly they weren't down there.

Puller: Damn right! They still aren't.

So I wrote an official letter about it, and Smith says, "I'm sorry, Lewie, but I can't let your letter go through."

I said, "General, it's none of your goddamn business. I've written this letter and I'll stand behind it. It is the truth. And the Commandant should be told what the hell is going on in the 2d Division at Lejeune." I said, "That'll probably be used before the Korean war is over." Well I talked to my battalion commanders, my four battalion commanders,

and also I surveyed all the guns.

And they say, "Well, we had all of these replacements on hand, and the plan was before we marched out of Camp Lejeune to reissue new weapons. But, they gave us 24 hours to get out of Lejeune and we couldn't do it, "So we did it in 10 days.

And here's another thing: All of these replacements were shipped in by special trucks from Barstow, and I still insisted that we take all our replacements out and fire 'em, see, and I surveyed 37 percent of all the weapons that came down from Barstow that were marked in the cases certified to be ready for combat. And those goddamn civilians up there and Marine officers with them, see, did not a goddamn thing about it.

General Smith wouldn't even let me forward that letter. And I said, "I don't care whether you do it or not, but I'm just putting carbon copies in the mail for the Commandant."

Lee: Which Smith was that?

Puller: O. P.

Q: You brought up one little thing there which occurs to me ... this is going to go back down to the Banana Wars, but talking about tommy guns: The Marine Corps was the first of the armed forces--I think the only one.

Puller: The only one. .

Q: ...that ever made the tommy gun a part of the organizational equipment.

Puller: That's right. .

Q: Of course nowadays the trend is going right back with all these Schmeissens and things--the Russians, the Chinese and the Czeks, so on-- but what was the underlying motive behind the Marine Corps first adopting the tommy gun? Who gave the big push for that?

Puller: Well the man that gave it the biggest push in the brigade down there was Bleasdale, Colonel Bleasdale. Of course he was a major at that time. And he gave it the biggest push.

But the tommy was a very good gun for Nicaragua (cross talk), because just like a shotgun with buckshot is a very good gun in the tropics, too; that is, if you can get all metal cases for the shells.

Q: Another possible reason for that I've heard advanced was that the small percentage of the Marine Corps being detached to the mail guards in 1926 was found that the rifles were not necessarily what the doctor ordered on the train, and the pistol didn't have a long enough range, and there was the possibility of getting the Thompson's; and that's how it was introduced in the Marine Corps.

Puller: Yes, they did use them on .the mail guards. I wasn't on the mail guard duty so I don't know much about it.

Q: Well when did the Thompson first entire the Marine Corps? It was before '26 wasn't it?

Puller: Well the mail guards were in '26.

Q: Yes.

Puller: And we went back to Nicaragua in '27.

Q: Yes, I guess that's right, yes.

Q: The ships' detachments didn't have 'em in '27, I'm pretty sure of that--did not have them when they went into Nicaragua. (pause)

Puller: Well I'd like to know what son of a bitch sold that carbine to the armed forces.

Q: Talking about the mail runs: that's rather funny because .we had a request in the last year--we've had two requests--from the state police down in Kentucky to get surplus or excess carbines. ..

Puller: Christ sake! Give them all you can find.

Q: ...turned over to them. Well, they'll take them, too. But the big reason that they want them is because when they have to go up into the mountains after the moonshiners, the police revolvers don't have the range--they just laugh at them--and what they wanted were the carbines to instill a little bit of fear into the. ...

Puller: Well I don't think the carbine has any more range than the .45 pistol has.

Q: What about with the M2 carbine is automatic.

Q: Yes. Tell the policemen that and the Winchester _____

Puller: You know, I was talking about being in command in .the barracks at Pearl Harbor in '46-8. ...

Q: '48.

.Puller: Yes, '46-8. No! '48 to '50.

Q: '48 to '50. Right!

Puller: Not a damn thing that was in the American papers about any trouble in Korea. But a large segment of the population after the Japs were Koreans ... they imported them out there to work in the sugarcane fields; and of course they all stayed there, naturally. Well, they have Korean newspapers there, Korean language papers. And of course the English newspapers out there all full of Korean, because the news- papers are printed to make money.

Q: Yes. .

Puller: And the Koreans buy'em if they got Korean news in them. So everyone of the English newspapers there have all Korean news. Well Jesus! The first day I was there I picked up a paper and here was all this damn trouble going on in

Korea and Christ! I had heard a little bit about it but not enough to amount to anything. And the papers were just full of it. So that went on for the 2 years I was there.

Well about 6 months before the Korean War started or before we got into it, I picked up a paper one morning and I read this account. It was written by some American newspaperman that was in Seoul when this North Korean battalion north of the parallel fired into the South Korean battalion south of Korea, and the South Korean battalion ran away. So this newspaper knew he had a story, see, so he hires a Cub plane in Seoul and rides down to the town about 20 miles south of the parallel where this South Korean battalion stopped when they took off, and to interview a South Korean battalion commander. So the interview went like this:

"Colonel, why did you and your battalion run away?

Just because the North Korean battalion fired into you."

The colonel says, "Well what could I do?"

He says, "Well it's not customary for a battalion commander and a battalion to run away just because it was fired at."

He said, "But what could I do?"

And the American got sort of mad then, see, apparently from his write-up, and he said, "Goddamn it! I told you it wasn't customary to run away just because you get shot at."

And the South Korean said, "Look here! You Americans activated, trained, and armed us South Koreans, and you armed

us with carbines." Now that is every goddamn weapon they had. They didn't have a machine gun, they didn't have a rifle, they didn't have a mortar, they didn't have a piece of artillery, and they didn't have a tank. The only thing that the South Korean army had were carbines. Well then the colonel continued on to talk. He said, "Now the Russians activated, armed, and trained the North Koreans, and they armed them with good Russian rifles. And again I would like to tell you that when a carbine goes up against a rifle, the only thing for the carbine man to do is to run away." Now there it was expressed in a few words of the great Pentagon building a bunch of bastards that have never been under fire, have never commanded troops--except at Leavenworth.

Q: Yes. Well they're 'gonna run into the same trouble, I'm afraid, with this new wonder the M-14; there's already a lot of static coming up from the troops in. ...

Puller: Well tell me: Now we got out to Korea when it was 25 degrees below zero and the goddamn thing wouldn't even shoot; you couldn't fire a shot out of a carbine. Now has this new weapon that you were talking about, has that been tested out in 25 degrees below zero? Because in Siberia and Russia it gets a goddamn sight colder than 25 degrees below zero.

Q: Well, I don't know whether they've tested it under those conditions but the reports that have come in from the troops

that have been using them, including the ordnance school down here--the people that have been playing around with it--all shake their heads.

Puller: Well I tell you, the first time I saw one of them was right up on the post. I was down at the Ed Center here, and god! He was highly complimentary about it, see, and all these ordnance people were. They had it down there.

And I said, "Boys, you may be right, but I doubt it like hell."

They said, "Why?"

I said, "It looks too much like a carbine to be anywhere worth a damn." And that's exactly what it looks like: a damn carbine.

Q: Well, in addition to that, the M-60 machine gun, we had George Chinn here. The general knows who he is.

Puller: Yes, I know who he is.

Q: The ordnance, so forth. Well, he's probably forgotten more about machine guns, automatic weapons, which other people have ever known in their life. But a captain here who come in here a good deal just to shoot the bull and so on, had been given a job to go out and run some evaluation tests on the M-60; and he kept shearing off firing pins. So he brought it in here; he knew that George Chinn was here, and he said he came in to see what the trouble was~ And we took a table

right over there in this room--a big mess table--and we broke down the M-60 and the German ... we had the Lewis gun and the what, the MG- ...

Q: MG-42, MG-43. .c'~

Q: G.~'x3.h..~ "c. ,. ;,

Q: ... 42, MG-43, which were all weapons that had gone ... when you laid the bolts and the guts out on the table, you couldn't tell which was which--they were so similar--except, as Chinn pointed out, the people up in the Pentagon wanted to prove that they were worth their salaries so that instead of copying faithfully what the Germans had developed as a proven weapon, they had to add something to it. And as he said, there's a built-in malfunction. And he gave it to our custodian, who is a civilian now but is a retired master sergeant who used to run the ordnance shop down here. He said, "Look, Steve," he said, "take this piece of metal down there to the ordnance shop and shear off a little angle here," and he said, "take this thing out altogether and bring it on back." Well he didn't get a slipstick out to figure out the angle or anything like that; he just sort of with his thumbnail said, "Just about like this." And Steve Costa took it down there and put it up on the machine there and tooled it down, brought .it back here, and they took it and, with a firing pin that was already cracked, they fired another 5,000 odd rounds out there and nothing happened--they had no more trouble. So .when Captain Tolbert wrote his report up, he mentioned all

this thing. And the people in the Equipment Board were so impressed but they said to him, "Look! We think you ought to come up to Washington and talk to the people up there and tell them about this." So he went up there

So he went up there to the Army Ordnance. They had a big meeting with a lot of high-priced civilian help around there. And Tolbert made the mistake, as a young Marine captain, of quoting what Colonel George Chinn had said, practically verbatim, which was: he said, "If you can't improvise, at least copy accurately." And at that he said there were about .a half a dozen civilian experts all jumped up and went Upstairs, started looking out the window.

Puller: You know, the Russians got the system: they'd take those goddamn bastards out and shoot 'em, see.

Q: Sure! Certainly they would. .

Puller: I mean, they're the people responsible for that.

Q: And the other thing is the Russians have is they're not afraid to copy.

Puller: That's right.

Q: If they see anything good, by God they use it. Why should they make.

...

Puller: Well, everybody knows that the Army ordnance haven't had a new thought in 40 years.

Lee: Well I still say that goddern Springfield rifle.

Puller: Never make another one like it, see.

Lee: A man that can handle it ... you train a man to handle it, he can handle it all right.

They took and threw them out to the junk pile and civilians, and they even sent them across to the English. Then the English was wise enough to send them back to us for about 50 dollars apiece.

Puller: Yes, after they're all worn out.

Lee: Yes. That's what I said: Wear them out and then sell them back to the American public for around 50 dollars apiece.

Puller: No. This thing of Korea: We aren't fit to go to foreign countries today and advise these people. Now you talk about this great American ... Look at Korea. Can you imagine ... Now I remember.

Q: Look at Laos.

Puller: ...now I have a classmate named Roberts, General Roberts (retired major general in the Army now), and while I had the barracks in Pearl Harbor, he was relieved. He had been out there a couple years ... that May ... in Korea, see. Been commander Korean army out there. So when he got back to Hawaii, he gave one of his newspaper interviews. He got back to San Francisco and he gave a newspaper interview.

Well every thing he said came out in the papers, see. And he says, "I have just come from training the greatest Asiatic army in history." He says, "The Korean army today can march anywhere in Asia (the South Korean army) virtually unopposed." So help me Christ! Six months later the North Koreans came through that outfit like a hot knife through butter.

Q: ~he walks out.

Puller: And why? Because they had nothing but carbines.

Now a South Korean is just a brave a man as a North Korean. I've seen them, I've talked to them. But goddamn it! You've got to give them something to fight with.

Q: Sure. Right!

Puller: They didn't have a bazooka; they didn't have a piece of artillery; no anti-tank; no machine guns.

Lee, let me tell you my machine gun story. When the Army relieved us on Guadalcanal, the Marine Corps loaned me to the Army for three months to go on sort of a Chatauqua trip to every division that they had and all their schools here in the United States. Well, the word was that--when I reported to the Pentagon--well now, here's your schedule; you're going to shove off in 2 or 3 days. But General Marshall, the chief of staff of the Army, had left orders: Before you go he wants personally to talk to you.

I said, "Well goddamn it, I'm ready to talk to General Marshall now. Where is he?" I said, "The sooner I talk

with him the sooner I can go on this expedition."

They said, "Oh, you can't see him till Wednesday, 10 o'clock."

So at 10 o'clock the next Wednesday I was there. And I walked in and Marshall remembered me from when I was at Benning. He was the executive officer down there then. And he said, "Puller, it'll only take about 10 minutes to talk to you, because there's only one thing I want you to get over with to the Army." He said, "The Army people believe that the Germans and Japanese are invincible." And he said, "What are your ideas on it?"

I said, "Well I don't know anything about the Germans. But from my opinion the Japanese are just a little bunch of yellow sons of bitches, and any American can lick three of them if you give them a half a chance."

Lee: That's 7 days a week.

Puller: And he says, "That's exactly what I want you to get over to them. You put that over and let the Germans take care of themselves ... or just tell them what the Japanese are." So I spent 3 months going around telling the Army what the Japanese were.

Anyway, we got through Guadalcanal, and I was back in Washington, see. So while I was in Washington the Marine Corps Headquarters sent a message to the division that had gone to Australia, see: Send a colonel back here immediately

to answer questions about the war on Guadalcanal.

So the division commander got sort of huffy and he sent a message back and he said, "Goddamn it! Puller is there. Why don't you ask him your questions?" They didn't even know I was there, I guess. So they sent for me.

Well, they said I was to report over one morning. They said, "Well we can't get the board together till 2 o'clock this afternoon."

I said, "Why don't you make it one."

They said, "Oh, no. They won't get back from lunch until that time."

Well I walked in before the board there and they had about a dozen officers on it. And they had some young lieutenant colonel--I don't know what the hell was his name--that did all the talking for the board. Well I imagine the reason they had him to do the talking was that none of the rest of them knew what the hell it was about, see. I don't recall his name, but he started in like this; he said, "Now Colonel Puller, the Marine Corps has decided--the order's out--to do away with the machine gun company, and the largest machine gun outfit will be a machine gun platoon. What do you think about it?"

Well, I said, "I don't see what the hell it makes a damn what I think about it. You tell me that the Commandant. ..."

End Tape 3

Puller/Lee- 101

Tape 4

Puller: And I said he'll be a second lieutenant and he can't demand anything, even if he's a first lieutenant. And I said, "When the Commandant signed that order, you tell him that I say he'll never have any more machine gunners. " And he won't."

And he said, "But that's the way you did it on Guadalcanal. As far as we can see, when you landed there a platoon was attached to a company, and they remained there as long.

I said, "Yes. But I had read over your plans for the continuance of the war with Japan, and you intend to attack Japan at the present time through China. " And I said, "On Guadalcanal there wasn't any machine gun terrain where they could be used as they are supposed to be used. But," I said, "when you go to the plains of China you can use machine gunnery as it should be used." And I say, "Why in the hell do you make up your mind--decisions at least--on a god-be kniglitedplace:.like Guadalcanal. "

Q: Perimeter of Defense.

Puller: But here they are, see. (pause)

So you did away with the machine gun company just to the recommendation of some kid there in the Marine Corps Headquarters that came to their decision: Well this is the way they did it on Guadalcanal and allegedly that's right ... never having been to Guadalcanal and never having been to the plains of Asia, see. .

Well what worries me more than anything else is: the lack of a cool weather boot in the Marine Corps. They sent us up to North Korea wearing rubber boots. Well, as I said, most of the time I was up there it was 25 degrees below zero, and we just had feet frozen off by the hundreds. In fact, in the 1st Division they lost several thousand people were amputees. Of course the American don't know that nobody knows it unless you were in Korea or unless even before I told you that. But the Marine Corps lost several thousand Marines in the 1st Division by frozen feet--amputees. Well we went up there wearing these rubber boots, see, and they probably tested them out in Haiti, I imagine.

Q: Got the water out.

Q: Probably in the depot in Philadelphia in summer.

Puller: But before the war was over they came up with the thermal boot, see. Now the thermal boot's all right--your feet won't freeze--but, by God, you can't walk in it. Now here we are about to go to war with the Russians and Chinese in Siberia, and the only thing we can do is when the winter comes is to go in winter housing, because you can't fight a war unless you can walk, see; and we had the thermal boots, you can't march in it. You can make 6, 7 miles a day, less than that. But still we'll spend billions of dollars on a trip to the moon but we won't spend 10 cents getting a field boot you can wear in that kind of weather.

I remember the last thing I did when I was retired down at Lejeune: I went to the Equipment Board they got set up down there and I said, "For-God's sake, fellows, do something about the boot!" Christ! They weren't even interested.

Q: Well there's nothing very sophisticated about a boot. That's the trouble, everybody's talking sophistication.

Lee: One other thing is: Our garrison shoes ruin our feet to start with. They should never have a garrison shoe in the army. The feet is tender when they start in and not properly taken care of, and when you hit the field well the man is down.

Puller: No, I've always claimed that it takes 6 months to trail break a garrison soldier.

Lee: It takes that and then some. Some of them never do get it.

You talk about machine guns: Right here in the-FMF in the H Company of the 2d Battalion, Gilder Jackson had it at the time. Jimmy McHugh had the Machine Gun Company and the special weapons. So they called us down; they were going to take the Machine Gun Company out and qualify it, so I wanted an American aiming circle. There no use in mentioning names, but the outfit went around there and they wanted to set up a machine gun range and none of them knew how to do it. So, to make a long story short, Dewey who was the captain of the

outfit, called me in and said, "You set up the machine gun range. You set up the machine guns. And when everything is ready, let me know." He said, "We'll go out and qualify the men." So I asked for an American aiming circle and a range finder--went down to 10th Regiment to get that in the artillery outfit--we set up the range down there at the foot of the thousand yards butts, put the range finder on the firing lines, got the range, took the American aiming circle at each one of the gun positions, run it through the mill clicks because some of them are spaced 29 inches and some of them 31 inches and some of them 32 according to the Parahola that they swing in~ We armed the machine guns, tightened up the nose planes on them, run them in at a thousand inch, picked up the stray bullets so they'd stay on a paper; and then I got a hold of a bunch of big sugar bags out of the commissary, filled them up half full, and set the pintle on those, floated the two front legs, sandbagged the rear legs, and laid a small sandbag on the front leg. And Christ! They had all kind of patent cast aluminum chained gadgets to clamp the legs in to keep them from vibrating and all that stuff. Some of them had wooden teeth where they clamped the machine gun down. You wanted to know who showed me how to set a machine gun up that way. I told them that was about the only way that I knew; I was ordered to set them up. We set 12 machine guns up on the range down there and qualified the company at 52 percent. Before that they'd been around about 3 or 4 per- cent of the company qualified as expert machine gun.

So it was written up and went through channels and went .to Washington. The next damn thing, I was called in the front office and said, "Did you set up the range?" In the meantime the range had been torn down; that is, the targets had been taken out and the sandbags emptied and the machine guns taken back into the armony.

I said, "Yes, sir. I set it up and was there during the whole qualification and run the line."

Well he says, "How many men fired?"

Well I think there was something like 130 some odd men that fired over the course. And he said your percentage.

I said, "Well, it was somewheres around 52 percent, if I remember."

He says, Well, can you do it again?"

I said, "Why certainly!" I says, "You can take them out and do it again."

Well he was sitting back in a slouched position. He jumped up on his feet in front of the desk. He says, "Well, goddamn you," he says, "you'd better do it again," he says, "because the whole board in Washington is coming down here to watch you." And he says, "By Christ! It'd better be done again." He says, "Was there any phoney work on it?"

I said, "Not that I know of."

He turned around to Captain McHugh there, and Captain McHugh.says, "I was out there." He's the captain of the company. And he says, "The gunner is the one that set it up and he was the one that turned in the reports. I signed them and they went through your office."

Well by God Washington sent down somewheres around about 18 men, and about the only one that I knew in the outfit was Colonel Ashurst; he was a major at that time. So we set the machine gun range up again. We qualified 56 percent of the same men under the supervision of battery commander telescopes lined up in back of each one of the machine gun positions watching the burst and what have you. And well, to make a long story short, the only thing they told me is: It was goddamn lucky for you.

I says, "Well there's nothing lucky about it."

Puller: I don't see why that's any great percentage.

Lee: I know. But everyone in the Marine Corps was an authority on machine guns--an authority on this. As soon as they get into a position, why they're an authority; nobody else knows a goddarnn thing but just that one department. Well when they looked at that sheet ... and I think the first time it went in, I think it was 52 percent of the company had qualified as experts. And that's something that they've never heard of in the Marine Corps before. Well Jesus! Instead of sending down some praise and trying to find out what was new and what would help someone else, Christ no! They come down there and, so help me God, if there had been something phoney about it I'd have got a court martial. .

Puller: No.

Lee: That's the attitude that was taken on the damn thing.

They wanted me to go then to Indiantown Gap where the ...

Puller: Teach the Army, huh?

Lee: ...Basic School, to compete against the ... well, I don't know, Army reserves or someone else there. I told them, I says, "I don't know a damn thing about anything." I said, "Any bunch of bastards that will -line up," I says, "and pass the buck down the line, and then stand on the sidelines to see a guy get a general court," I said, "I don't want a goddamn thing to do with any of them."

Puller: I went to Pearl Harbor in 1926 as a lieutenant. Well the first day I was there when I reported in, the adjutant, Harry Albans said, "Now Lewie, just as soon as you get time in the next day or two, come back in my office. You've got to read over the plans of the defense for the island, to certify you've read and understood 'em. Every officer that comes here does that."

I said, "Well give 'urn to me now. If they're so important I'd better read them now; something might happen before morning."

He said, "Oh, no. Nothing will happen before morning." Well I said, "I haven't got anything to do that I know the rest of the day. I've already reported to my company, and the company commander said there isn't anything to do for

the rest of the day." And I said, "Now is the time to read um."

And God! He broke out the plans of the defense of the island; they weren't even in that safe, see--mimeographed. Well he said, "The main thing is that in case of trouble--foreign_trouble--the Marine Corps furnishes a machine gun battalion."

I said, "Very well." So I read the whole thing through, the part pertaining to the Marine Corps God! It finally took me about 30 days to read the whole damn thing--the Army parts, the Navy parts and things. But anyway I went on back to my company. And next 3 days I never saw a machine gun. I went down to the company property office and said to the property sergeant, "You got any machine guns here?"

He said, "No, sir."

Well, I had a platoon sergeant, pretty good man, I said, "Look here, fellow. I looked at your service record book and I see you've been here 18 months."

He said, "That's right, sir."

I said, "During those 18 months here, have you had any machine gun training?" "No, sir."

I said, "Has anybody in the company and the platoon had any machine gun training during your time?"

"No, sir."

I said, "Have you seen a machine gun since you've been here in 18 months?"

"No, sir."

Well I went back to my company commander. I said, "Captain Curtis, I've read over the defense of these islands and we're supposed to furnish a machine gun battalion. And my platoon sergeant which I believe the few days I've seen him, is an excellent man; tells me he's been here 18 months-- I verified it in his record book; he has--and he says he hasn't seen a machine gun in 18 months he's been here."

So Curtis says, "Now we've got the machine guns; don't try to start anything."

I said, "Very well, if that's how you want it." So I knew the company didn't have any, see, so. I went to the quartermaster. Harry Gammell was the post quartermaster I said, "Harry, you've got machine guns in your store rooms and the rest of the stuff that goes with them for a battalion?"

He said, yes, yes, yes, yes.

By that time I could look across Harry beyond him and see his quartermaster clerk, man named Dickey. (He was killed in Nicaragua during the earthquake down there.)

Lee: Dickey.

Puller: Yes. He was quartermaster clerk. And Dickey made faces at me when I was talking to Harry, see. So I waited around till Harry went over to get a beer, see. And I went over to Dickey, I said, "Goddamn you, Dickey, let me see your litto and machine gun equipment you got here." So he broke it out and said, "Now look here." The only thing he had: he

had sufficient guns and sufficient tripods. He didn't have a water can, he didn't have even a loading machine. The only thing he had was the guns and the tripods.

Lee: That meant no belts either.

Puller: No! He didn't have a belt. Not even a damn box, cartridge box.

So I went back to my company commander and I said, "Curtis, they haven't even got a goddamn thing on this thing." And I said, "Sooner or later something's gonna happen around here." And I said, "Do you mind if I draw a couple of machine guns and tripods, and teach the members of my platoon the nomenclature, breaking down and stripping of this weapon?"

He says, "No! I don't mind it."

So, you had liberty every day there at noon. So I announced that my platoon would get no more afternoons liberty; liberty wouldn't start until 5 o'clock until every man was proficient in the nomenclature and the functioning of the machine gun. So of course then I'd stay there and teach from 1 o'clock to whatever time to qualify these people.

Well, the second day I was on the parade ground teaching school ... the post commander, Colonel Newt Hall ... no, it wasn't Newt Hall; Newt Hall had left then. What the hell was his name? I don't even remember the man's name. He came by and he said, "What've you got there, Mr. Puller?"

I said, "I've got a heavy Browning machine gun."

He said, "You know, I've never seen one of those before." Colonel of the regiment, colonel of the Marine Corps.

Q: '26.

Puller: Yes.

He said, "I've never seen one of those before."

Well, I took one of the guns and went down and showed him how to tear it down, see, and put it back together and a little of the nomenclature. I said, "Colonel, you know. ..."

He said, "Well what are you doing?"

I said, "I'm instructing my platoon in machine gunnery."

And he said, "Well that's very nice. Teaching something?"

I said, "Colonel, do you realize that you're suppose to have a machine gun battalion here in defense of these islands?"

"No, I don't know anything."

I said, "You are." So I went back to Albans the following day, I said, "Albans, did the colonel speak to you about machine gunnery?"

He said, "Yes." He said, "Due to you he raised hell."

I said, "How is that?"

He said, "He came in my 'office and says, 'Puller tells me that I'm supposed to have a machine gun battalion here. Is that so?"

Albans said, "Yes, sir. ' Here it is in the book, the book of regulations." So he also said, "He also sent for the post quartermaster."

And by that time Harry had Dickey working into the fact, see, he didn't have his stuff. So he put in a requisition immediately for everything to go with the machine gun, see. Well, we got it about 6 months later.

The reason I asked you, you were then appointed the machine gun officer of the Marine Corps ... for making 56 percent, see. They made me battalion machine gun officer.

And so I never had trained my platoon; I trained the company and the other companies. We all went over and fired at the thousand yards range. We also fired distance shooting.

So when Pearl Harbor finally cracked open, see, after the Japanese ... It didn't surprise me a bit. I knew what they had coming to 'um for years. In fact, I felt sorry as hell for the men that were killed, but I couldn't help 'em laughing a little bit; not a single general court martial put out--nothing. The only thing they did they Short and Kimmel. And they both went to the retired list; long and faithful service.

Q: Excuse me, general. General Snedeker called and said the dinner is any time between 6:30 and 7:00, and would you come up any time before then whenever you are ready.

Puller: What time is it?

Q: I've got quarter of six, here.

Puller: Well, I guess I'd better go on up.

Is there anything else you gentlemen want, or I can come back tonight.

Q: Well, sir, I feel that we've gotten a wealth of information coming out here this afternoon.

Puller: And that was the extent of machine gunnery on Pearl Harbor in 1926. Silly bastards. .

Q: We just got the duty book from the barracks, that covers the date of 7 December. It was sent it. ..General

Q: Is that a gift?

Lee: I'm gonna loan that to you.

Q: Indefinite loan.

Lee: ..until you locate another.

Q: Oh, okay. That's fair enough.

We'll turn that over to Mr. Long over there who's. ...

Q: General, I can't tell you how much we appreciate this.

Puller: I know.

Q: Especially on top of. ...(cross talk)

Puller: Well, you want to keep this here for awhile?

Q: Could we look through this?

Q: Bring it back to your house? (cross talk)

Tomorrow morning. .

Q: I might take a look at it.

Q: This wraps up the September 25, 1961 interview with Lieutenant General Lewie B. Puller, U.S. Marine Corps (Retired (interruption)

Lee: I can give you a brief idea of the value of aviation as it came into the picture in our Guardia patrols in Nicaragua

Back in August of 1932, the large hacienda owners in the vicinity of Matagalpa and Jinotega, also along the ridge from San Rafael to Yali were reporting high losses in their cattle herd. Well, their Mozos or the Indians that took care of the herd, had trailed the cattle that was driven off and each one of the trails seemed to track towards the Pantasn Valley, which was one of the great open spaces in the northern part of the Jinotega area. Well after about 10 or 15 of the biggest owners had made their most urgent plea for the Guardic headquarters, a patrol was formed and headed for the Pantasma Valley to see if we could cut across any of the trails. As I remember, after one big raid which took place in the Matagalpc area, we cut the trail at the confluence of the Pantasma Rive: flows into the Coco. Now the terrain was heavy wooded: and virgin. And that cattle trail led into the stream and from there it led into oblivion; we just couldn't find a cattle trail in any direction. Now that's a big order by virtue of the fact that those Indians, can pretty nearly trail a mosquito through the foliage down there.

Well we made camp and spent 2 days in hunting down that trail. It was impossible. We hunted down the river, the ridges, circling out for a half a mile at a time, making a complete circle in our patrol. We came back into Jinotega and reported the fact. The next day a plane landed in Jinotega. It was flown by Captain McKitrick. We laid out the map and showed the captain where we'd been, and I was selected to fly with Captain McKitrick over that area to see if we could find the camp. Well, it took us--as I remember--(pause) ... Now Captain McKitrick used Santa Cruz as his starting point. We knew that the bandit camp was somewhere to the west of Santa Cruz, just where we didn't know. But we started out on various azimuths for a distance of around about 6 to 8 miles and returning to Santa Cruz, pick up another azimuth, and away we went. After about the third pass, which, on an azimuth, it practically paralleled the Coca River at a distance of around about 10 miles, we found a large bandit camp which was well hidden in deep rugged terrain, practically covered from aerial view by heavy timber. Now that camp had very close to 32 permanent bandit houses. A permanent bandit house consists of log pole siding with a thatched roof. It was, as I say, about 32 of those permanent houses in that area.

Now by making two passes from Santa Cruz over that bandit camp, checking the watch on the instrument panel of the plane, speed, and the direction from the compass, we located the camp quite accurately. The next thing was how to get in there; there was no trail, it led itself through

somewheres around about 10 to 15 miles of mountain wilderness and about every angle that you could look at the position from, and from the known trails.

We headed back, picked up the patrol, and headed back for the Pantasma Valley; crossed the Pantasma Valley, and picked up one of the creeks. We followed that creek for a distance of around about 8 miles, winding in and out around the steep bluffs that came down ... some of the places were almost at a perpendicular angle to the creek. As I remember, about the deepest place in that creek was about knee deep and around about 10 feet wide. In the wet season it would be impossible--or the rainy season--it would be impossible to move anything through there; you'd have a raging torrent. Dry season ... it was from ankle deep to around knee deep. And we waded that whole patrol down that creek for a distance of 8 miles, but we finally hit a well-defined cattle trail and a well-defined bandit trail leading from the creek. They had used the same entrance as we had used. And that is one of the points of opportunity that was brought out in our patrols, it was the lucky and fortunate part of hitting that creek and the decision to march down that creek instead of trying to cut a trail overland.

As soon as we got out of the creek, as I remember the trail was sheathed in on each side by heavy, dense foliage. Well I immediately got my bare footed boys up front where there wouldn't be any noise, and we slowly picked our

way up through that virgin jungle on that trail. The first thing that we encountered was a bandit sentry standing out on a little point no more than 30 yards in front of me. I stepped back into the brush, pulled one of the points back, and whispered to him to go back and notify Captain Puller that the bandit camp or an outpost was just ahead of us, somewhere around about 30 or 40 yards; and that it could be hit from our left with a small group working through the brush. The captain took Sergeant Torres and around ten men and cut around through the brush to mask the position that I had outlined to him, and sent word back to me to hold my point in position until I thought that he had gained position. Now, though the distances were very short, there was only around about a hundred yards between myself and the captain. And he, notifying Sergeant Torres and around about ten men and circling around about 50 to 60 yards to my left through the brush, took but a very short time.

And I will say that while we were on the trail watching that sentry, that he looked directly in our direction at least a half a dozen times. It seemed as though he was on the super alert.

Torres broke cover from an uphill grade to this point, just about 35 yards from where we were. I told the sentry that was watching the bandit lookout to disregard him. I says now, when we pass him that he can't hit us; he will shoot but he can't hit us because he is uphill, which we had

found out through long experience that those people will overshoot their mark. So about five of us made a rush by the bandit sentry, trying to hit the camp. Now when I say a rush, I mean a rush in the form of a stampede. There was around about twelve made a stampede run by that sentry to see if we could get the camp.

In the meantime the bandit lookout fired one shot, turned to me, and as he did he walked into Sergeant Torres' sub-Thompson with Captain Puller right at his back. We circled this lookout post which was a permanently built house around about 6 foot square. And we found out later that it held two men; one of them did get away.

Now the camp proper we knew must be in the immediate vicinity. So we immediately made a reconnaissance, picked up a wide, well-beaten trail that had been used over a long period of months by the lookouts that had set in that listening post. We made a run down this trail which zigzagged downhill all the way for around about 200 yards; and it terminated right in the center of the main bandit camp.

Now that burst from the sub-Thompson had cleared the camp. The cooking fires were still burning, food was in the pot, all the bedding was in its original position, all the equipment, somewheres around about six head of cattle were tied up. ...And they, by the way, were not range cattle; they were blooded beef. So we knew that we had hit the main

camp which, in turn, it was a supply camp that was supplying food and information a ring of camps that went clear through the Segovias and--I believe--as far as the Honduranian border. We found evidence that the same camp had supplied another concentration or a central camp north of the Cua River--months later. And it was there that the expeditionary force that hit the east coast was assembled north of the Cua River.

Now this camp, although it was a permanent structure, at its position. ...You'd attach little significance to it. But in that position, somewheres about 3 miles south from the Coco River, around 10 to 15 miles due east of Santa Cruz, in that camp we found newspapers that were printed in Leon 2 days before. Now the only way that they could be carried into that camp was through the medium of a horse patrol which was an exact replica of our pony express.

Q: That's at least 100 miles apart.

Lee: Oh, gracious! It was more than that. See here's Leon down here; and that camp was situated right in here.

Now maybe I haven't done enough justice to the campsite itself. That camp was right down in the bottom of a deep ravine that cut in from a broken mountain terrain, heavy wooded; and some of the faces of those bluffs that rose out of that camp were at an angle of around about 30 to 35 degrees; and some of those breaks were steeper than that. There they

had fresh running water and a permanent installation. We later found that the trail in turn led down this wide creek into the Coco River, and they would move up the Coco River a distance of around about 5 miles on a shallow, hard surfaced bottom; sometimes along the shore, which was sandy and clay gravel, for a distance of around 8 miles. There the trail took them into the main trails which led from Quilali on down into Yali. And the direction from Yali was taken over into Esteli, and from there on down into Leon. El Sauce seemed to be sort of a junction/ You must remember that after you come out of the broken, wooded terrain of the Cordillera de Yali and out of the Esteli area you hit the plains where you could make a rapid progress all the way into Leon.

Now this camp was a culmination of more importance than what we have been giving it by just the fact that it was pinpointed through Marine Corps aviation with a Guardia patrol heading in from the information that we got from the aviation patrol.

Q: Well when you requested aviation for reconnaissance purposes, did that come from your area commander, the Guardia area commander, to the headquarters of the air squadron, we'll say, in the capital--Managua?

Lee: Yes. That was requested through official channels by Colonel Matthews.

Q: But you did not normally have assigned to you or attached .to you any aviation. It was strictly an on-call mission.

Lee: That is correct. It was no force assigned to us as a unit. Whenever we had an area that we wanted to look over and to make a reconnaissance in--an aerial reconnaissance--the Marine aviation unit in Managua lent us every assistance that they possibly could. And they flew in weather that was really adverse to the type of plane that they had at the time.

Q: What means of communication did you have with the plane once it was airborne? Were you entirely dependent on panels? Or pickup?

Lee: None whatsoever. From the time that we left the field in Jinotega until we returned to that field, we had absolutely no communication with that flight. The thing is that the plane commander would outline the section of terrain that he was going to cover. The patrols would be in a standby position and the probable time of return would be noted. Now if the patrol plane didn't return at that time, obviously we'd know that something had happened and the patrol would immediately head in that area to try to ascertain what had happened. Fortunately, those emergency measures were never used; they never had to be.

Q: I should think it would have been very difficult in an actual occasion where you had air support for the pilot of

the plane to have distinguished between the bandits and the friendly forces, particularly in low level strafing or dive bombing.

Lee: The planes were never used for that purpose.

Q: I see. Strictly reconnaissance.

Lee: They were never used for strafing or bombing. The only instance that I know of where they were used for bombing was in the Esteli area, the area in around ... let me see the Tuma River area when Blandon and ... what's the name there. ...

Q: El Cordera?

Lee: No. That was here. (pause) It was one of the boys up there. I can pull his name out later on.

He came down in through the area on a mounted patrol in the Guardia ... patrol took out after him, and the aviation came up and bombed out that mounted patrol. And they did a tremendous amount of damage; they just tore that patrol all to pieces. There was absolutely no way of knowing how many casualties that bombing committed. The place was northeast of (pause) it would be to the west of Los Angeles, which was to the north in the San Antonio area; it'd be just south of the Mount

Now the planes picked up that mounted patrol which amounted to somewhere around about 75 or 80 mounted bandits all of them coming from the northern area. (pause) Miguel

Angular Ortega came out of the mountain regions in around Somoza in what we call the northern area, into Pueblo Nuevo. And he drifted down into La Concordia, he hit in south of Jinotega and come across by Matagalpa on over into the rich coffee section. The Guardia picked up his movements. And as he made a turn to swing north through the mountain regions, he picked up enough mules and horses to mount his patrol. And believe me they were superbly mounted. Now his main object in making his patrol was right at the height of the coffee season, and he had visions of a tremendous amount of monetary loot from the coffee haciendas and also money and equipment from the various cattle owners through that region.

Now there's a small Guardia patrol here and there along the line from the northern area into the central area to pick up and cut across his trail. The news was sifted in to the central area, into Jinotega, so we could pick up his back trail in fine shape. But it seems though the news of his whereabouts was somewhere around 3 and 4 days in getting to us. Through fear and intimidation the natives were afraid to bring in the information by virtue of the size of the patrol and the threats that were made to them. So we finally got three patrols in the field from the Jinotega area. The aviation from Managua were notified, and they came up, cut the area that we had marked out, and picked up the bandits when they were actually enroute. Now the bombing lasted for spasmodically for around maybe close to an hour heavy at times, then would slacken off.

Now you must remember that the picture of the mounted patrol was somewhere around about a hundred animals, stretched out on a single trail in a heavy wooded area. Some of the trail led through deep ravines, some of it pretty close to a ridge top. Now those aviators had to go down below the ridge for some of their bombings; some of the fire was coming from above the planes at times.

Now for the value of the bombing and how much it actually accomplished: There is no way that we can properly evaluate the damage. We ran across 10 or 15 horses that were killed outright; the saddles were on the animals. That meant that the bandit that was riding that animal was a casualty--either dead or wounded. He in turn was taken off by his other ...
Q: Companions.

Lee: ...patrol mates, and we never could find out whether there was one dead or two dead or three wounded, or exactly how many were actually killed and wounded in that contact. But it did do this: It wounded so many animals and so many pack animals that were loaded down with loot in the form of clothing, grain, rope, blankets, medicine; it wounded so many animals that it slowed that pack train and that mounted patrol down so that we could get on that trail and overtake them.

Now the ultimate was that after we had made contact with those people, we put them on foot in that heavy wooded terrain, we put them on foot, scattered them so that their trail

was absolutely impossible to pick up; blood trails leading in many directions. We took over as much of the loot as we could in the form of beans, rice, blankets, dynamite bombs; and we mounted every man of our 40-man foot patrol, and rode back in to Jinotega with 15 pack animals, somewhere around 20 some odd rifles, and the blankets, dynamite bombs, and other loot that had been collected.

Ortega ... we found around about a month later, had brought his small group back into the area of Telepaneca. But in the meantime he had lost so much prestige that his men had practically deserted. He left to make his raid with over a hundred men and returned with less than twenty. Now that doesn't mean that the difference in there was killed or wounded; many of them deserted for lack of prestige for not carrying out the promise of wealth and grandeur that they were supposed to have received in this area. So that it was a despoiling of a reprisal led by ground patrols, coordinated from a central area, working in conjunction with the aviation, reconnaissance, and bombing missions from Managua. The overall picture of the engagement was excellent from a standpoint of the Guardia and aviation action in the terrain that they had to work on, and the admittance of pertinent information that would have helped the directing of more efficient method of gaining the contact. We had to do everything down there the hard way.

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Q: Would you care to comment on the organization of mounting out ~a typical patrol at the time.

Lee: Well, that is a fine question. And if I could draw you out a worded picture of the way that a patrol was originated and the way it was brought out. ...The first thing: During the time that I was with Company M, Captain Puller--who is now General Puller--commanded that outfit. He didn't direct it, he didn't lead it, he commanded it. When we had bandit information in the town, it was circulated through the town first and then would eventually get to the Guardia headquarters. When it got to the Guardia headquarters the captain was called into the office and told there is information of a patrol in such and such a place. Now tomorrow morning you get the company together and patrol that area and see what you can find out. The reply was, "Aye, aye, sir!" This may be anywhere in time from 8 o'clock in the morning until four in the afternoon. If it was after four in the afternoon, the word would come directly to the captain through the ... he'd notify the adjutant that the patrol was leaving in a half hour and maybe we'd get back in 20 days and maybe it would be 25 days; with a sharp patrol we'd be back in 10 days.

The way that he operated was this: He'd get a hold of the first sergeant, "How's the men?"

"Fine."

"Good. Can you have them ready in 10 minutes?"

"No, sir. It would take twenty."

"Then have them ready in 20 minutes."

"Well it's impossible to find so-and-so and so-and-so and so-and-so; they're out in one of the barrooms or they may be at their home." See, the married Guardia is the same as .we had in liberty towns.

"Well, round them up."

"Well he couldn't possibly make it; he was very drunk."

"Put him on a pack mule; he'll sober up in 4 or 5 hours. We need him. Good machine gunner.

It didn't make any difference what condition that patrol was in when it left town, just so it cleared town. Then he'd say to me, "Lee, I guess. ..."

End of tape 4

Tape 5

Q: We'll take it from where Puller was talking to you.

Lee: When Captain Puller would send for me he'd say, "Lee, how soon before you can clear the patrol?" He'd already spoke to the first sergeant, activated the first movement on this. The first sergeant knew that when the captain let out a war whoop the best thing to do was to grab as many men as possible and get the men together first. I would ask him how many days. The answer was generally twenty. So 20 days ration would come out: rice and beans, lard, some brown sugar if we had it, coffee--that was the patrol ration; we had nothing else to go on. That was packed in ammunition or wooden

kerosene boxes, put on the _____ of the mule; and each mule carried around about 80 pounds. A mule is capable of carrying twice that weight. But the thing is, the way that we traveled and the terrain that we traveled on, and the varied food that the mules had to forage on, we didn't carry any forrage whatsoever for our mount--or our pack mount. That determined the amount of weight that we put on the animal. In the dry season we'd put around 60 pounds on it. In the wet season when there was plenty of forrage we'd put around 100 pounds on a but seldom over that. Another thing, we kept our mule train lightly packed so they could move in a hurry in an instants notice, and by the same token so that it could be utilized in carrying back the wounded if .we ran into adverse conditions.

Now another picture that I want to bring out: The thing is the patrol itself. The patrol itself consisted of a group of enlisted men that came from every walk of life that there was in Nicaragua. Some of them were the mountain boys that come in there barefooted; some of them come from the college at Leon. They were men that came from the various families of business establishments and a blue collar group that come from artisans and mechanics in the larger cities. Now they banded together in the Guardia, and they had esprit de corps that if it was held and sustained by their officers, they had a unit that was just second to none. I actually believe that the Nicaraguan Indian can stand just as much on the trail as

any troops in the world. And if he is taught to shoot--which we did teach those men to shoot--he can do just as well as any human that ever shouldered a rifle. If he's given the proper equipment and the proper leadership he'll go anywhere, and it was proven that he would and did do that. Now many people question the success of Company M. Why would a man be found at the Quatell door under full marching orders with his all of his Guardia equipment, including his rifle and bayonet, and when interrogated by the sergeant of the guard and the officer of the day on who he was and what he wanted, was informed that he had walked from Managua to Jinotega to join Company M. Now if that had happened on one occasion, you would think that you had a fanatic or a lad that was slightly cracked. Those things are just not done in the military service. But when you have men coming from all parts of the country to beg admission to a combat unit, where the word has been circulated over the grapevine by word of mouth that would attract those Indians into Jinotega to join Company M, there is something that has been formulated there that doesn't appear in other parts of the country or in other departments of the Guardia.

Q: You're the only separate detached company, so to speak, were you not?

Lee: We were what is known as the "Mobile company." Now if you could sit down and listen to the tales that some of those

Indians would tell each other, it would go along like this: He says, "I was walking along slowly thinking about Maria, and by God we heard a shot. And then there was many of them." He says, "The first thing that I did was to take a look at the captain." He said, "I couldn't see him." He said, "I took a look for the lieutenant. I couldn't see him either. Somebody else says, 'This way.' So I go that way. And you know he says, "They were actually running right into where they were firing." He says, "Now would you believe that?" He says, "With my own eyes I saw the captain running right straight for that man that was shooting at him."

Q: What was a new experience for him.

Lee: Now that in itself was something ... a picture that was absolutely could not be seen--a white man in a Guardia uniform running right straight into a firing line was something that they could not understand. But they did understand and were loyal enough to follow. Now after they had made about three or four of those so-called charges, then the word started to spread.

Now some of those people come in in an unbelieving attitude to see if it was the truth, and others came in there for pure loyalty to and the romantic and exciting part of actually taking part in a battle with Company M, just the same as a matador will stand in the ring in front of thousands to aggravate a bull with a red carpet in the ultimate killing.

Q: Well there's certainly no financial motive involved because they were not allowed obviously to lose, and their pay was probably what, 10 dollars U.S. a month, or would it have been 10 dollars a month?

Lee: There was no such a thing as pay. You could not pay an Indian in Nicaragua anything. That was below his dignity. Now the thing is: When he came to the pay table he was on the winning side. In other words, he won so much each month from the government; he was not paid a monetary rate. He gained or won so much from the government, along with his clothes and his food.

Now that is another point/I want to bring out. Regardless of where we were, or under what conditions we were traveling under, whether it was in the mountains in the cold rain or whether it was down in the Tewa Caliente on the plains that were dried out in the desert lands, we saw at all times that our men were properly clothed, and that when they had food, we had food.

Now, the story that I like to tell about Captain Puller on feeding his Guardia patrol: One of his main assets was to roll a Bull Durham cigarette, at the same time watch the cook who is building up the fire. Now the strange thing is, you'll say, "How could he build a fire in the wet season? You've been in a downpour of rain for around 6 and 7 hours for around 3 and 4 months straight." Well very frankly, gentlemen, we had Indians up there that could find dry wood where .

there was none. And I never remember for one day in a period .of 4 years on what I call an intensive patrolling, not only with the Guardia but with the Voluntaria group, where we didn't have two hot meals on the trail. I think that was one .of the secrets of keeping our men in the condition that they were in and remaining in the condition that we were in ourselves. And I think that was one of the big items that sustained the morale of the patrol and it put us in a position where we were advertised by the men that were in it. It was one of the big recruiters of the service.

The point that I wanted to reiterate was that the new lieutenants coming into the Guardia--most of them were enlisted men or second lieutenants in the Marine Corps being commissioned in the Guardia--and they'd be shoved north, they would have one or two trips with us, with Company M as an indoctrination patrol.

Now one of Captain Puller's favorite stunts on a youngster: When the chow line would form the young officer who was just joining the Guardia would immediately step up in front of the line. Well the captain wouldn't be expressive about it but he would call the officer by name, and we'll say that he said, "Mr. Jones, have the mules been fed yet?"

Mr. Jones would say, "I don't know, sir."

The captain would say, "Well would you please check and see they're properly tied and that they have the proper amount of food."

"Yes, sir." Mr. Jones would lay his mess gear down and proceed down to the area where the mules were tied up to see if they'd been fed. Now if the chow line was going through at that time, Mr. Jones would come back and report to the captain that the mules were tied up and fed.

"Now Mr. Jones, how many mules did you count down?"

Immediately Mr. Jones would look at the captain, "Why," he says, "I don't remember, sir."

"Well would you please go back down and count them and be sure that they're all there."

"Yes, sir."

Well by the time Mr. Jones got back, the chow line had passed through in front of the cook; and the cook would just always put a little over a half ration aside for the youngster that was on patrol, the first two or three meals that he was out. Mr. Jones would immediately get back, and he may have to make the third trip down to the mules for something else to see if a certain mule was. ...But at the same time, if Mr. Jones was smart enough, Mr. Jones would also keep his eye .on the captain and he'd see that he was down next to the chow line or in a position where he could overlook it to see that the food was cooked. Now there's no such a thing as properly prepared on the trail, but to see it was cooked on the trail.

Q: Were you able to supplement your rations with wild game?

Lee: Deer, chachulacka, and beef.

And the other thing is: Whenever we knocked a beef, we always paid for it. The price of a beef, regardless of whether it was starved out and weighed 90 pounds or whether it was in a fat condition and 800 pounds was five dollars; that was the accepted price to the Guankclia. And of course the thing that went with it is that if Senior so-and-so did not receive the five dollars gracefully, why he lost the beef ungracefully. So it was all a sporting proposition. I never refused a man five dollars for a beef and I never had any question or any wrangling over the price.

Now in each one of those beautiful weapons that we had, we had steel ramrod to go along with the rolling block rifle and then later on when we got the Springfield krag we had a ramrod attached; that is, the metal ramrod. That was used as a spit.

Now those lads could look a cow right in the face and tell you how many mouthfuls they had ... not only for one meal but it was salted down and cooked up that night and was used for 3 and 4 days on the trail. Now I want to tell you one thing: When you get to where you can smell a patrol by the meat it's carrying, you know that it's getting just about ripe. The meat was sometimes eaten along the trail just as it was, sometimes it was recooked. But the ultimate was that the head, the hide, and the stomach--that is called the mondongo down there in the area we were in--the head, the hide, and the mondongo--and of course that

takes in the hooves--all reverted to the hacienda owner. That in turn was turned into a green packers hide that would be sold for around a dollar, dollar and a half. The head and the hoofs and the stomach which would be turned into tripe and used for food for the people of the hacienda.

Nothing on a cow goes to waste down there: nothing whatsoever.

Q: Well as part of this diet they were able to, as I say, thrive on it but to have sufficient strength to carry on their daily work.

Lee: That is right. I myself started in down there ... we only had two meals a day; that was breakfast and supper. We ate exactly the same rations. And when I say we I mean .the captain and myself, and if there were any supplementary officers that were being broke in or taken along on the patrol, they ate the same as every other man--there was no extras here and there along the line.

Q: And it didn't make any difference whether it was raining or not, you went ahead twice a day and. ...

Lee: We had cooked meals twice a day, rain or shine. Now when I say shine I mean the sun beat in the middle of the day anywheres a temperature up to 112. And it would be just exactly the same as being on a desert; you'd be in a dry bowl in Matera Caliente where there wouldn't be a breath of of air stirring, and everything down there--grass, cattle,

everything that there is in line down there that moves, creeps, or crawls-- is panting in the shade. And by the same token, I've been through the mountain areas there that were heavily wooded where you wouldn't see the sun for 3 and 4 days at a time ... and through the rainy season where it rains every straight day from 1 to 6 and 8 hours, and a couple of hours at night, day in and day out without a let. I've seen swollen streams that were raging torrents where you couldn't move any troops or mounted units across. If you threw a stick in the water it would be carried off faster than a man could run. By the same token, 3 months later you could wade across the place and not go over the top of a 16-inch pair of boots. .

Q: Talking about your provisions for medical supplies and for a test, did you normally have a corpsman or an equivalent attached to a patrol?

Lee: No. the medical supplies that we started out with consisted of quinine, aspirin; and then a *caffé aspirina*, which was no more than a *cafféin* derivative from coffee--a stimulant--for colds; iodine, which was *tinctura iodo* crying ink; and we always carried a white salve which was zinc oxide ointment; and we always carried plenty of bandage, both gauze and linen.

Now the treatment that they got at first was when they were shot, the first thing that they did was to wash out the

wound with a little boiled water. Next thing comes the iodine; next thing comes the bandage. Now the more bandage you put on it why the less it would hurt. Anything that was a skin wound, if you could just keep the infection out of it would heal up and ready to go in around about 4 to 5 days ... dry season; couple of days more in the rainy season. It would take around about a week in the rainy season for a skin wound to heal up.

Now if a man were punctured, I can give you a good idea of a body shot. We were scouting along south of Yali in the coffee tales. I had two Indians ahead of me. One of them heard a rustle in the trees to the right of us. The action that was taken: "Down teniente, with a hand motion. I immediately dropped to my knees looking to the left. I had heard nothing; he had heard something. He immediately got down on his hands and knees and started looking up underneath the brush as close to the ground as he possibly could. I knew that when he told me to get down that that didn't mean stand up and look; I was down looking with him, a distance of about 3 yards. About 2 yards in back of me the Guardia stopped, leaned over on his rifle. The next thing that happened was one shot. It pinned that Guardia just about an inch above his breastbone. The bullet just missed his backbone and came out underneath the left shoulder bone. The only thing that it punctured was his lung. He fell on his

After the contact was over, which lasted around about ... I should say somewheres around about 5 minutes, we charged the firing line. The first sergeant shot the man that delivered the shot, who by the way was a 14-year-old boy with a krag rifle; we captured one prisoner, and I believe there was one or two others wounded that were carried off. We came back to our own.

Now the picture is a Guardia laying on his face in the trail. The first thing we did was roll him over. I felt him; his heart was still beating. We opened up the bottle of iodine and poured the iodine in both front and back openings of the wound; the bullet didn't mushroom any, didn't hit a bone--made two clean holes right through it. You just poured the iodine in it. I took a linen bandage that was around about 8 inches wide; we took those bandages and strapped him up in an X-shape--out over the shoulders, around the chest--and bandaged him just as tight as we possibly could bandage him. He was still unconscious. The first sergeant and the rest of the men said, "For Christ sake! The lieutenant has gone crazy. We're carrying a dead man." They wanted to put him on the mules.

I said, "No. We're going to carry him." So we made an improvised stretcher out of a couple of poles, pinned the blankets on there, folding the blanket over and running sharp- pointed sticks through the blanket, pinning it on there; put that man in there. We carried him on shoulders, relieving .

each other on the carrying job up over the mountain ranges .into Yali a distance of around about 60 miles. From Yali to Jinotega he traveled in the bed of a bull cart-- that's a two-wheeled vehicle with no springs on it--over a rough mountain trail. He came down around about 30 miles the first day and made around about 22 or -3 miles the next day; so that means that he traveled around 60 miles in the bed of a bull cart.

In the meantime, from Yali to where I had delivered him into the hands of the Guardia there, directing that he be sent to Jinotega, we cut back through the mountains into the Pantasma Valley and came back into Jinotega by way of Tanayunca and PasaReale. And it was exactly 5 days from the time that I left him in Yali until I reported in at Jinotega. So I come in at Jinotega;the first thing we asked for if this lad had been turned in.

They said, "Yes, he's sitting up."

We went in and took a look at him. Of course the whole Guardia got around him and instead of sympathizing with him the questions that were asked him is, "Well what does it feel like to be hit by a child? How intelligent can you be after listening to what the captain has told you? How watchful must you be to know enough to shoot back? What do you use your ears for?" Those were the jibes that were handed to him while he was in convalescence in the sick bay. And of course they were given and taken in the best of humor and in good jest.

Well, to make a long story short on that: In another 5 : 'I days he came around to me and he said, "You realize that it will be 10 days before I can have any money."

I said, "Yes."

He says, "The doctor informed me that it was customary to have leave when you come from the hospital." He says, "Can I go home? "

I said, "Well, if you don't want to stay too long we can see that you get home all right." So the next part of the conversation was, "Whereabouts do you live?"

Well he lived alone in Managua. So there was a continual truck train traveling back and forth from Managua to Matagalpa carrying coffee out during the coffee season. So it was a cinch for the Guardia to go down and crawl on one of those 5-ton trucks to get a free ride as far as Managua. So the thing was it was still on the money part of it and the permission to go. He said that 5 days would be enough and that five dollars would be enough. So I gave him the five dollars and I gave him 50 cents extra for a little drink of guao, which we called a salut3. vida. So he took off; and sure enough he went home, spent 5 days, and was back up there; pay day was at the table, turned over the five dollars that he had borrowed to go home on, and the next patrol he was on it. And you talk about a smarter lad ... you never saw one in your life. And that lad stayed with us for over 2 years; and I'm telling you on the trail he was dynamic. It woke him up and believe me he woke everyone else up that was in sight or hearing on it.

Q: Well in any event you had 12 casual ties; one or more .men were killed. Was it customary to remove the body or sometimes, I presume, you had to bury them on the spot and attempt to conceal the grave, possibly return for reburial. But what normally happened?

Lee: Well, if we were in hiking distance of a hacienda or a landowners burial ground, we carried the Guardia in there to that burial ground that were killed on the trail. That happened in three instances. The only instance that comes to my memory where a man was shot outright, was in the Lindalugare area where we were over a hundred miles away from our base, we buried that one Guardia and marked his grave on the map. It was secreted away from the trail and away from the bandits so it couldn't be found and mutilated after it was dug up and mutilated by the bandits in their area. Now the other man that we had shot was in the Cordillera de Yali, and we carried him a distance of ... well, I would say in a line about 50 miles and buried him in a grave-yard at Corinto Finca. Another one I remember being buried in San Rafael and afterwards moved by his parents.

The wounded were treated on the scene of contact, and we later had, as the medical department, a trained native corpsman. We picked him up and took him on the trail in the patrol with us. But at the start of the patrol, we had no corpsman and no doctor.

Q: Colonel, we generally got talking about the period here from 1930 through the close of 1932, at which time most of the patrolling activity on the ground--as I see it--was conducted almost exclusively by the Guardia. What were the regular Marine establishments, the ground troops, the ground forces of the 2d Marine Brigade doing at that time? Were they primarily on garrison duty in the principal cities or were they simultaneously patrolling but in a different area of Nicaragua?

Lee: Well, the Marine units were reduced from patrol duty to garrison duty and they in turn only garrisoned the main lines of communication. Now the place that I'm most familiar with is the central area. We had an establishment up there, a Marine post, which in turn had some posts that run into San Rafael and Yali. Each one of those posts were manned by a captain, so many lieutenants, and so many men which could throw out a 10 or a 15 or 20-man combat patrol. As the Guardia came into being and moved into the area, the Marine .garrison was first reduced from a patrol unit to a garrison unit, and then the outpost was turned over to the Guardia and the Marine officer ... either an enlisted man or Marine .officer that was an officer in the Guardia ... turned over to Guardia officer and the Guardia patrol; and they, through that system, sprunk back into the main area.

Q: But they were always there to assist you or for reenforcing purposes if, per chance, the situation got out of hand.

Lee: They were. But along towards the last of it why when the brigade pulled out that just left a token in charge of the rail lines--Managua and right on down to Corinto.

Q: And I presume a detachment over in Puerto Cabezas on the east coast.

Lee: Puerto Cabezas they had small Marine outfit.

There was another phase I was going to pick up and carry on from that chow line. Now, we say that Mr. Jones got back up from the mules, when he got to the chow line why he would have a substantial ration but it wouldn't be a full ration. So he would kind of raise an eyebrow when he looked at the way that the beans and the rice had been cooked, and the cook would generally look up at him with a smile and say, "Would you like more?" in Spanish.

Of course Mr. Jones might not understand the fellow. He'd turn around and he'd ask one of us what he said. So he'd say he asked if you'd like to have some more. Mr. Jones would say, "Why certainly!"

Well the cook would say, "I'm very sorry but we have no more."

Q: "Si, si, _____ (?) ." "Yes, we have it, but it's all gone."

Lee: Yes. Mr. Jones wouldn't have to count the mules many times before he found out that his place wasn't at the head of the chow line.

The thing is that the men had to do all the work. And the other thing is that the country belonged to them; and we were down there just supervising, and we stayed in that capacity. And I think that that is one of the things: That two hot meals on the trail and to put the Guardia in the line where each one could see what the other one was getting and to keep those forces divided up equally among _____ I think it is one of the biggest morale factors that we have now. And we never ... I'm telling you in that whole time we never had dissension in that company. And that company was called out ... We weren't notified to go on patrol the next day.

Captain Puller's main objective was to do everything as fast as you could do it, and in that way you'd have time to do something else. Now if we were headed, we'll say, for a 20-day patrol, well why leave at 8 o'clock in the morning when you can leave at sun-up or when you can leave at 6 o'clock that evening.

It was sort of an unwritten law in the bandit country and in the Guardia section that they just didn't march at night unless it was an absolute necessity. There was no patrolling from sundown to sun-up unless it was an absolute necessity. I can bring out quite a few of the necessities:

.

When we were in an area and we wanted to throw the bandits off the trail and there was enough moonlight so that we could see the trail, we would make a normal camp and at the end of the evening where we'd split up to turn in, instead of that we'd move up and march a distance of around 5 or 6 miles out of that area so that the bandits would lose track of where we were. In other words, try to cover our trail through by a short night march. We've done that many times and had been successful in gaining contact through that.

Q: The Guardia camp was never ambushed by the enemy at night.

Lee: Never to my knowledge. Ours was certainly never ambushed at night; never moved in on us.

The other thing is on the patrol itself: When we first started out the Guardia had an idea that they were leaving the quartel; that is, that was the barracks. So therefore all his possessions must go with him. So he would' take along an extra pair of shoes, a couple extra pairs of socks, an extra shirt, an extra this, an extra that. Well, Captain Puller ... if it took someone we'll say, 5 hours to get from Jinotega to San Rafael--that was close by--and we'll say out to Corinto Finca--this is around 16, 17 miles--and it took him somewhere around 2 or 3 hours to make that, why the captain would want to know why in the hell it couldn't be done 15 minutes or half an hour sooner than that. It wasn't put in the form of a gripe but it was just put in the form

Of ... well, it's just too slow; we'll move a little bit faster. Well we kept moving a little bit faster. The first thing you know why the extra clothing was left behind, and the extra blanket was left behind, and the canteen was only .half full of water along towards the end of it. And there was no extra clothing taken along. Pretty soon the shoes were left stocked. We were just traveling light stripped, fast and furious.

Q: Well in these operations apparently the terrain was such .that had you put out flankers it would have slowed down the speed of your advance and would not have been worth it.

Lee: It is. .

Q: On the other hand, by denying yourself the use of flankers it must have increased the dangers of a meeting engagement or an ambush.

Lee: It did. It did, it certainly did. And the other thing that goes with it is that after we had been down there for around about a year on the patrol, we were denied the luxury of electric lights and the sound of radio and the sound of automobiles. And in that medium we became just about as alert as the Indians that were the natives of that area.

Now by reading a trail, you can read that in just about the same ...
(You turning it on or off?) (buzzing noise)

Q: I don't know.

.

Lee: We could read a trail just about the same as the average person could read a newspaper. And some of those men could hear noises and sounds that a white man couldn't think of hearing. There was always some indicator or some element that would give the position of an ambush away, and we were never completely surprised. In fact, I believe that the majority of the ambushes proved to be a greater surprise to the natives than it did to the Guardia by virtue of the fact that as soon as an ambush was laid for us and opened the next thing the Guardia would be on top, the ambush would be permanently destroyed. In thick underbrush a man ... all he has to do is to step out of an ambush position, take about five or six steps in the underbrush, put his head down .and run in a zigzag fashion, and he could just zigzag through that brush clean out of sight in anywheres from 10 yards up to 25 or 30 yards and be completely out of sight or hearing-- scattering in all directions. (You gonna cut that off?)

Q: No, sir, it's still on.

Lee: Some of our river crossings: Those rivers down there were ... dry season, we had no trouble crossing them. In the wet season when they'd become a raging torrent it was a problem to cross the river. One of the most beautiful river crossings that I ever saw in my life was made on the Tuma River. We had a 30-man patrol; we rounded up a bunch of steers, run them into the water, and as they took to the

water each man with a running ... running the steers down .through the gauntlet. When they'd take the water why we'd take their tail. It only took around about 75 or 80 steers to go down through there, and when the last man had cleared in a .40-man patrol, why we just had a river full of bobbing heads, both Guardia and steer. The steer'd get to the middle of the river and the bend in the river, wash the current to the other side, and the steers crawled out, dragged the Guardia out with them. We've been across the river that was impossible to cross. About 3 or 4 days later why the hacienda owner'd come down, find out that some of his steers were on the other side of the river; and when the water went down why they went down and drove them back. No harm done, but the patrol was across.

Q: Would you care to give us, in the remaining time--if you care to--some of the highlights of this operation on the railroad between ... I believe it was Leon and El Sauce at the time that they were completing that spur.

Lee: Oh, yes, yes. That was interesting by virtue of the fact that we were all on the way home. And it was just the same as coming home from school. We came home from school by landing in Managua. The patrol was all done. From now on all we'd have to do is just to sit around the barracks and tell all the new recruits just how we did it, when we did it, and the way it was done.

The next day after we landed, the order come down we were to get a patrol to head for El Sauce. That at the time was the head of the rail section, and the president and the jefe of the Guardia wanted to sort of dedicate that railhead because they had pledged the people of that area that it would be in on that date and the people didn't believe that it could be done.

Q: This was President Moncada or President Sacassa.

Lee: That is President Moncada and Sacassa was the jefe in ... that is he was the same as the chief of staff to General Moncada.

Well the bandits ... or the opposing group collected there at El Sauce. So the first thing it was thousands of men that were cleaning up the grading of the railroad and the laying of the ties and the rails; it was a regular operation that was carried in the same method that they lay rails in the States with the exception that it was all hand labor instead of using heavy equipment.

Now the bridges that were built across were all made out of heavy timber that was cut practically on the spot. So when the order come out for the patrol, well that was going to be the last patrol in Nicaragua. So they looked for Captain Puller and Captain Puller was on leave. So they pointed the finger at me and said, "You're it! You can have anyone that you want." Now that to me was one of the most glorious

field days that a man could ever have. I was in a position where I could select any type of weapon that I wanted, any number of men that I wanted, and any officer that there was that came from the entire Guardia Nacional of Nicaragua. Every Marine non-com and every Marine officer that had served with the Guardia was there in the camp, and I was given a choice of any man or group that I wanted.

The patrol was selected, the ordnance was laid out, and the ... you might say out of a hundred requests I picked the officers as Bunn ,Pulver, Hayes, Stevens, Snyder, and Dr. Lynch. And we got a hold of one native that didn't come with us. And they said, "Well now, who is going to lead the patrol?"

There's only one man; that was Captain Puller. Captain Puller stepped into the picture, he flew in from Panama. We had the train set up to leave to coincide in arrival at El Sauce at 5 o'clock in the evening, laying over one night in Leon. Captain Puller stepped out of the plane, he just said, "Have you got my equipment with you?" .I said, "It's right here, sir." He stepped right into the train; away we went to Leon. From Leon up to El Sauce.

Now as we neared El Sauce just outside the Point of Reale, about 2 1/2 miles ... or it may have been 3 miles, the first thing that happened was: a burst of machine gun fire hit the train. The next thing ... God only knows how much automatic fire opened up on both sides. One Guardia was

shot right in the car and two of them were wounded.

Now in going up the line we had one boxcar ahead of the passenger cars, and that boxcar was put on there in case the rail had been mined. It would blow the boxcar up and ... the engine was on the rear, pushing us out. Well I was standing on the boxcar with a pair of binoculars watching the road and watching as much of the terrain as I could. Stevens came up and sat on the back of the boxcar as we were going across the bridge because he wanted to get some pictures of the bridge. I looked up the rail and there I spotted two men with rifles; passed the word to Stevens, Stevens down the ladder on the boxcar and into the car. I in turn yelled for my sergeant. I says, "Give me the automatic rifle." Well he, in between the two cars, he reached up with the automatic rifle and handed me the automatic rifle. I set the sights on the automatic rifle, raised up. ..that is off hand, to take a shot at a man that was running across to our right off the trail. At the next instant there was a ring of fire that opened up on us. And so help me God I'm telling ... you that you couldn't tell how many weapons they opened up. And the rifle fire for the initial volley was certainly some- thing; most of it hit on the rail and in the road bed.

I assumed the position on the right hand side of the rail which was left facing north, and opened up fire. Captain puller jumped out to the right of the rail, Bunn followed him with the Guardia, and they strung out in a circular motion

around that end. I made a movement around the left with Pulver and Snyder. We cleared those two sections. And when those two sections cleared, on horseback there was a cloud of dust that went clear to the heavens on that dry road; it looked as though a cavalry of a thousand men had gone down that road. We found out later that there was more than 300 mounted and armed, and that there was a following of another three or four hundred that were just hangers-on and wanted to be in the show to stop the president from coming in.

Well the ultimate of it is that we picked up our dead and wounded; we moved them on in to San Juan, into Puerto Nuevo from El Sauce and made the report. The president did come in, was received, and did dedicate the railroad, and did complete his promise to the people in that area. We in turn folded back on into Managua, turned in our gear, turned over our troops to the native officers that had been previously trained, and on the first of 1933 we had entrained for Puerto on our way home.

Q: That wraps up the interview on 26 September 1961 with Colonel William A., Lee, USMC (Retired) .

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