

Interview with Major General Ford O. Rogers, USMC (Retired)

Conducted by Oral History Unit, Historical Branch, G-3 Division,
U.S. Benis

Headquarters Marine Corps, by interviewer Bozls M. Frank
at General Rogers' home, Lone Star Farm, Gainesville, Va.

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Q: I understand that you had originally wanted to talk about World War I. I thought this was a good chance to hit you up on several other things of which you would have knowledge. Just to start things off, on the batch of material I sent you on Okinawa, volume 5, we had some comments, and particularly about the organization of TAF (Tactical Air Force). I understand you were Chief of Staff of the Air Defense Command under General Wallace, right?

General Rogers: Yes.

Q: He never commented, unfortunately. Maybe he's in rough shape.

General Rogers: No. His wife got into a great deal of money, and all he does is play golf now. That's all he does is play golf!

Q: Nothing wrong with that. Well, you know Toots Henderson, General Frederick O. Henderson, artillery man, naval gunfire type?

General Rogers: No, I don't think I do.

Q: Well, he's quite an historian on his own. He made a comment that, what happened was, Second Marine Air Wing was established under the 10th Army in November '44. I think it may have been just a little before you got there.

Rogers: Yes. I got there January 1st.

Q: That's right. And the rest of the TAF staff was not organized until late in November. By that time much of the earlier basic and important pre-invasion planning had been completed, the Iceberg Operation, without TAF participation. Do you know any reason why they weren't ready and they couldn't have?

Rogers: No, I have no knowledge whatever. See, I had been in South America, and when I got out of Peru, I went right straight out to Honolulu as fast as I could get. When I came out of Peru, I think I had three days in the States, from the time I landed in Miami and got up to Washington, and caught a plane -- no, I went out by train, because my wife wanted to go with me. Then I left ^{Francisco} San Francisco and went with Mulcahy, who was back on Christmas leave, and we went out to Honolulu, and got there January 1st, I think. Mulcahy was set up at that time. As I remember it -- of course, there had been operations before I got there -- Perry Farnell, who's now dead, was Mulcahy's operations officer, and he'd go over to the 10th Army every day, and come back, and have a flimsy of what had gone on that day, and

the reports from the different outlying stations who would participate in an invasion. Parmelee would get that from ^{the staff of} Simon Bolivar Buckner, and we knew very little about it, except the preparations.

Q: Well, was the fact that TAP and ADC were not involved in this planning -- did this affect their operations?

Rogers: The fact ^{is} that they were let in on the knowledge, but I don't think they had anything to do ^{with it} -- I don't know about the ground troops, but as far as aviation went, I don't think we had anything but Parmelee's knowledge of the plans that were made. He'd come back and tell Mulcahy what he'd learned that day. Mulcahy hardly ever went over to the 10th Army headquarters over there.

Q: That was another question I was going to ask you later. Well, did the fact that TAP was left out, or just an information addressee on all that stuff, did this affect operations at all later?

Rogers: No.

Q: Because TAP actually had a pretty good record.

Rogers: Yes. It didn't affect operations at all.

Q: I know Sherrod wrote something about the TAP pilots and ADC pilots

were unhappy -- quoted someone, I don't remember who -- ~~the~~ the fact that during operations at Okinawa, "AF" pilots were unhappy to go out to fly combat air patrol and see carrier pilots come in getting close support.

Rogers: My knowledge was that all of our CAP ~~work~~^s, if they didn't engage any kamikazes, ~~they~~^{helping} came back and used up all their ammunition in close support, ~~was~~ our own close support people who were primarily operating ~~on it~~^{the}. ~~Now~~^{No}, I don't remember any cases of the carrier pilots coming in, ~~because~~ because Megaw had the close support.

Q: -- he had the Landing Force Air Support Control Unit.

Rogers: Yes.

Q: You recall he was head of the LFASCU and he had two, one with each corps, and then he had the CASCU on the command center.

Rogers: Yes. Megaw sat most of the time over on the ship with Kelly Turner. Then he had some very good units. Bisson ~~had~~^{commanded} all the five or six radar companies that were scattered ~~on one of these~~^{over the area} ~~little islands, and they were off of Haha Misaki, and all around Okinawa. Bisson was the overall commander of those five or six radar companies.~~^{one was at}

Q: Yes, the Air ~~A~~^{Warning} support.

Rogers: Yeah, ~~AI~~, AHS.

Q: Well, now, I was on Okinawa. I remember that the carriers came in. As a matter of fact, I was with the 1st Division at division headquarters, and I remember after division headquarters had been set up --GP set up by Kakezu Rido, --Navy carriers came in on a strike and hit our own people. ~~the~~ Pedro del Valle raised *hell*

Rogers: I know. And then of course we had that unfortunate thing where one ~~of~~ *pilot* -- I think it was one of Toby Munn's boys, or it might have been one of Bob Dickey's boys, got the coordinates mixed up. That was when we were shoving south so fast. Shot that whole truckload of Army people up. Killed a whole bunch. I had to be on the investigation of this. The boy came back and panicked and lied about it, and then he admitted it, and it was pretty much of a mess. *they was the time* Then when this goofy Army boy shot up that no good division ~~arm~~ *arm* ¹ that had been *knocked out of the line & sent north*

Q: That was pretty rough. Now, going back to the use of carrier planes for close air support, and the ~~main~~ *marine* planes for --

Rogers: CAP?

Q: CAP -- earlier, there had been some attempt to get Marine planes on carriers. Again using Sherrod as a source, he quotes a report that Admiral Durgin made, *The fact* ~~to the effect~~ that nothing save Marine pilots any greater capability for close air support over Navy carrier pilots;

they all had the same basic training, and there hadn't been that much employment or utilization.

Rogers: Well, I would only have an opinion on that. I would say that our people were far better trained in ^{reading} ~~finding~~ coordinates and land observation than the boys off the carriers, because way back in the dim distant past, the boys from the carriers couldn't navigate over land to save their lives. I'll never forget, in 1923, I flew from San Domingo ^{along with} -- a boy named Palmer, ^{we had} ~~and I took~~ two OHs and flew from San Domingo to the St. Louis air races, and then went on, on Colonel Turner's request. ^{to an} ~~They were having~~ an American Legion Convention in San Francisco, ~~and~~ ^{We} we were going ~~to~~ there just to represent Marine aviation. ~~At~~ ^{At} San Diego, Palmer and I -- neither one of us had ever seen the West Coast in our lives -- ^{Took off before} ~~there were~~ about 10 Navy planes ~~took off, and the two of us, and we were the only two that~~ got to San Francisco. They scattered all over California, ~~because~~ ^{because} they'd been flying over water, with that little old navigation board, ^{could not read a map} and they simply got lost. ^{a few} They finally got in -- ~~some of them struggled in.~~ Most of them piled up, though. That was in '23.

Q: Even in those early days, Marine pilots were trained? Well, of course, they'd all had basic training and all had basic --

Rogers: -- yes, and we'd been flying over land entirely. Our initial carrier operations were ~~very sporadic~~. ^{not good,} We had very little. ^{and}
 Navy indoctrination

when we got on a carrier, ~~of course~~, we dumped -- fell in the water ^{often}
^{the time} ~~when~~ ^{then} Oscar Brice lost his whole damned squadron, fell in the water, ^{cut off gas &}
~~and other people~~. Sandy (Sanderson) went over the side two or three
times. Ferrell went over the side. *also.*

Q: Sanderson?

Rogers: Yeah. He went over the side on his carrier qualifications,
and there were -- we were about as lousy on carriers as they were
over land.

Q: That even occurred in '45, according to the reports I read.
They're part of this story on Marine planes on escort Marine carriers.
They had to go into this operational carrier training and so on. They
had certain things. But just reading the action reports and the war
diaries, it seems that a tremendous percentage of the losses were
based on pilot error, on operational errors.

Rogers: Yes, because we were actually, basically -- I only know but
one or two Marines in the history of Marine aviation that like carriers.
I despised them more than anything in the world. I was scared of
them, actually. Well, my fright was, I'd been flying so much longer
than almost anyone else, and I would not trust myself to a signal
officer. I couldn't believe that the signal officer was correct.
I knew that I was correct.

Q: Going back to this ICOMBING operation, talking about the

-- Perry Parmelee going and getting the scoop from 10th Army headquarters, from Buckner's headquarters --and the fact that TAF seemed to be highly disorganized -- could it be the squadrons that were to be assigned to TAF were so --

Rogers: -- they were scattered all over the map. They were scattered. They weren't there at all.

Q: That's one thing -- at Espiritu Santo?

Rogers: Everywhere. Some were at Guadalcanal and some were up at San Torrey's outfit, one of those little islands, some little dinky island up there. They were scattered all over the Pacific. Yes, the squadrons that were to go into operation all came in from carriers.

Q: But then also is it possible that they were so fully committed at the time, almost up to the time of the Okinawa invasion, that the ground forces, rehearsal of ground forces on Guadalcanal, of Geiger's ^{III} 3rd Amphibious Corps, was limited by the fact that they had no close support in their landings rehearsals.

Rogers: No, *None AT ALL.*

Q: And very little naval gunfire. Of course, you had two going on.

Rogers: Yes, going on all the time.

Q: So this might have been it. But all in all, you would say --

Rogers: Well, the close support on the landing was done entirely by the carrier planes.

Q: True. But even at that time, the rehearsals on Guadalcanal, they had very few planes.

Rogers: No, they had very few.

Q: But all in all you'd say that, as far as the operations of ^{TAF} ~~attack~~ ^{AND} ADC are concerned, they didn't effect any great --

Rogers:--No, didn't at all. Not to my knowledge.

Q: You mentioned, just to bounce around a bit, your tour down in Peru, and I noticed in your jacket that you were listed as the commanding general of the Peruvian Air Force and then later as the inspector general.

Rogers: Well, sir, that was when the Jefe de la Casa Militar was escorted ^{from him to the palace} Prado's boy, ~~that escorted~~ his mistress back and forth. He was a general. And he wanted to be ministro. So the Minister of Air, who was also the Minister of the Navy, a man named Diaz ^{was out} ~~del~~ Lento, and Fernando Melgo, who was the Jefe de la Casa Militar, finally prevailed on Prado to make him Minister of Air. Well, when he became Minister of

Sir. Well, when he became Minister of Air, that put him senior to me, and I became -- oh, I was chief of mission, I think, *Jefe de la Mision*, and he became the Ministro. He was very rank-conscious, and that change in the names meant nothing to me. Didn't bother me one way or the other.

Q: What were your duties?

Rogers: I was in command of all the Peruvian Air Force, and I had my problems, because prior to going down there I knew nothing of the sensitivity of Latinos at all -- for example, if you see a man at midnight that night, and if you see him the next morning, if you don't shake hands with him, you've insulted him. Things of that kind made it rather difficult for me at times, until I finally learned. And I went down there not speaking the language and had to learn it in the two years I was down there. But in my tour down there, I ran into all the political complications that the Peruvians went through. For example, promotion was done on political hookup, not anywhere near on actual military efficiency. I'd go into that, and I'd have to go up to the Palace and sing my piece, and then he'd say, (in Spanish) "Oh, my colonel, that is a question political." The President would tell me that. And so it wasn't ⁺every -- personally it was a very happy time because I played polo and I attended every White House function and everything else, but as far as a professional job goes, it was a pain in the neck.

Q: Did you help train the Peruvian Air Force?

Rogers: See, I had John Carey, who had come back from Midway, been shot up, and I had John in charge of the fighter planes. I had Jakie ^{R+m.} Plechta organizing. Jakie Plechta was never given credit for what he did. He organized the entire engineering department. He had -- we had five or six Marine sergeants who were top instructors in engines and airplane rating, and Jakie did, in my opinion, the best job of anyone down there ~~at all~~. Then we had a communications outfit that T.B. White was in charge of, and Magee was my No. 2 man, ~~and~~ Magee was a little bit -- Magee was very ambitious and very brilliant, and he could antagonize the Peruvians more than any one of them at all.

Q: When did you relieve?

Rogers: Nuts Moore. ~~Nuts had drifted along.~~ ^{some screwy} Nuts had done things -- ^{to get} his nickname ~~was Nuts~~, but he was not nuts at all. He was plenty smart.

Q: Boyington in his book says he was "nutty like a fox."

Rogers: Yeah.

Q: Boyington evidently, to diverge here, seemed to indicate that Moore was a very fine man.

Rogers: He was. In my opinion he was very, very fine. He was a fine officer. He was never given credit for -- ^{all he did} his nickname Nuts, which he got at the Citadel, carried through all the way, and people always

thought he was eccentric. Well, he was eccentric in carrying that walking cane until old Geiger put the kiss of death on him.

Q: Did he pick that up in France?

Rogers: No, he started that walking cane business -- oh, he was never in France. He came into aviation after. He'd been at San Domingo in the early days of the occupation, and he was never in France at all. I don't remember when he picked up that walking cane. But the day he got the "Dear John" letter, he throw the walking cane away. It was his talisman or whatever.

Q: In Peru, did the Marine Corps have supreme responsibility for the training of the Air Force down there?

Rogers: No, they had an air academy, and their instructors in preliminary flying -- we didn't bother with their preliminary flying at all. It was their tactical stuff that we went into. See, we had instructors with the tactical and navigation people, and particularly in the maintenance and in communications, but the preliminary flying was done entirely by Peruvian instructors from the Air Academy. The Air Academy had a colonel named Silva who was in command, who was a very good man, and they came out of that preliminary flying able to fly.

Q: Did they ever mount out a tactical unit for employment during the war?

Rogers: No. The only people, when I was down there, that wanted to go to war, though, were the Peruvian submarine people, and they did everything -- begged and ^{pleaded} ~~said~~ with Admiral McNair, who was the Chief of Naval Mission, to do anything in the world to get the United States to let the Peruvian subs go to war. They were very gung-ho.

Q: They must have been really sharp. The Navy Mission trained those people?

Rogers: Yes. Let's see -- before McNair -- McNair came down there when I came, but I think Bill Quiggly had preceded him, and I think that they did an excellent job down there, because Diaz de Lanto was Secretary of the Navy, and he was more our friend than anyone in Peru. He absolutely leaned on the Naval Mission. He was on our side too until Melgo took over, and then Melgo was slightly rank-conscious and wanted to be sure that he, as Secretary of Air, ^{had} the final say.
1

Q: That was the primary responsibility of the missions down there? Of course undoubtedly you were there because you'd been invited.

Rogers: They were invited because -- what had happened, prior to the mission being there -- there was all this political intrigue and squabbling among the Peruvians who had any rank at all, and they had had a French Mission, then they'd had an Italian Mission, and they got mixed up in kickbacks and buying planes. And when de Lanto took over, he realized the potential corruption that went on, and the

bickering and fighting, and that's the reason, I think, that the mission was invited down. Nuts went down as the first one. I was the second, and Rowell relieved me. Then Rowell just threw up his hands and quit. He was too old to fool with it.

Q: Well, Rowell was pretty senior at that time.

Rogers: He was -- no, he made lieutenant general on his tombstone, I think, but -- I was a colonel, see, when I was down there, and Rowell came down as a major general, and he was just --

Q: --- I guess he was just about washed up.

Rogers: He was so and with Field Harris and those other people out there. He was just used as could be with the internal workings of the Marines, you know.

Q: I'm going to get to that. Well, we might as well talk about it right now. I read some place, and it may have been -- Munn may have said it, I don't know, because no names are involved, it's part of this Sherrod stuff -- the fact that one of the reasons that Marine aviation had been in the doldrums in the Pacific for such a long time was the fact that senior aviators like Geiger were too much interested in being ground officers, and had neglected the --

Rogers: Well, now, of course Rowell^{III} was -- after his command in Nicaragua,
Rowell

that was the glory period of Rowe's life, and he had -- at Quantico he flew. He flew very conscientiously. Well, he was a nice guy, and I liked him, but he was not a master politician, as far as I can see.

Q: I guess for aviation to be sustained or to get its way or to bring its head up, you needed politicians.

Rogers: Yeah. They never had one in the history of Marine aviation that could compare with old Brainerd. He was the top man, in my opinion -- Brainerd. He was the one that followed Tommy Turner, and he had more guts and more drive and more ability than all of them put together, in my opinion. Of course, he got out of the Marine Corps. He got ideas. He got delusions of financial grandeur, and the Curtis Company talked him into resigning. That's how he left the Marine Corps, to head Curtis, and then when the crash came, he was left high and dry.

Q: Of course, the organization of Air FMFPac, Marine Air Wings Pacific, -- they really dragged themselves up by their own socks.

Rogers: Yes, it was. Of course, I spent those two miserable years in Peru, so I was not present during all that terrible effort. Of course, the thing that actually saved Marine Aviation in World War II was Guadalcanal, with people like John Smith and Dick Mangrum, all reserves -- no, John was a regular, but Dick was a reserve -- and then those other people, and Pappy Boyington, who was the thorn in

my side. I had him as a cadet, and had to put him on the ground and prop him up and do all that.

Q: I wanted to ask you about him, because I just almost completed the appendix of this volume 5 dealing with Marine POWs, and dealt with the major groups that had been captured, ^{and I had to use} ~~that~~ ^{one} example, ^{of} ~~say~~, ^{who} ~~an~~ ^I ~~aviator~~ ^{mentioned} had been captured -- mentioned in the chapters we sent you about those who were captured at Chichi Jima and Isten, by the ^{Japanese} ~~cannibals~~. I don't know whether ^{you} ~~they~~ had a chance to ^{lead that} ~~run~~ or not. We'll talk about that shortly. But I used Boyington as an example, and we read his Sea Sea Blacksheep. Of course, he bars no holds on himself. I mean, he lays himself wide open. And I have a lot of respect. He was a maverick, and evidently a damn good pilot.

Rogers: He was a natural. He was another Sanderson. See, he was a professional wrestler, actually, Peppy was -- he wrestled in college and he wrestled professionally, and he had the incredible reflexes that Petras and Sanderson had, and little Frank Schwable had them too. Frank was no athlete at all but he had those phenomenal reflexes. And Petras, I think, for all around purposes, was, barring none, the best pilot the Marine Corps ever had, in all categories -- Ted Petras, a great boy. I'll tell you, Vander ~~W~~ brought him back to be his pilot, and then Cliff ~~F~~ kept him as his pilot for four years, and then Shepherd kept him up there in Washington for four years. But he'd been down. Now, Dickie Byrd

told me personally that at the South Pole, if it hadn't been for Pete, they'd have mutinied on him -- said Pete's incredible morale, his sense of humor, and his physical endurance, and his ability kept that whole South Pole deal from mutinying on Dickie Byrd. And Dickie told me that himself. That's not hearsay. He told me that.

Q: Which expedition was this?

Rogers: The South Pole expedition, when they stayed down there so long.

Q: The late 20's?

Rogers: No, later than that. In the 30's.

Q: Getting back to Boyington, interestingly enough he mentioned two people for whom he had no liking. One was a Colonel Lard, ^{and} the one up at headquarters. Well, Colonel Lard, I found out who it was --

Rogers: -- it was the fat boy --

Q: Joe Smoak.

Rogers: Joe Smoak, yeah. That's who it was, Joe Smoak.

Q: He was just on his back constantly.

Rogers: Yeah.

Q: And the other one was the fellow who was up at Division of Aviation, who was supposed to have saved the orders, and the information concerning the man who went off to fly with the Flying Tigers, and instead threw it away, and as a result --

Rogers: -- that was either Jerry or Mitch. Either Jerry or Mitch, one of those two. See, because when he came back, after he broke his contract with Claire Chennault, he wanted to come back in. And I happened to be -- I don't know what the circumstances were -- in headquarters. That's when Jerry was controlling Mitch. They had had the falling out, and they were just like that, and they were going to turn him down cold, and I stuck my big mouth in. I said, "He's the only man in the Marine Corps except those old boops from World War I that ever fired a shot in anger, and for gosh sakes why don't you take him?" I said, "He has had combat experience with those old P-40s" which was the most modern thing we had. Nothing at the time -- you know, when the war broke we had not a cockeyed thing worth a nickel -- And so, with a great deal of reluctance, they -- I don't know whether I, whether my big mouth, had anything to do with it or not, but I argued violently for him, seeing that he was the only one we had that had ever fired a shot in anger. Of course the rest of us were not going to go in combat. We had too much rank, and were too old.

Q: They evidently kept him on the hook for a while, waiting to hear him -- put him back as a reservist. Well, he had his troubles there, too.

Rogers: Oh, he was always in trouble

Q: He was evidently deeply in debt.

Rogers: Terribly so. That's how they put him out of the Marine Corps in the first place. Now, this is an amusing story on Paopy. Just before they got him out of the Marine Corps on debts, he was in Coronado^o, and he needed money badly, so he went over to San Diego and wrestled under some ridiculous name, and missed the last ferry. He telephoned his first wife -- that's the mother of his son-- and said he'd missed the ferry. She was mad and said, "Well, come over if you have to swim home." So he said, "All right." So he took his uniform off. He'd changed to wrestling clothes, when he was wrestling under some name, not as Lt. Boyington. It was heavy fog, and he swam for two hours and ended up back on the San Diego side, nearly frozen to death. The police had found his uniform and thought it was suicide, and they picked him up naked, with just his underpants on, and took him to the police station and thawed him out. Then he got almost pneumonia. I didn't know anything about it, and I went over to see him, because with all of his nuttiness I liked him, and he was sick as could be with pneumonia, and he told me about it.

Q: That's really fantastic.

Rogers: He had the stamina of a bull elephant. There's his story--

how they beat him, the Japs beat him, and he said he didn't give a darn. He ate their officers' food, said he ate better than they did.

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Q: Funny enough, after his book came out, my wife and I were coming down from Connecticut on the Jersey turnpike, and we'd just seen him on TV, on a Channel 5 program, and he and his latest wife I guess came, and I introduced myself. I know other people think he's a nut and everything else, but I imagine a lot of people who knew him appreciated his ability.

Rogers: Yes. Oh, he had tremendous ability. As I said, he was a natural athlete. Like Pete and Sanderson. They were all natural athletes.

Q: Of course, he left himself wide open afterwards.

Rogers: Yes, of course.

Q: Some question about Mulcahy and the reason why he was relieved -- I think you may have alluded to it earlier. I'm not trying to dredge up any scandal or rumor. The fact probably was that he had been drinking, when Woods relieved him, but I've heard comments on the fact that this in no way affected his ability as the commander of the Second Wing. Now, is this true or not?

Rogers: It -- to me it did not affect his ability. We had Paul

Pontana helping him, and Paul's brilliant. And Parmelee, when Parmelee was not drinking and was not in one of his arrogant spells, Parmelee was a very capable person too. With Paul Pontana and Parmelee around, they carried the burden.

Rogers: Of course, Pat, as I say, was a very close friend of mine.

Pat, with his violent Irish temper and his drinking, would get himself in a mess, and then he knew how to duck out. For example, he made the 10th Army mad at some conference, and then there was a meeting, and he wanted Bill Wallace to represent him. He wasn't going to go to the meeting. Oh, he just ran us all crazy. Bill had gone off

somewhere in a jeep, doing nothing, and he got me on the phone. The -- Chester's report had come in. I'll never forget that, on those poor old kamikaze planes that were helpless coming down, and I think they shot down eleven that morning.

Q: Yes, on the attempted raid on the Yontan.

Rogers: I said, "Pat, I've got good news that's come for you." He said, "I don't give a good God damn -- you get Wallace and get him to that meeting."

Q: How were the relations with Buckner and the Army in general?

Rogers: OK. Yeah. There was no friction whatever.

Q: How about the quality of Marine pilots at this time?

Rogers: I think that they were excellent. People like George Axtell -- to me, he was a heebolickin Marine, George Axtell was. I'll never forget the joke they pulled on him. George would come back from a CAP, and he always, bringing this right back, if he had to use up his ammunition he insisted on going down and shooting up the Japs, down in the South. He called in. "Sure, go ahead." Old George went right down to the trees and shot up Japs. Then he went back up. He sent them down one by one, not together, and he'd holler, "Get out of the way, get out of the way, you can't kill anybody down

Corrected AS
12

there!" And someone said, "Shut your big mouth, Coach." George says, "Who said that?"

Q: Who had the ^{UMTB-131} ~~APB 1-31~~? Or was it ⁻¹³² ~~1-32~~? Did a tremendous job on pear drops. And supply drops.

Rogers: I don't know.

Q: Remember, they were brought over originally -- they were going to run anti-submarine patrols, and they were used for --

Rogers:-- I don't remember who had that. Only ones that I knew were the fighter outfits. They didn't come under AOC at all.

Q: Well, we're skipping around here, so it really doesn't make much difference. We want to talk about your tour as ^{island} ~~commander~~ ^{Pek/ra} on ~~Selen~~. I'm also going to ask you if you've got any pictures or stuff. There's the other man, Mr. ^{GAYARD} ~~Satan~~, who has written about the ^{elefin} ~~Palau~~ campaign, and of course I've written about the surrender operation, so I want to see if you have some personal pictures.

Rogers: I've got some, I think. I've got quite a few pictures of the surrender.

(material here on horses omitted as unconnected with subject)

Q: When did you become interested in polo?

Rogers: In Haiti, in 1930. We used to play all the time. We had a brigade Gendarmerie team, and a brigade team and a civilian team and an aviation team, and Louis Little was in supreme command, of course, and that was just perfect. Everything in the world -- anything we wanted, we did.

Q: You know, we're getting off the track. It really doesn't make any difference, as this is interesting to talk about. It's been my theory, for instance, that the Golden Age of the Marine Corps was perhaps in the 20's and 30's.

Rogers: It was. The Golden Age of Marine aviation, from the point of view of the pilots having the best time that ever was in the world, was in the late 20's and 30's.

Q: And the area in which the Marine Corps was supreme was Haiti and Santo Domingo?

Rogers: Haiti and Santo Domingo and Nicaragua. That was -- see, Brainard all during the -- ~~1930's~~ and Turner -- see, Brainard followed Turner, and then Turner followed Brainard again in that time, and that was when we could go anywhere we wanted to and do anything, and fly, and all the airports in the United States were opening. Sandy and a *Sergeant named Delcher* and I were invited by name to open these

airports, to do the outside loop and the ~~side~~ ^{upside} down and stuff, and we'd compete for cash prizes. And if they didn't put up cash, we wouldn't fly.

Q: I was going to ask you about these ^{trophy} ~~chubby~~ races and so on. What did they prove and what do you think you got out of it?

Rogers: Nothing but dough. Nothing but pilot training. Got nothing but pilot training. In flying against these, you know, up against the Army and the Navy and the civilians, there's where we had always done extremely well, in competition with the other two branches of the service and civilians.

Q: Whowere these pilots for the most part? Old World War I pilots?

I was the only one who
Rogers: No. ~~They~~ ^I used to go into that kind of flying. Sandy was a cadet in World War I, so he never went to France. I was the only active World War I pilot that was mixed up in that. Pat had never gone in for it, and the few that were left -- of course, P.T. Hill had gotten out of aviation long before that. The few World War I people who were left, -- Jackie Plachta was never one.

Q: Aside from the Marine Corps pilots, how about the civilians and so on? Were these just kids who got the bug with the barnstormers of the 20's and so on?

Rogers: They were the old pros, like Freddie *Lund* and Speed Holman, that had been flying the mails and doing all that sort of stuff .

Q: No connection with military flying.

Rogers: No, they had never, those people -- some of them may have been in the service during World War I, but most of them were just making money. They were agents for the ^{WACO} ~~Waco~~ plane and stuff of that kind.

Q: I was going to talk about island command, but let's talk about World War I flying. What was it like?

Rogers: Well, to me, this was -- that's what got Chapin interested.
(Lt. General L.F. Chapin ^{JLC})

Q: That's what I understand.

Rogers: For some reason or other there was something said about Geiger, and that brought on the whole conversation. To begin at the beginning -- it's all in the Archives, it's recorded somewhere -- but Cunningham was the father of aviation, as everyone knows, absolutely, completely. Without him, there never would have been any aviation. He was never given one-tenth the credit that he

deserves, on account of his friction with Tommy Turner, and the way that Tommy put him out of aviation finally. But Cunningham was Number 1, and then B.L. Smith, who was never active in Marine aviation at all. He was always off on attache duty with the Navy if something. I think he was Number 2.

*: Bernard Smith? Wasn't he a balloon pilot also, and they brought him back in '40, '41 to start the barrage balloon program?

Rogers: Yes. He's been in and out. He married Margarita Silva, that opera singer. I met him but I never knew him at all. And then there was McIlvain, and ^{D.}U.S. Brewster, and Geiger, and Harvey Hims, who's still alive, and a man named Rodney Wheeler, and Ed Chamberlain. They were about all there was in Marine aviation when the war began. And as soon as the war began, Cunningham, with his real vision, wanting to perpetuate himself also, which was perfectly natural -- he was in like Flynn with Barnett, who was commandant, and he sold him the idea. And from the first Officers Training Camp at Quantico, he got some of the originals -- like there was Mulcahy and Karl Day and Bates and some other boys -- and he picked up some civilian boys who'd learned to fly on their own, college boys, and they went to They'd come to Philadelphia, where he was, and then he finally got enough together to get them up to Mineola, where McIlvain was in command, and they learned to fly with the Army at Mineola.

Then the weather got so bad up there, and the Army sort of ignored them, and in some mysterious way, they got them all on the train and they went down to Lake ^{Charles} George, Louisiana. That was the

original nucleus, there at Lake ^{Charles} ~~George~~, Louisiana. Then, the Second Officers Camp at Quantico, where I was, Cunningham came down and he interviewed all of us, and he picked out six. To my knowledge, I'm the only one left alive of the six. I remember them very well. There was Kenneth Collins, and a little Jewish boy named David Levy, and a boy named Harry Stovall, Charlie Wilcox and Jack Wimple and myself.

So we were ordered to Miami. We got down there and were ordered to Dincer Key, down at Coconut Grove, and Pete Mitscher was in command, and Geiger was there, and Douglas Cohen and Arthur Page. There were two or three strays that Cunningham had picked up. I don't know where he got them. There was Mako Stewart and a boy named Louis Bowman and one named Ray Kirwin. They were all there, and they had had a little ^{flying time} -- they'd been fiddling around with the Navy.

Then Geiger, through Cunningham, got a lease on the old Curtis Field just outside of Miami, down on the Canal, and they had two OX-5 Jennys, and two instructors. One was a boy from Harvard named Derbyshire, and the other was a boy from Buffalo ^{from Rochester} named Brock ¹ Davy. They were reserve second lieutenants. ~~Because~~ ¹ They had learned to fly in civilian schools, ~~they could fly~~. So that was Geiger's original command -- ² ~~the~~ two second lieutenants reserve, and the six of us, and two Jennys. The Curtis school was on that field.

The preliminary instruction went along. I had drawn Derbyshire as an instructor. ~~For~~, Derbyshire didn't like me and I didn't like him, ~~and~~ he kept snatching the controls out of my hands. ^{when} I'd had two hours and ten minutes instruction. ~~So~~ old Geiger came out

to the field one morning and said, "When are you going to fly?"

I said, "Right now -- if Derbyshire would let me."

He said, "Do you think you can?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "Get in the plane." I got in the plane. He got in the front seat. He said, "Take off."

Now, I'd never been allowed to take off and never been allowed to land with Derbyshire. So I took off, and we flew around, ^{*into the cockpit*} and ~~old~~ ^{*Suddenly*} the engine stopped, and I looked ~~at it~~ ^{*left*}, and I saw he'd cut the switch. Those little old OX-5 engines, they ~~passed~~, turned over, all the time. So I turned the switch on. He sat there like a toad frog, sitting there with his head down, and pretty soon the engine died. I looked at the switch and it was on. I looked at the throttle and it was back. I started pushing, and he was holding it down. So I pushed and he still held it and I said, "Turn loose the throttle." He turned loose. He said, "Go on down and land."

So I went down like going down stair steps. And I landed. He got out and said, "Go on, fly." I'd only had two hours and fifteen or twenty minutes.

Q: How hard were they to fly, those old planes?

Rogers: You had to fly those Jennies all the time. They landed slowly, but you had to fly them all the time. There was no touch control. You really had to fly them.

So I was flying around, and Derbyshire arrived, in his

Hudson airplane coupe. It was his plane, and he said, "Who's that up in my plane?"

Geiger said, "That's Rogers."

"Who let him fly?"

Geiger says, "I did."

So there was a great silence, and I came down and landed, looked at Derbyshire, looked down my nose at him and walked away. Gus Brettnier was another boy that had come in ^{ahead of my grants.} He was one of those like "ako Stewart. ^{Derbyshire} ~~I forgot him.~~ So ^{he} took old Gus up, and Gus made a bad landing, and ^{he} screamed, "You God damned fool!" The plane ^{burned} and spun in. Gus was knocked cross-eyed, leg broken, and Derbyshire, both legs were broken, so that was the end of Derbyshire as far as flying went. ~~And that was the way. Then Geiger got permission.~~

Geiger

Q: What was he, a captain, then? Did he increase the number of student aviators?

Rogers: He was a captain, yes. He got permission to enlist some of the civilian students at Curtis Field, and he took them in as flying privates, with a potential commission. ~~I jumped the gun.~~

~~After~~ ^{When} Those of us had soloed, ^{we} ~~then we went over to Dinner Key to become naval aviators.~~ That's how I outdate those other boys who were flying long before me. ~~See,~~ I went over to Dinner Key, ^{Charles} they were still at Lake George. ~~We went over to Dinner Key.~~ I'll never forget ^{my} ~~the~~ two instructors. They were both Yale boys. Both of them were killed ^{later} -- Okie Ballard and Art Sailor. They had

R-6's, great big old Curtis plane, on two pontoons. They had a plane called the Thomas, a ~~great~~^{big} plane with a single pontoon and an OX motor, wide open maybe make 60 miles an hour. They had F-boats, those little single-engine OX-6 with the engine right behind your hair.

Q: Old pusher type?

Rogers: Yeah. Pushers. And they had two Sop-Camels on pontoons, that we were not allowed to fly at all. Pete Mitscher used to fly them.

Q: Mitscher was down there?

Rogers: He was in command. Mitscher was a two-striper in command. He and Geiger had been at Pensacola together when Geiger was flying. They were good friends. So after you'd flown all the types of planes that were there, which was R-6s, the Thomas, and the F-boats -- had to ^uspend in so many hours in each one of them -- and then the naval aviator qualification was acrobatics in an R-6, and if you can imagine doing acrobatics in a lumbering plane with a 200 horsepower motor, with two giant pontoons on it! You had to loop the thing, ~~do loops~~, do half rolls, those kick and jerk half rolls, and spins.

Q: Like a back flip on a pair of stilts, wasn't it?

Rogers: It was the most clumsy old thing in the world. And you went through the acrobatics, with an instructor riding. Then the ~~chute?~~ ~~boat?~~ final deal was to shoot the bolt. You went up to 6000 feet, which was big altitude in those planes, cut the engine switches, killed the prop completely, spiralled down, and landed. There was a boat anchored out there in the harbor somewhere. Landed right beside the boat. And if you did that, bang, you were a naval aviator.

Q: No parachutes?

Naturally
Rogers: ~~Nessir~~, not a blessed thing. So that was done. Then we went back to the Curtis field. Then in came all the boys from Lake Charles. So they had to go through this naval aviator business, after us. So that's how my NA designation outdates *the others*.

number
Q: What were you?

520
Rogers: I think it was ~~X520~~, ~~I think it was~~. I've got it in the house ~~there~~ somewhere.

Q: Tell me, was it fun or was it hairy?

I don't remember.
Rogers: Actually I was so darned eager, ~~myself~~, because I had ~~had~~ an obsession -- I had wanted to fly from the time in 1910 when I saw *HAMILTON* Charlie Hampton make the first night flight in the world. It's *?* never publicized, though. It was in Nashville, Tennessee, when I was

a junior in high school. I'd gone to Tennessee with my mother, and I saw that, and then I saw old Cal Rogers make his transcontinental flight, ^{? TEXAS} and he stopped in my home town in Cassius, and then the great Flying Circus ^{CAME TO WACO} that ~~It's forgotten what his name is~~ -- promoted, ^{Bleriot's ?} ~~and had~~ they had ~~and had~~ ^{Rare ?} and Antoinettes and a Curtis Pusher.

Q: There were French planes and pilots too?

Rogers: There were French planes and French pilots and United States pilots. It was ^{Morison's} Johnny Morison's Flying Circus. And I'd seen all that. And the bug ~~had~~ bit me. I was never the least bit worried.

Salvation of the six--
I wanted to fly so darned badly that it was all fun to me. But we ~~had~~ ^{of the six--} ~~of the six--~~ ^{-- (this is one of the funny stories of Geiger --)} ~~of the six--~~ ^{to mine together.} ~~of the six--~~ ^{of the six--} of us who went down, after Gluckner got smashed up, Charlie Wilcox and Wimple went to Geiger and said, "We're through. We've seen Gluckner and ^{Derbyshire} smashed up. We want to quit."

So Geiger said, "All right. You can quit."

Then Levy, ^{one of the six a} ~~was~~ little Jewish boy, -- he just couldn't fly. ¹ ~~He~~ ^{he} ~~had~~ ^{was} soon in, in an F-boat, ~~and then~~ we went out to rescue him, -- the engine had come down on his chest. He wasn't hurt at all. The plane had crashed, and he was laying there, with just his Jewish nose ^{getting like hell while} out of the water, ^{get him} ~~and we were trying to~~ ^{get him} ~~pull it out.~~ And this boy Make Stewart, who's long dead -- he became a multi-millionaire -- oil man from Texas -- he says, "Shut up, you little Jew, or or we'll let you drown. We're trying to pull you out."

where

~~David~~ David finally went back to the field, and he turned over two or three planes, and old Geiger went up to him one day, and Geiger said, "Levy, you're a Jew, aren't you?"

Levy says, "Yes, Sir."

He said, "You better change your religion, 'cause Christ gonna get tired of helping you pretty soon."

Q: Didn't he go on to flying -- ?

Rogers: No, he quit. ~~He quit~~. So that left, of the six of us, ~~there was~~ Stovall and Kenneth Collins and I, and we three went on to France. But the main thing that Chappy was most interested in was, when they got these squadrons formed, there ~~was~~ were three squadrons, ~~and the fourth was not formed so they left them there.~~ *completely was in Miami.* Geiger had Number 1, McIlvain had Number 2, and Roben, ~~who had been over there,~~ *Roben was at Dinn Key when I arrived* ~~who was there when I got to Dinn Key, he had~~ *had No 3* ~~previously.~~ I think he'd been through Pensacola. Roben was a hot shot. He had the Third Squadron. ~~Geiger and McIlvain and Roben had gone ahead --~~ *went to France* ~~Chamberlain was~~ *also.* ~~over there, Ed had been there all the time -- to pick out landing~~ *1* fields, places for us up on the North Sea. Now, we had flown nothing but Jennys. We got one DH-4, and all of us in Miami got one flight in the first DH-4, with the gas tank between the pilot and the observer.

Q: That's a big high plane, with a --

Rogers: I've got pictures in there. I'll show you. That was *Liberty ???* ~~Libby~~ Engines

That was the ne plus ultra of everything. We had one flight.

Our gunnery training had consisted of getting into the rear seat and using a ^{Lewis} ~~Lewis~~ gun, shooting the targets on the ground. None of us had ever fired a fixed gun in our lives. None of us had ever dropped a bomb in our lives. We went to war!

We got there. Geiger and McIlvain picked a beet field, with irrigation ditches around it. As soon as the first rain came, it was deep in mud. Roben had more sense than the other two put together, and he found himself a place that was high and dry.

Q: There was this actually?

Rogers: The First and Second Squadrons were at a place called ^{Loire?} ~~Oye~~ ^{Flene} which is between Calais and Dunkirk. Roben was back at LaFame, I think the name of the place was. He got himself a dry field.

Q: You chose your own fields?

Rogers: Geiger and McIlvain and Roben chose the fields. Geiger and McIlvain took this beet field.

Q: Who was the supreme authority?

Rogers: Cunningham had gone in the boat with us when we all went over, so Cunningham set up his headquarters. But Geiger and McIlvain

and Roben had gone ahead, and they had picked these fields. So the fields were picked, and the contracts were let with the French for the occupation of the fields, before Cunningham got there.

And we were there.
So Cunningham set up his headquarters. / And no planes.

Q: This was the 1st Marine ^{Aviation} ~~Av~~ Force, right?

Rogers: Yes.

Q: What was the chain of command?

Rogers: Cunningham, through Admirals Starr and Harvahan. There were Starr and Harvahan. It was the Northern Bombing Group. That was the Navy, see. Cunningham was under Starr and Harvahan. Harvahan was a rear admiral, Starr was a four-striper, I think.

Note: Harvahan was a four-striper

Q: This was all under the ANP?

Rogers: No. It was under the Northern Bombing Command. It wasn't under ANP at all. It was under the Navy. And the Navy had had a DD boat squadron up at Dunkirk. They were there ahead of us. That's why Barrett, Di Gelas and Forrestal had been up there.

Q: Tell me something. This is part of the historical aspect. What were the uniforms you wore?

Rogers: We wore britches and boots -- Marine -- and we all got ourselves overseas caps as soon as we got there. We had to ape the British. See, we arrived with campaign hats.

And the blouse

Q: Oh, you were wearing the campaign hats, with the high collar?

Rogers: Yeah, with the high collar, ~~forest~~ green. We bought Sam Brown belts. We were not allowed to wear them in the United States, but as soon as we got to France we all bought ourselves Sam Brown belts.

Q: Wasn't the Sam Brown belt part of the Marine Corps uniform before?

Rogers: No. We all got them. Then they became part of the uniform when we were in France.

Q: Had you been given wings?

Rogers: Oh, yes, we all got wings. Our wings were given at Dinner Key. All of our wings were given at Dinner Key. But, to go back a way, Cunningham, when we had just the bunch that came from Lake Charles and the few of us there, Cunningham went to the Navy, went to Key West where the Navy had a station, went to Pensacola and out out a big sales talk and said, "We're going to war," to the Navy -- "there's practically no chance of you getting in battle at all so join the Marine Corps." So those squadrons were filled up with transfers from the Navy.

Q: Oh, really? Inter-service transfers?

Rogers: Inter-service transfers. They became Marines. It was a transfer, see. They all became Marines. And that was how the four squadrons were filled up, because the original group was not enough to make one squadron, and they had all these Navy boys that had not flown land planes, and they all came over to this old Curtis field, and we checked them out. I became an Amesbury instructor when I had I think 20 hours to my name or something or other -- I became an instructor. I was an acrobatic instructor.

Q: Funny to look back on.

Rogers: Oh my gosh, yes.

Q: Now, these Navy people as well as the Marines, you mentioned that some reserves came from Harvard. Were many of the Navy people Academy people? I guess at this time they thought this wasn't good for the career.

Rogers: Not good for the career at all. There were no Academy boys. They were all reserves. A great many of them from Yale, and Columbia, and some from Harvard, I think.

Q: That's true, I think there were quite a few from Yale. Yale out out a

lot of them.

Rogers: A tremendous number. One of our most eccentric boys was ashamed of his temperament -- ruined him, as far as doing anything -- was George ^{Laughlin} ~~Lartin~~, of the Jones-^{Laughlin} ~~Lartin~~ Steel Co. He had been --

Q: -- from Georgia?

Rogers: No, from Pittsburgh. Jones ^{Laughlin} ~~Lartin~~, you know, the big steel mill. Yeah, he was a Yale boy, and he'd been goalie on their championship hockey team, and he was not an athlete, but his reflexes were terrific, and he was a marvelous pilot but just as crazy as a loon. And he gave himself temperamental trouble all the time, so he never did any flying at all.

Q: You mentioned reflexes quite a bit, both in connection with World War I and World War II. This must be the prime requirement.

Rogers: It is. For example -- of course, in those days -- of course, right now it's all controlled, everything is --

Q: -- engineering --

Rogers: -- yes, all engineering. You can just fly by the dashboard in front of you and from the ground control. But in those days, when you had no aids at all, you had no navigational aids, you had nothing

Tachometer
but a ~~comptometer~~ and a oil pressure gauge, and temperature, and a compass that wouldn't work. That's all you had.

Q: You wore regular Marine Corps uniforms. What did you do for flight clothes?

Rogers: We had good flight clothes -- great, big, heavy Teddy Bear uniforms issued, reasonably fur-lined helmets and pretty good goggles, great big gauntlet gloves and big heavy boots. Because the climate was pretty bad up there. I've got some pictures I'll show you of some of those uniforms there, and some of the flight clothes.

Q: This man Amos who wrote the history of the 1st Marine *Aviation* Force, in the *Cross and Cockade* 2 series -- well, he came through. I think he had one eye that was gone and he had a glass eye. There was a little cockade -- whenever he was at a party, he said, he'd put it in -- a red bull's eye with a blue --

Rogers: Oh, that's Ivan ~~Team~~ *Sheaton?* *yes*

Q: That's right. That's *who* ~~how~~ it is. He was telling, he used the castor oil --

Rogers: -- yeah, in the rotary motors --

Q: And those fumes would come back and everybody would have the runs.

Rogers: You'd get yourself covered. Your helmet would be covered with castor oil. Those *Amster* ? motors spun, and the castor oil was coming back on you all the time.

To go on back to -- of course, I'm digressing, skipping around so much -- but what Cunningham did. When we got to France, and no airplanes, the prospect was so nebulous that no one knew anything. They were supposed to be down at Boulogne in crates, and we were going to get some from England some time. We didn't get anything. And there we were, sitting there, and Cunningham had the very brilliant idea. . . . (off tape)

* * *

Side 2

We were So Cunningham, with no airplanes at all, -- was sitting on the ground, doing nothing but getting in trouble, going to Calais and getting drunk and all that sort of stuff. So Cunningham -- the British had suffered terrific attrition in personnel, but they had all the planes they wanted. So he went to the British and said, "I've got a complete bunch of untrained pilots, how about using them?"

The British said "Yes." So we were sent, by a chain of circumstances, to what they called the Pilot School at There's where we flew these British DH-4s with a six x cylinder Siddeley-Paine motor in them, 200 horsepower. Great big old DH but very light.

Q: Was that the most powerful plane available?

Rogers: That was in the day bomber. So we were sent to the Pilot School to familiarize ourselves with the planes. Then we went back. Then there was Squadron 2+18 and 2+17, and a Camel Squadron that said they would take us, certain numbers. That's how Mulcahy got his decoration. He was with 2+18 before I was, and he was in that food drop to the French outfit that was out off. There's a picture of him up there in those decoration things. And a boy named Frank Helms, who's still alive, and there's some of them. Then they took them by seniority, and McIlvain, as soon as it looked like we were going to fly, McIlvain went to bed in the chateau and turned the command of the squadron over to a boy named Benny Hoffa. A Harvard boy who had been given his commission before me was next in rank in that 2nd Squadron to go to 2+18, and he knew he was due to go, so he got on a bicycle and went to Graveline and they couldn't find him. I was next. So I went to 2+18.

I had never ^{fired} ~~flown~~ a fixed gun. ~~XX/XX~~. None of us had ever fired a fixed gun at all. Their method of operation was to take off, go way out over the North Sea, come in over Holland, get lined up on the target -- the Dutch theoretically shot at us but they didn't try to hit us, because we were violating neutral territory--
 get lined up on the target. And the bomb ^{sight} ~~sight~~ was a piece of plexiglass with two crossed wires between the squadron leader's feet. He had notches on the vertical wire and the crossed wire, and he lined up on the target, and when he decided to drop the bombs, he'd nod his head. His rear seat gunner would shoot a

✓
✓ Verry pistol, and we'd all drop on the Verry pistol.

Q: At what height?

Rogers: We'd generally be 15,00, 16,000 feet. That high. Those little planes could go up to about 17,000, 18,000.

Q: What type ordnance did they have?

Rogers: We would carry either -- I think either 450s or 600s. I've forgotten, it's so long ago.

Q: Was that British ordnance or US?

Rogers: It was British ordnance. Then we began to get some planes, and Roben, who was the ^{deger} most ~~agor~~, got all the planes for the 3rd Squadron, and the 1st and 2nd Squadrons didn't get any planes. Geiger was not putting out at all in those days. He was drinking, and he didn't fly at all, and neither did McIlvain. Roben flew a great deal. And his outfit got the first DHs, the first Liberty motor DHs from the United States. And I stayed -- knowing the 2nd Squadron wasn't getting any and I was getting along fine with the British -- I stayed with them, until the end of the war -- until the flu epidemic knocked everybody out and the war ended. Roben had died of the flu in the meantime, and a great many other people had died.

And Bob Lytle -- Bob Lytle is still alive, he was one of them there -- he took command. He was senior captain, after Rob^N. Rob Lytle took command of the 3rd Squadron after Rob^N's death, and the 1st and 2nd, -- after they got some planes they sort of amalgamated and went up north. I was still with the British. Then the war ended. So I was with the British from the time I went with them. I stayed with them entirely.

Q: How many Marine aviators were there?

Rogers: Well, see, the 4th Squadron came late and they never got in anything at all. They came just about before the Armistice. So we had the three squadrons, and I think I have somewhere there a roster of the 2nd Squadron. I think a lot of the ~~WFO~~^{rear seat} boys were second lieutenants who were not, according to the powers that be, good enough to be first pilots. A lot of the gunners were rear seat boys, who were second lieutenants.

Q: They were commissioned, though.

Rogers: Yeah.

Q: Did they do any flying at all?

Rogers: They were just designated to be rear seat gunners, and they didn't get to fly much.

Q: Did any of these go on to become aviators in the Marines?

Rogers: They were all aviators.

Q: All aviation trained?

Rogers: All had wings.

Q: How many pilots did you say flew with the British?

Rogers: Oh, let me see. There was Mulcahy, Helms, Kipp, Meaby,
^{revor}
T_A Williams -- let's see how many. Quite a few others.

Q: All under British command.

Rogers: All under --

Q: What was it like operating with them?

Rogers: It was perfect. They were cold-blooded. They were just as fine as could be. I'll never forget how impressed I was. The squadron commander was a Canadian named ^{W^R} who later became Mayor of Toronto. I saw him in '35 or '36 in Toronto. The two flight commanders were Scotch boys, one 19, the other 20, one named Reeves and the other named McLaren. They put us -- always the newcomers were the last on the right, in the ^{"Y"}, because if you got shot you hadn't lost anything. We came back. We'd take off about 3 o'clock in the morning, daylight, just break of dawn up there in the far North.

And we came back in and landed one day. This was why I was so impressed with them. I saw an ambulance come up to one of the planes. I didn't pay any attention to it. I was cold and wanted to go in. I'd had tea at 3 o'clock in the morning, and I was going in to get breakfast. At the table the doctor came in, and McLaren said, "How's Potts?" The doc says, "He's dead." Potts was McLaren's rear seat gunner. It was the third boy killed behind him. So McLaren said, "Potts dead? Poor Potts. Pass the tea, will you."

Q: You know, as a kid -- and you've probably seen it on TV since that time -- "Dawn Patrol," you remember the movie -- it seemed to me, from my little knowledge of the period and uniforms, that it was pretty accurate.

Rogers: It wasn't too bad. It wasn't too bad, considering they'd done a lot of research.

Then I had one highly humorous experience. The first time I went out with them, I was naturally scared to death. My gunner was a sergeant, gunner sergeant named Boss Winkler, who's now a big shot with Mutual of Omaha, lives in Seattle -- he's still alive. So I was just scared to death of everything. And we took off and went out over the North Sea, and I was flying on the tail. They began to pull away from me, and I opened the throttle, opened the throttle, and the darned old thing -- I didn't know anything about those 6 cylinder Siddeley-Puma engines, didn't know anything about any engines. And wide open, they were pulling away from me. Well, finally, I wasn't

gaining any altitude. There I was, sittin' up there high, wide and handsome, all by myself. And then I fought the battle of, what shall I do? I didn't know where we were going. I was just following.

So I knew that land was on the right, and I thought, well, I don't know where to go, don't know anything about it, so I guess I'd better go home. So I turned around, not knowing where I was, and went right over West End Battery, where the best German anti-aircraft was. And they missed me. Then I got to Dunkirk, and I said, "Home free." Then I remembered -- now, mind you, I'd never dropped a bomb in my life -- I remembered, "Jiminy Christmas, I've got these bombs, and they said never to land with bombs."

So I looked down at Dunkirk. The harbor was full of ships. I'd never -- so I headed out over the ocean. You release the bombs with a little toggle with slots, like this. So I dropped my six bombs and flew on back. Landed. And Wimp came out. Of course, I was back first, and he said, "What are you doing back?"

I said, "Well, I was wide open and they pulled away from me. I lost sight of them completely. I couldn't keep up with them with the throttle wide open. There's something wrong with the engine."

He said, "Well, you did the right thing." Then I went in. About half an hour later he came and he said, "Let me tell you something, young man. The pilot who depends on his engine had better find out what's wrong." He said, "You had a cracked cylinder. You were flying on five cylinders, and one cylinder water was going right in. It's a wonder you got home at all." So he gave me a lecture about taking enough interest in the engine to see what was wrong.

Then, two days later, in came a vague report that some Germans had captured a British plane and had flown over Dunkirk and bombed ships down there. I never said a word! No one ever knew that till many many years after. That was me.

Q: I guess all the Marine aviators who went over to France in World War I were primarily bomber pilots?

Rogers: See, we had had a few boys that, down at Lake Charles, had gotten to fly those little Thomas Morse with *Notary* motors, the United States Thomas Morse, and we had a few at Miami, a very few. But Dunlap and ~~Charlie~~ ^{TREVOR} Williams and very very few ever got to fly them. There was some sort of a ~~2nd~~ ^{1st} *elite* crowd that had learned to fly those things with the Army. And there was a British squadron of Sop-Camels, and some of our boys got over there with them. I remember Williams did, and I'm not sure whether Dunlap did or not, but a few of them got to the British -- 217 and 218 were the two day bomber squadrons. All of us who were with the British were with them. I think it was 215 was the Sop-Camel outfit. But I don't know, I don't remember how many of our people got over there, but they didn't stay very long, because that was a high powered outfit and we weren't up to it.

Q: What was the nature of the night bombing operation?

Rogers: Well, we had none of that at all. The British had those

WAs -- we called them the Flying Bathtub, where they sat out in front -- and they went over and did the night bombing. But we didn't do any night bombing. We were strictly day bombing. The fantastic thing that I was telling Chappy about was the fact that we went there, and none of us had ever fired a fixed gun, none of us had ever dropped a bomb, none of us had ever had the slightest knowledge of a bomb sight.

Q: What was the nature of the operation the time you won your Navy Cross?

Rogers: It was simply that they -- I had flown in so many raids, I've forgotten how many, and in the decision, they just looked at the number of people who had gone so many times. There was nothing spectacular about it. Just a case of, like to give air medals now.

Now, Pat got his DSM -- a DSM outranked^{ed} a Navy Cross -- Pat got his on that food dropping deal to the isolated French outfit. And Bob Lytle got his when he was in command. They got lost, and that was when ^{Talbot} ~~Cox~~ and Robinson did all that big stuff. They all got busted up somewhere, when flying their own planes, and Bob Lytle had a German named Weidman who was a Prussian and a magnificent machine gun shot, and Bob was jumped on by two or three single-seater Germans, and Weidman shot them all down. Bob just flew the airplane. But he got the DSM for that. And that was when, in that same mix-up, when Talbot and Robinson got jumped on, and they shot down so many, and Robinson came back all shot to pieces. He died a natural death several years ago.

Q: Ralph Talbot was shot down.

Rogers: Ralph Talbot was killed the day of the Armistice, in a take-off accident.

Q: Not operational. You remained in France until when?

Rogers: As soon as the war was over -- it broke our hearts, we all wanted to stay in France and enjoy life. They packed us up and we got home, about three days before Christmas, 1918. It broke our hearts. We all wanted to stay in France. The war was over and we wanted to have fun.

Q: Did any of the air outfit stay in France afterwards?

Rogers: No. Cunningham packed them all up, the whole business. Except the 2nd Division, they all went to the Rhine, but we were all -- it just broke the hearts of all of us, because we wanted to stay there. We hadn't ^{ever} seen anything, except Calais and Dunkirk.

Q: Couldn't talk them into it.

Rogers: No. Cunningham was going home. And we went home.

Q: You were there altogether how long?

Rogers: Oh, I think we got there in July or something like that, or August.

Q: Six months --

Rogers: Something like that, approximately. It wasn't too long. We had been sort of regimented. Cunningham had the right idea all the way through. There wasn't any sense in being foolish. And some of them went off, did sneak off to Paris, and Cunningham would give them a court martial. Didn't do any harm to them at all. And old Geiger got on a big drunk and tried to beat up Starr, hand to hand, and Geiger got a court for that -- for his drunkenness.

Q: What do you think were the positive results that came out of this?

Rogers: Well, the positive thing that came out of that 1st Marine Aviation -- there was a nucleus that stayed in. See, 90 percent of them got out as soon as they came back. They were all reserves. Wanted to go back to college and stuff of that kind. But the few that stayed in, plus the cadets that had never gotten to France, were the tiny nucleus of aviation in the early 20's. See, it was a tiny nucleus. And then, the 1st Expeditionary Force, there was one went to San Domingo under McCaughtry, and then Geiger -- Harvey Mims had gone to Haiti, and then Geiger came down to relieve Harvey Mims. And that gave us a reason to exist. We were in two occupied countries. Without that, unless there'd been that, we would have disintegrated completely, because we were not loved by any means by the line, or anything else -- thought we were superfluous and no good.

So after, we came back, we went to Miami, and then the disintegration took place -- the demobilization, rather -- and the few that were left were sent to Parris Island and Quantico. And at Quantico they ^{chopped} ~~cut~~ that thing out of the trees. On Parris Island our field was the old, old rifle range, which was nothing but a pocket handkerchief. It was the tiniest thing you ever saw in your life. You can't imagine. Those of us who went to Parris Island, having to operate out of that extremely tiny field, got more experience than anyone in the world. We could go into anything, any size field, that no one in the world could go into, because we'd had to, or get killed. That was the best training that ever was. The same thing went on then in Haiti and San Domingo. The fields were microscopic, and in operating in and out of those tiny fields, as the planes changed, as we got better and better planes --

Q: -- the Fokkers down there --

Rogers: We had triomotor Fokkers. But they were in Nicaragua entirely. We never had them in San Domingo or Haiti.

A: That's the one they used to evacuate casualties and so on.

Rogers: Yeah. The Fokkers -- old Brainard -- see, to go back to that chain of command -- it's all written up many times about Turner. Cunningham kept Turner out of aviation. Turner had learned to fly with the Army, and he'd been in command of an Army field in Texas.

And when Smedley Butler negotiated the relief of Barnett and got Lejeune made Commandant, then Turner had been Lejeune's boy, so Cunningham was fired as Chief of Aviation and sent to San Domingo in command of that little squadron, and Turner took over. Turner stayed. And Turner took in his friend Brainard -- who, I say, is one of the greatest people in Marine aviation. He took Brainard in. Brainard was a lousy pilot but a terrific officer. He smashed up more planes than anybody in the world.

Q: Was politics so tremendous at that time?

Rogers: Oh, gosh yes. All kinds of stuff. It was too new, and no one knew a thing in the world about it.

Q: Well, in the Marine Corps itself -- of course, Smedley Butler's machinations and involvements--

Rogers: And Smedley was in like Flynn with Lejeune. And they then finally -- they ended up getting Cunningham out of aviation. He ended up as a quartermaster. I think he was retired as a lieutenant colonel. And yet he was the real founder and the whole reason for Marine aviation.

Q: Did you know Ellis?

Rogers: The Navy bird?

Q: No. He was supposed to be the brains -- lieutenant colonel who envisioned -- he was LaJeune's operations and special --

Rogers: -- no, I didn't know him. The only line officers I knew at that time were those who had gone through the Second Officers School. They were the only ones that I knew.

Q: Well, actually, in the early days aviation and line operated completely separately.

Rogers: Completely separately, yes.

Q: How about down in Central America?

Rogers: In there, we were all under the brigade. That was -- Harry Lee was the brigade commander in San Domingo, and in Haiti, in the early 30's, there was old Dickie Cutts and then Louis Little, and John Whatchamacall was high commissioner, -- John Russell was high commissioner, a diplomatic job in Haiti. But in Haiti, Santo Domingo and Nicaragua, we all operated under the brigade. And in China, when Smedley had it, Tommie Turner was out there. That was all under Smedley's direct command too. But up to the time of going out -- well, in Quantico and Harris Island we were nominally under command of the CO at Harris Island, but he had nothing to do with us. He didn't know what to do with us except put us on court martial duty, just to say, "Get some of these fellows, those no good aviators."

Q: No such thing as flight pay in those days?

Rogers: Oh, yes -- 50 percent. 50 percent. In the 20's, there were no restrictions. You could go anywhere you wanted to go, any time. You had a cross country packet where you were authorized to buy gasoline. The cross country packet gave you shipping orders if you cracked up, to ship your plane back, if you went anywhere at all.

Q: A real emergency kit in those days.

Rogers: Oh, Lord yes. That's the cross country package. Down there, if we wanted to go some place we'd just go, and never asked anybody's permission or a blessed thing. Just go. And we flew -- that's when Cunningham was still in command, in -- let me see, 1920, they had the first Pulitzer Trophy Races on Long Island. And Cunningham decided the Marine Corps should be represented. The army had gotten -- had one special ^{racing} plane called a *Verulle* Packard, just built the one in ³ the world, to win the Pulitzer Trophy Race, and they had some French planes, some foreign planes in there. The Navy had some VE 7's, the *Vaughts*, the first time they came out, those Chance *Vaughts* -- copy of a *Spad*. And Harvey Mims and I were at Parris Island. We flew up with two DHs. From Quantico, Sanderson had a VE-7 and someone else, the Navy had some VE-7s. So that was a great race. The first airplane race in the United States after the war. I ^{threw} ~~threw~~ a con rod in the race and landed in somebody's field. The *Verulle* ^{Aeronca} Packard won it, and the ~~ME-3~~ ^A 's and the ~~Aeronca~~ ^{Aeronca} that the Army had -- that was the fighter plane that the Army developed that came out after

the war. They never had 'em in France at all. They ran one, two, and Bert Acosta had an Italian plane, ran four, and then we came in -- a whole nondescript outfit of the junk that the Army had and the stuff that we had. So that was the first Pulitzer Trophy Race in the history of the United States.

*: That about the development of aircraft used by the Marines?

Rogers: Well, we were always on the dirty end of the stick. Of course, after that nebulous period of confusion, everything that we had came from the Navy. Everything we had. And as it turned out, if they didn't like it, they gave it to us. So we ran DNs and VE-7s from the time we came back -- and the VE-7s came after we came home-- we had DNs, had all of them in the world. They made hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of them available, and we'd get them through Army contracts, some way or other. Then the Navy was going ahead. The Langleys started way back in the early 20's, the first carrier, and the Navy would get something, and if they didn't like it, they'd send it to us. We got the small end of the horn, almost all of the cases, of the progress in the development of planes. See, we stayed with DNs, '20 up through '27. And I was at Anacostia, one of the test pilots at Anacostia, and we had a whole lot of DNs there, and I used to be used as a sort of exalted chauffeur for the Secretary of the Navy and for Theodore Roosevelt Jr. when he was Assistant Secretary of the Navy. So I would get to fly. Whenever they wanted

to go, I'd take them, so it was a gravy train for me.

Then the VE-7s were a lovely little plane, but the Navy went crazy about them, and then we had quite a few of them. Then they went to the various ⁰Vought chain of developments, I've forgotten the exact terms of them -- some of them Corsairs and things of that kind, different things. Then they got a Curtis ⁰Falcon with air-cooled motors, when the air-cooled engines came in, and we got those.

We had had, in the mix-up period, when Turner took command he was friends with the Army, and he got these MB-3 As, these Thomas Moss Chunky things that the Army developed before we went to war, and then the Army had taken as reparations a whole bunch of brand new Pottker D-7s, and Turner got a load of them in the crates, brand new. They were in Quantico, and we didn't want to fool with them at all. No one wanted them. Old Geiger was in command, and I asked Geiger, I said could I have one of these things? He said, "Yeah, who's going to fix it up?"

I said, "I guess I can get my mechanics to fix it up on spare time." He said, "All right." I said, "Now, can it be my plane?" He said, "Yeah."

Sanderson heard about it, so Sanderson went to him and got the same thing. So we took two out of the crates, and got them rebuilt completely. And they were our private planes. I wouldn't even let Geiger fly mine.

Q: How long did you have that?

Rogers: I had it until I went to Santo Domingo, and the day I left, it became public property, and a boy was killed in it the day after I left. I'd had it for seven months. It was my plane.

Q: Was it fun to fly around?

Rogers: Oh, gosh, the most fun of any plane in the world. The most beautiful thing, in those days, to fly in the world. It was the first A-1 counterbalanced rudder, beautiful BMW ^{cylinder} BMW engine that you could trust like you'd trust your life. Never went wrong. Landed slow. It wasn't too fast, but it could climb beautifully. It was just a dream plane. And the two of them -- when Sandy left, Louis *BOURNE* dumped Sandy's plane in the *Chopankasic* ~~Chopankasic~~ Creek. He didn't know how to work it.

Q: What happened to the rest of those?

Rogers: They were never uncrated. They were just discarded -- brand new Fokker D-7s. No one took any interest in them.

Q: What about the mission of Marine Corps aviation in the 20's and 30's.

Rogers: Well, the mission--as I said, Santo Domingo and Haiti saved it, and then came Nicaragua and that was the peak. Then Marine Aviation was on its feet for good, due entirely to those two expeditionary forces

outfits and Nicaragua. And then China came along, but they didn't do much in China. It was just a question of flying. There was nothing there. But Nicaragua was the first time -- now, in Haiti and Santo Domingo particularly, we ran the mail. We picked up all the sick people. We transferred all the officers to their outlying posts. There was a little field everywhere in Santo Domingo. We'd pick up sick people, untrained men, officers, and move them back and forth. We'd run the mail. And then we did go into a great deal of practice in gunnery and bombing. That was the first time that it became the support of the ground troops, the support of the organization. See, we did everything that Lee in Santo Domingo -- he had C.J. Miller as his Chief of Staff -- anything that they wanted. Brainerd was in command. And we did it for them. Consequently, we became useful, and friends of the ground troops.

Q: But nowhere was it written that Marine Aviation would provide support for ground troops? You were just there and they used you?

Rogers: We were there and they used us, and they used us to their advantage, and consequently we became useful and an integral part of the Marine Corps. And of course, in Nicaragua, that's when there was quite a bit of active fighting. In Haiti and Santo Domingo the ground operation was chasing the bandits in the woods, a tuff of that kind. It was a small microscopic idea of Vietnam. But that was the salvation of Marine Aviation, because we had not Dominican and

Haitian and Nicaraguan occupation been there, we would have disintegrated and gone. Then the idea, why back there, when they started putting squadrons on the carriers on the West Coast -- that came later. And the desire to get in with the Navy and stay with the Navy.

Q: What was being done in the States on an experimental basis? What was the nation of Marine Aviation operations in the States?

Rogers: Well, the first thing that went along that amounted to any significance in the training was the bombing of the Ost-Friedland -- -- you know, when Bill Mitchell wanted to prove that you could sink a battleship. Well, the Navy was in on it, and Geiger was in command at Quantico. That's when I was down at Parris Island, and he had very few pilots that were useful at all, very few, and I was ordered, much to my sorrow, from my kingdom down at Parris Island up to Quantico. And that was the first beginning of any intelligent training. We went out and we practiced. We carried two 500 pound bombs on the wings of the DHs, and we'd go down there and bomb those old sunken hulks at the mouth of the Potomac, all those old Liberty ships that were sunk down there. And we practiced and practiced and practiced, and then we based down at Yorktown, and we participated in the bombing of the Ost-Friedland. Our bombs weren't big enough to do any harm. They sunk it with an old Martin bomber, with a great big bomb off a Martin bomber, by hitting in the water beside it. But we did hit the thing. That was the first phase of training.

Then, at Quantico, with Smedley in command -- Smedley was

running the ~~Big~~ Wilderness ~~Maneuver~~ -- and he wanted night flying. That was the first time we did any night flying, to my knowledge, at all.

Q: When was that, 1925?

Rogers: Oh, no, it was '21, when he had the Battle of the Wilderness down there. We'd go out at night and do whatever Goodley wanted us to do.

Q: What was night flying like at that time?

Rogers: Horrible! It was horrible! Out of the little old field at Quantico, no instruments, not a blessed thing. An example of how bad it was -- and with the lack of experience -- ~~Jeff~~ ^{Joey Ed} Davis and someone else were supposed to go down and make some theoretical night attack on the troops, and Joey got turned around, back down there by Chancellorsville, and instead of going back, went in the wrong direction, and kept flying and flying and flying. He ran out of gas down by Charlottesville and landed on top of a tree. Didn't hurt him at all.

Q: It must have been hard to keep formation or anything else. It must have been real hairy.

Rogers: Well, we just went two at a time. And then at the time also -- in that development, we had that, and then Goodley

at Quantico -- it was all just hit or miss, but somebody would get an idea and they'd do it. Smedley had a searchlight battery, and he wanted to see if the searchlights could pick up planes. So Geiger was in command, and we went out. I went out the first night with -- I've forgotten who the other pilot was -- and Smedley wanted to know if the searchlights could pick us up. Well, we flew and flew and they never picked us up. So then we flew into the beam. He wanted to know, if they did pick us up, could they follow us, so we flew into the beam, and then we got out of the beam. Or at least I got out of it. The people operating the searchlight didn't know much. You could roll over on your back and pull back this way and they'd think you were flying along that way, and the beam would follow the direction you were going, and you'd rolled over back and gone backwards. That was the night before Minnis was killed, when Geiger got all the credit for what ^{Farrell} ~~Farrell~~ did.

Minnis was a Naval Academy boy who'd been in the 2nd Division and was decorated in the infantry, and came into aviation, like George Hamilton did, and he was a full-out kid that his ambition was greater than his ability. So he said, "How'd you get out of the lights?" and I told him. He said, "Well, I have a theory that you dive straight down at the light and then pull out, and they won't -- "

I said, "I wouldn't do it, Scotty."

So he dove into the lights and never came out. He went right into the Potomac, wide open. And Geiger and Farrell went out there in the night and did the diving, Farrell did it all, and

they got Minnis's body up, and Geiger was given a hero's welcome, and poor old Farrell didn't get much credit for it.

Q: Was that ⁺Walker?

Rogers: ^GW. F. Farrell, ^{G. V. G. G. G.}Walter G. G. G.

Q: What kind of communications did you have at that time?

Rogers: I had none at all, until -- oh, we didn't have any communications until in the 30's. Another development, in those little progressive steps that took place at Quantico, they started a quick air photography deal, so we got a camera, and we'd be given a target somewhere or other, and you were to get over there as quick as a possible, take the picture -- that was from the BW, and the boy in the rear seat would be the photographer-- and he would do the developing in the plane coming back and make a quick print, and then deliver the picture to Smedley, to see how fast the picture came back from the target. That was one of Smedley's ideas, going through the deal that way.

The first radios that we had at all were in the early 30's. We had no communications at all.

Q: Just arm and hand signals.

Rogers: Yeah, it was arm and hand entirely.

Q: Nothing from the ground?

Rogers: Nothing from the ground at all. We had ~~no~~ ^{no} ~~pal~~ ^{Pal} drops. You know, pickups then -- and also there's another thing I forgot to add. There's a pickup unit with two poles and a rod, and you come down with a hook and pick it up, and the drop -- we went all through that message drop and message pickup deal.

Q: Down in Central America.

Rogers: Yeah, that was there, and we did in Quantico too. That was done at Quantico, but it was in Nicaragua mostly where it was put into practical use. All the practice was around Quantico.

Q: The status of Marine Aviation, say at the beginning of World War II, was pretty bad?

Rogers: Oh, it was terrible. It was terrible. That's the reason that I got down in Peru, which was one of the mistakes that you make when you don't know anything. See, I'd been in command of the Virgin Islands, and we had been chasing these German submarines, dropping bombs on them, not hurting them at all with the little bombs we had -- didn't hurt them, but we had sighted some and made them duck. And I came out and I said, "What's the picture?" And they said, "There isn't any picture. Geiger and Howell are sitting in San Diego glaring at each other." They didn't like each other at all.

Geiger didn't like Howell. Howell was harmless, but Geiger didn't like him at all.

"Got any planes?" No, they didn't have any planes. "That's the picture?" ^{haven't got} ~~Not~~ a darned thing. "Got any planes coming?" Nothing in the picture.

NOTS MOORE OR

He says, "You can relieve ~~Max Muller~~. Go out there to San Diego."

I said, "What are we going to do at San Diego?"

Well, we weren't going to do anything. There was nothing in the picture at that time at all. So I made a mistake in saying, "All right, I'll go to Peru." And that was a very bad mistake I made.

Q: Well, who implemented the concept of night flying? Who said, "Let's send Schwab² and those people over to England to find out?"

Rogers: Oh, that was World War II, when the British had gone into it, and they had the balloon barrage around London, with cables and all that. The British had gone into that. That real night flying combat was originally by the British.

Q: I realize that, but the question was, who at Division of Aviation said, "Well, maybe this is something we ought to get into".

Rogers: Well, that was Ralph Mitchell. Ralph was responsible for that. See, he was sitting on the throne at that time.

Q: He was Director of Aviation. Didn't it change between Harris and him?

Rogers: Yeah. See, when Geiger came back from Guadalcanal, Geiger took it for a very short time, and then he got the Corps Bug, and then Field Harris took it. But all that business in England, ~~something~~ sending the observers to England, was all done under Mitchell's regime.

Q: Of course, the war was going on. They had to find out. How about Lewis Merritt's trip? You mentioned that Daylington was the first aviator that fired in anger during the war, but wasn't Merritt --?

Rogers: Merritt was shot down. He wasn't a pilot. None of those boys that went on those trips. That was another reason for me going to Peru. I asked when I came back, I said, "Let me go to England." I'd been a single seat pilot about as much as I could be, and I said, "Let me go over there and get some experience with those Spit-firs," and they said, "Oh, all those trips to England and all of that all took place when you were in the Virgin Islands." So Mitch wouldn't send me over there. I begged and pled with him. I said, "Let me go over there and get some first hand experience flying with them, like I did in World War I." But Mitch wouldn't do it.

Q: You say you had a lot of single seat flying experience. When was the shift over from the BUs to fighter types?

Rogers: Well, we began to get the single seaters in Quantico, and we got the first water-cooled Curtiss Hawks in -- let me see -- in '26. Then we got the air-cooled Curtiss Hawks, which were a dream plane. That was the same plane that Al Williams made his reputation in, and that I flew in all those air races, as an acrobatic pilot. I used to ^{all} do that. We had them. Then I was up at headquarters when Brainerd was chief, and we had one assigned to him, -- two, I think -- and we'd go up to Buffalo and get them, and we got them down in Quantico. The air-cooled Hawk superseded the water-cooled Hawk. I forget the name of that Curtiss water-cooled engine. Then we got these fighter squadrons. They were formed in Quantico and formed on the West Coast. I had by virtue of my own long tour at headquarters, having an F6 Ck -- that's the first Pratt-Whitney air-cooled Curtiss Hawk -- I flew that all the time. I had, with being allowed to go anywhere, -- that was when they were opening these airports, and I could go around there flying those airport openers. Then that was when Jimmy Doolittle was performing and Sanderson.

Q: Shell representative?

Rogers: That was when he was still in the Army. Let me see. Of course -- yes, he was still in the Army in '27. Yes, in '27, because Sanderson and a boy named George Town^{er} and I flew out to the air races in Spokane, Washington, and Jimmie was in the Army at that time. Jimmie was doing his acrobatic work at the Spokane air races. Then that's when Jimmie got out and went with Shell.

Q: Shell, and then he went to selling planes to other countries.

Rogers: Yes. He went down to South America, representing Curtiss. He went to Shell, but he went first to Curtiss.

Q: Who would you say was the real sparkplug at the Division of Aviation at the beginning of World War II? To whom could you attribute whatever success Marine aviation had in World War II? The Commandant? Was General Holcomb that vitally interested?

Rogers: Not too much so. I would say, guessing, that Ralph Mitchell was. I would guess that.

Q: What was the method of his operations? Did he have to work through the Commandant or through the Navy?

Rogers: He worked both through the Commandant and through the Navy. See, Mitchell, having been a Naval Academy graduate, was quite a politician, a magnificent politician. He was a smoothy. He would go around and get what he could and do what he could. See, Geiger, as you know, went to Guadalcanal alone. He just got on a destroyer and he went out there. Geiger always wanted command. See, Geiger had spent his whole life in command. If he wasn't in command he'd send himself to War College. See, Geiger spent his whole life in command. If he couldn't -- when ^{1 LUTZ} ~~Turner~~ outranked him, Brainerd } outranked him -- of course, Turner always naturally outranked him and Howell outranked him -- well, if he was going to be sent somewhere who

where he'd be No. 2, he'd go to the Army War College, go to Fort Leavenworth

~~XXXXXX~~, go to Naval War College -- go anywhere.

Q: He had a good background in ground operations as well.

Rogers: Yes, he was smart at Leavenworth and smart at Naval War College.

Q: He may possibly have been the first aviation Commandant, do you think?

Rogers: No, he was -- statutory age hit him.

Q: And he died after he retired.

Rogers: No. He would have retired two weeks after his death. before
statutory age had him, and the last time I talked to him -- he knew
he had cancer of the liver -- he said, "I don't know, I'd rather
die than retire." Well, he did. He died before he retired.

Q: We dwelt some earlier on Okinawa and so on. What about your
tenure as island commander of Peleliu?

Rogers: Well, when Okinawa was closed up completely, and after
^{Pat's}
~~perhaps~~ unfortunate experience, Woods came.

Q: Before we go on to that, let's talk about ^{2d} ~~Second~~ Wing operations, after the end of Okinawa, over Japan, with ^{George Kenney's} ~~Walter Jennings's~~ outfit -- the sweeps over Kyushu and so on.

Rogers: With George ^{KENNEY?} ~~Chasfield~~?

Q: I think Ralph -- ^{MITCHELL} ~~the~~ ^{2d} ~~Second~~ Wing came under Far Eastern Air Forces.

Rogers: Yeah. Well, Jimmie came from England and ran at Okinawa just about -- JULY,

Q: -- Doolittle -- ^{HAD 7 WE} ~~8~~ ⁸

Rogers: -- OK, and Jimmie came, and Jimmie had been living in castles in England, and Jimmie'd had no field experience at all. He'd been, you know, sitting over in Europe all the time on the gravy train, and when Jimmie landed there, the thing was practically over.

Q: I remember when the B-29s came in on Kad^eina.

Rogers: Yeah. Well, Jimmie came in there, and I went over to see him, because I'd known Jimmie since 1920, and he was sitting up in the mud, terrible thing. I said, "Jimmie, why don't you fix yourself better? You're a lieutenant general" -- or whatever he was, I've forgotten. Well, he just didn't know. So we took him over there and

I fed him, and we had a lot of whiskey and icecream machines as you know and all that kind of stuff. So Jimmie's eyes were wide open. He said, "How you got that stuff?" I said, "Jimmie, you just have to be in the Marine Corps."

I remember, they didn't do much of anything.

Q: Well, there were some fighter sweeps, and then, of course, you had some carrier air with some sweeps over Indochina and so on. Then of course planning for Olympic-Coronet. There were some plans for the use of a ^{2d} ~~Second~~ Wing. As I recall, there was some sort of -- you were under the operational control, ^{2d} ~~Second~~ Wing was under the operational control of ~~Pete~~ ^{FEAF} but yet retained a certain independence of action.

Rogers: I think it was something like that. I knew very little about that set up. We didn't come in contact with it ourselves, and it was in another --

Q: It was in a higher agency of operations. Well, then --

Rogers: When ^{L.F.} ~~Lowie~~ ^{Lowie} Woods relieved ^{PAT} ~~Smith~~, ^{L.F.} ~~Lowie~~ and I didn't get along very well. Hadn't for a long time. And I was going to be Number 2, so there was a little bit of friction between ^{Lowie} ~~Lowie~~ and me, ~~and~~ ~~this was in Guam~~. ^{Lowie} Lowie went up to Guam and told them, "How about making a trade between Schilt and Rogers? He's down in Palau. I'd rather have Schilt."

This is all true. So Nuts came over there and said, "I'm going to transfer you." Okinawa was through then, see. "I'm going to send you down to Peleliu and send Schilt up. You're not going to get along with Lewie^{CU}, and you might end up getting hurt, as long as you're his No. 2 man, because -- "

Q: Did you have your star by then?

Rogers: Yeah. So there was nothing to do but say "Yes" because Nuts was in supreme command. So I went down to Peleliu. Frank didn't want to leave Peleliu. He was the king. I said, "It's none of my doing at all. It's Woods' doing, in that case."

So we made the transfer. Then the Bomb -- let me see -- the Bomb was dropped --

Q: Two bombs -- August 6th? and August 9th.

Rogers: The first bomb was dropped either the day before I left for Peleliu or after I'd gotten there. I can't remember the date. So when we got down there, we had all the Japs who were contained in the north. We had Angaur and Peleliu, and had enough destroyers to ride patrol around them, and all we were doing at that time was flying over, and if there was anything to shoot at, we'd shoot at it. We'd go over there and bother them at night, shoot rockets at them at night. I knew that after the Bomb, it was all over. So I never got credit for this one, officer¹⁴¹ credit. I had a smart staff of naval

officers. A bad-tempered four-striper that never got to be admiral because he had such a bad temper. He was in the dog house, but he was brilliant. And I had some very very topflight staff people. So I said, "Now, the war's going to end, and you write up the surrender procedure for this thing here." So they worked on it and worked on it.

Q: Did you have a directive from Admiral ^{Murray} ~~McDonald~~ of Com Mariannas?

Rogers: No. I had no directive at all. No, I did that all on my own entirely. So, came the end of the war. I got in a plane, went to ~~Guam~~ Guam, handed it to George Murray. I said, "Here it is." Well, he hadn't done a God damned thing. He took my surrender procedure word for word and used it, and all the surrender procedures-- and I never got a nickel's worth of credit for it.

Q: Well, you will now, because I have the thing here -- It says here, "The vast majority of the island garrisons that were to surrender in the area under control of Vice Admiral Murray," and so on, "standardized the conduct of the surrender and occupation program. On 20 August he organized from within its force the Mariannas surrender, acceptance and occupation command, Task Group 94.3, comprising a group of the following task units and their commanders -- Truk Occupation Unit under Blake, ^{BONING} Occupation Unit under ^{Key} ~~Alcario~~, and Peleliu Occupation Unit under "you" Guam Evacuation Unit under General Larsen, ^{who} who, I guess, was island commander.

Rogers: He was island commander. of GUM.

Q: "And three other commands commanded by naval officers. The plan governing the operation of these units dealt with such specifics as the ^{format of} ~~task~~ the surrender ceremony, the American flag raising, and the demilitarization of enemy forces, which were to be called thereafter disarmed military personnel. In addition the directive ordered each task unit commander to determine whether any Allied or American prisoners were also held on the island being surrendered, or if any had been kept there. The commanders also were to conduct spot interrogations and investigations to determine whether any war crimes or atrocities had been committed during the Japanese Occupation."

Nogara: I was mixed up in that too.

Q: "According to the task force directive, relations between the victors and the vanquished were to be properly conducted at all times and all military courtesies were to be observed, both before and after each surrender and flag raising ceremony had been completed. Japanese interpretation of these orders often resulted in more than one Marine or sailor being saluted by all Japanese ranks. Mille Atoll surrendered first on 22 August, and then Marcus, -- talk about the establishment of Marcus and the island command there, ~~Harrett~~. ^{the barracks} Here's what I wrote, and I'll read it to you: "The next Japanese area commander to yield was Lt. General Sadae Inoue, who surrendered Palau? on 2 September, 1945, the entire Palau group and all forces under

his command, including those on Yap, to Brigadier General Ward O. Rogers, island commander on Palau. The Palau island command had been organized on 16 July, 1964, as the third island base headquarters under command of Brigadier General Harold D. Campbell." Campbell was an aviator, and then it was redesignated Island Command, Palau, on 16 November '64, and Brigadier General Christian F. Schilt ~~relieved~~ ~~relieved~~ General Campbell, as island commander on 19 March '65, and in return ^{was} relieved on 7 August by General Rogers." I guess because of the fact that they held air fields, etc., and there was generally a squadron on the island as well as anything else, they handed it over to Marine Air officers.

Rogers: Yeah. We had a full group there.

Q: "Beginning on 15 September, elements of the 111th Infantry occupied Koror and Malakal and Arakabesan, liberated 530 Indian and Japanese POWs" --

Rogers: -- and Indonesians, too.

Q: And Indonesians?

Rogers: Gosh yes. We had a whole -- either a battalion or two battalions.

Q: Why Indonesians?

Rogers: The Japs had picked them up and brought them up there. They'd picked them up somewhere down in Malaysia. I don't know where, but they picked them up. We had an Indian outfit, commanded by a colonel named *Wahedi Khan*, and Indonesians, and we took them over from Koror, *Ara Kabayan*, and *Babelthuap*, and we set them up in camps on Peleliu and fed them and took care of them.

Q: I asked about the Indonesians because you know I'd just finished writing about the Houston detachment. They were off of Java, and when they went ashore some of them were killed by Indonesians and others were turned over to the Japanese, and of course most of the Indonesians, being anti-Dutch, had a record of collaborating with the Japanese. Were these Indonesians part of the Dutch Colonial forces?

Rogers: Yes. The Japs had captured them. I've forgotten where the Japs had captured them.

Q: I see. Probably in Java.

Rogers : Around Java. They had them up there along with Indians. They captured that Indian regiment somewhere down there.

Q: Singapore? Malaya?

Rogers: Singapore. Yeah, Malaya. and I've forgotten the name of the

Indonesian CO, but the Indian CO was named Wahiti ^{ed} ~~Wahiti~~ ⁷⁷ ~~Wahiti~~ ^{7K}

So, going back to that surrender procedure, we had this little incident which was amusing. The Japs had an extremely brilliant chief of staff named Tada, and Tada was a nitpicker, and in my directive about the surrender of all weapons, he tried to make an exception about these samurai swords, because there was some radio traffic they'd monitored between MacArthur about whether a samurai sword was a weapon or not -- or an ornament.

Q: They were pretty well informed, then. They knew what was going on.

Rogers: They had their own radio and they were monitoring everything, and they had interpreters. So Charlie ^{Fike} -- I'd sent ^{to JAP H.Q.} -- Charlie was my chief of staff. He was brilliant in one way and nutty in another way, and I told Charlie, ^{what to do} and Charlie came back. He had been conferring with Tada. He said, "Tada's balking about the samurai swords. He says General MacArthur hasn't made his mind up about it." So I sent word through Charlie to Tada that I gave not a damn what General MacArthur did, I was commander and I said turn those swords in. They turned them in, 2,200 of them. And I jumped the gun. MacArthur later made them turn them in, but that was still in the back and forth period. So I just said through Charlie that I was not the least bit concerned with General MacArthur at all, my orders were, turn those swords in. So they turned them all in.

Q: Going back to the liberation of these POWs, ^PMost of them, I say,

"were suffering from marked malnutrition and beri-beri. By 5 October all Japanese had been removed to Ebelthuan of the Palau group. A month later the Indians and Japanese were repatriated." That's Javanese, probably.

Rogers: Javanese, yes.

Rogers: Sure.

Q:

Rogers: Javanese instead of Japanese, that's why -- why should they be -- "At the end of September General Rogers sent a small force to reconnoiter islands and atolls in the vicinity of the Palau, to search for missing Allied personnel. None were found."

Rogers: There was one case, which was to me -- It was the dumbest, most tragic thing in my knowledge. We knew that the Japs had one prisoner. That was ^{long} ~~and~~ before I was there. An Army B-24 had been shot down, and one man had jumped, and they had seen him picked up alive and well by a Japanese boat. Well, my first question, after the papers were signed, was: "You have one prisoner. Where is he?" And through an interpreter, Inoue said, "He's dead." I said, "How? What happened?" He said, "One of my officers killed him. Punished him." I said, "Well, deliver that officer to us tomorrow." The next day came a picture of a Jap in uniform with a hole through his head, laying on the ground. This officer committed suicide.

So I put in the whole statement then. I said, "Where's

this prisoner buried?" The story was that this prisoner had been up at Babelthusp, where it was hot as could be, and he had requested to go to Koror, where the climate was much nicer. Inoue had said "Yes." That was Inoue's story. A lieutenant had asked permission from the colonel, could he talk to this American prisoner to practice English? And the colonel had given him permission. So the lieutenant had command of an anti-aircraft battery. He took this boy -- who was Jewish, by the way -- and took him up to where our bombers had killed almost his entire anti-aircraft command, and he began to brood over the thing, and he decided to punish him, and he shot him, buried him on the spot and prayed over him. So we sent a party over. The boy was buried in full uniform, all of his money in his pockets, all his ID cards, everything exactly as it happened. So I had nothing in the world but this picture of this Jap lieutenant laying dead. So I sent the entire report in, and the picture, saying "This is all I know."

So they started a war crimes commission, much later on, and they went to Japan and picked Inoue up, took him to Guam, and tried him as the supreme commander. He had no more to do with killing that boy than the man in the moon, because everything he said was accurate. And they condemned him to death. Later it was commuted, and I don't know what happened, but he was not harmed. But he was condemned to be hanged. And with me, after the surrender, Inoue had cooperated absolutely beautifully. Everything in the world was, exactly, letter perfect. Tada, his chief of staff, was a little

too smart for his own good, but I kept him under control.

Tape 2, side 1

Q: On 22nd October, '44, the 2nd Battalion which had been disbanded, 26th Marines, arrived to relieve the 111th Infantry, Peleliu Garrison Force; ^{the} following March the Marine detachment provisional Peleliu was activated and on the 15th, 26th Marines was disbanded at Peleliu. Provisional forces redesignated Marines barracks Peleliu on 15 April '46 when administrative control of the unit passed to the Department of the Pacific.

When did you leave Peleliu?

Rogers: I left March the 19th, I think. I think it was the 19th.

Q: Just before the barracks was formed.

Rogers: Yeah.

Q: You had an Army battalion under you when you arrived. They did all the --

Rogers: They had -- It was one of the, X part of the division commanded by Smith when Beadle Smith relieved him in battle. I mean Holland Smith.

Q: A regiment of the 27th Division.

Rogers: Yeah. A man named Ayers commanded, who was a very nice bird, and they were -- in my opinion, they were ^{Very} ~~for~~ efficient. They were well organized and did everything they were supposed to do very very well. They were naturally a little bit bitter about what had happened. I'll never forget their excuse -- that in that Saipan deal, that they didn't want to go into action until there had been sufficient artillery preparation. That was what Ayers told me, that that was the crux of the situation.

Q: Provided by the Marines?

Rogers: H.M. Smith had to go, go right away. And they wanted to hold back until there'd been enough artillery preparation to -- as they said -- to "process" them. I got that from Ayers himself, who was an regimental commander.

Q: You had what at Peleliu? Or did you have a group, or just a few squadrons?

Rogers: Ed Pugh had a group. Let me think. At that time, by the time I got there, it was only a group.

Q: Transport group?

Rogers: No, Corsair. Fighter group.

Q: Did anything else of interest happen during your time there?

Rogers: Well, there was one thing that was purely amusing, that I'll never forget as long as I live. We told the Japs to clean up the island of Koror, which had been the capital of the Palau. It had been so smashed up by all our bombers, in the days when the Army was based at Angaur. So the Army and Navy -- Inoue outranked Ito by two weeks, so the Army was the senior presence, so they designated the Navy to do the cleaning up. So I went over to inspect, and Ito met me, and he had all his troops, and they presented arms with shovels and picks. They had done a beautiful job cleaning up. And as we were walking, looking at things, he said -- he knew a few words of English and he said, "I was in America." I said, "Where?" He said, "In Argentina." I said, "Se habla Espanol?" He said, "En poco," and we started talking in Spanish. His Spanish was about as bad as mine. We were chatting along, and my aide -- my chief of staff and Tada were walking behind us, and my aide and a Jap interpreter were walking behind ^KFife and Tada. The interpreter said to my aide, who was a boy named McKamy, "Colonel Tada is very unhappy." McKamy said, "Why?" "Because General Rogers is talking to Vice Admiral Ito in a language which Colonel Tada does not understand." Tada spoke fair English. McKamy said, "Why?" He said, "Because he is now afraid that Vice Admiral Ito will tell General Rogers what a dirty son-of-a-bitch Colonel Tada is!"

Q: Of course, the prisoners you liberated were in pretty bad shape.

Rogers: They weren't in too bad shape. They'd been fed on sweet potatoes.

Q: In other words, they were one of the few prisoner groups, island groups, able to maintain itself despite --

Rogers:-- oh, yes. They were not in bad shape.

Q: How did they treat the natives and so on?

Rogers: They treated the natives fairly well. The natives were not mistreated by the Japs to any extent. The Japs had been there since they took it from the Germans in World War I, and the natives were just natives. To the best of my knowledge they were never mistreated at all.

Q: Now about any hold-outs in the ^{No. 2 -} Bloody Three Sisters Ridges?

Rogers: All during the time I was there, we knew there were some Japs on the island, and after the surrender, we got jeeps with loud speakers. We posted -- we brought over some Japs. They didn't spend the night, by the way. And put them in Jeeps with loud speakers, went over every inch of the island saying that the Emperor had surrendered, the war is over, peace, no one's going to be mistreated. We had signs posted everywhere in the world but the one place that

they were.

Q: Where was that?

Rogers: Just a minute . So, we knew that they were going to the movies. They were back in the shadows. There would be a shadow that would disappear. At the ration dumps, we had so much ration dumps -- we knew that at the ration dumps (we didn't have any sentries on them) there were small raids on the ration dumps. We knew, but we couldn't -- we got those Japs over in the jeeps with the loud speakers, and posted the signs in Japanese, everywhere but where they were. They were right in the middle of the swamp. Right there. I can show you -- I think I've got that book in there. They were living in the swamp, and after the command deteriorated, after the Japs got bolder and bolder and bolder, finally the few people that were left on Pelelieu -- that was after Monahan had left, there was just a very small detachment there -- they finally got from Guam or somewhere some other Japs, and this captain or Lieutenant had about 12 or 15 men, and they came out, rather neat and well-fed, --

Q: -- surrendered?

Rogers: Yes.

Q: Was there an attack?

Rogers: Not to my knowledge. I don't know what. But I was told -- this was long after I was retired, that I learned of this deal --

Q: -- you don't know exactly when they --

Rogers: -- no -- when they found them, when they came out. But there were pictures published of this lieutenant or captain, looking rather neat, boxing.

Q: You know. We got a letter. This fellow, Mr. ^{GABAND} ~~Durant~~, who wrote the Pelalieu thing -- we heard from American schoolteachers that some Japanese came out after, in the 50's some time.

Rogers: That could have been. It could have been at that time.

Q: They'd been living in the swamp all the time.

Rogers: In the swamp. They were in good shape. Of course, they'd lived off our rations, our canned goods, and they had fish. I don't know where they got -- I guess they went to our wells at night and got fresh water. But according to the pictures I saw of them, they looked pretty good.

Q: There was a fellow who was in George Hun^Tz's company, on Pelalieu-- you probably read Coral Comes High, 8th 1st Marines, way up on White Beach -- and one of his company members, who is now wealthy, invented an oil rig for ^{use} down in Texas, fellow by the name of Fred Fox, I think in San Antonio -- he made a tour there with his wife, took a trip out there and he sent back photos and everything to

the ^{1st} Marine Division Association, in color. The place is really a mess.

Rogers: Well, last year I went to California after my wife's death, ^{visited my} and ^{who} the boy and his wife had been stationed at Vint Hill. ^{He} ?
^A was a private. ^{They had no quarters on the post so I} I found what a signen they were living in, and took them, ^{We became good friends.} put them in this guest room up here. ^{I went to see him.} They knew I was interested in Jack London's background, and we went up to the Valley of the Moon to see the Jack London Museum. There was a saloon down there where Jack London had done his drinking, in his day. The owner of the saloon had been a salvage operator, and he had been on Peleliu, picking up all the junk there. He told me about what was left. The ^{Kudzu} vines had taken over everything ~~in the world,~~ ^{all intelligence was gone} and ~~everything was gone,~~ but they had salvaged everything possible, and it all went to the Philippines and China. ^{eventually} China ^{all} got it ~~at that time.~~
 We left millions of dollars worth of earth-moving machinery.

Q: You know Earl Ellis, supposed to have been killed.

Rogers: Yes, on Peleliu.

Q: Was there any record? Have you come across anything?

Rogers: No um record whatever of Ellis. Theoretically he was killed on Peleliu.

Q: Well, this Navy chief -- was it, I think, one of the earthquakes in

Japan, was it '22, '25?

Rogers: Something like that.

Q: The American Embassy in Tokyo received word that an American had died mysteriously there, and this chief went to get his ashes, and supposedly came back out of his mind. This was Admiral Zacharias. But to tell you an interesting story -- Colonel ^{Kalut} ~~Calcutt~~, John ^{Kalut} ~~Calcutt~~... he had a regiment, and in the Peleliu campaign, during the height of it, one of his riflemen came up to a CP and said, "Colonel, we've just found a sign with the name ^{Ellis} ~~Russell~~" (Ellis vice Russell?) "on it, someplace." Then the kid disappeared, and the sign, and they never heard anything else. But this is like the Amelia Earhart ^{yes} ~~at~~ disappearance; they never solved it. There's no doubt, I think, in many people's minds, that he was murdered.

Rogers: Yeah. at Peleliu. He got in there. He was a strange person. I never knew him, but I heard that he was a very eccentric person, Ellis was.

Q: Well, I give the story for what it's worth. He was very close to Lajeune.

Rogers: Yes. Very close to Lajeune.

Q: And he was the operations officer, and of course he was supposed to be the man who foresaw the fact that we would have to take the islands in the Pacific, and the nature of the Pacific campaign. And

supposedly Lajeune had a . . .

(blank tape)

* * * *

Rogers: Yeah. You know, this is one of the amusing things about Peleliu. I've always laugh~~ed~~ed at it more than anything in the world. At the Senior Tactical School in Quantico, in '36, we had the Peleliu problem. Well, in the Peleliu problem, Colonel Holmes got a big fat U -- Unsatisfactory. The rest of us messed around and did various things and got S's. Maurice Holmes' solution to the Peleliu problem was the actual one used! Come up and take Angaur first, and then take another, and then operate from there. Of course, the big solution was Babelthuap. That was the ~~X/X~~ solution.

Q: Did you know at that time exactly the nature of the defenses, or what Japan was doing?

Rogers: Had no knowledge whatever what they had. They had on Babelthuap -- I went over -- Inoue asked me to come over there once and see him. His headquarters was on Babelthuap. He said I might be interested in seeing their defenses. So I flew over, there, and went across in a little boat to Babelthuap. There was no place to land on Babelthuap. We landed on that seaplane raft at Koror with those little old OY planes. We went up there, to the big swamp in Babelthuap, and they had -- there was a Jap colonel who was standing out there waiting to greet me, and one of these Japs, I think it was Tada, said, "This colonel is very sad."

I said, "Why?" He said, "Because he is standing in front --

after the surrender -- of the post he was supposed to defend, and his dream was to die defending his post when the Americans came in in overwhelming numbers."

But their defense -- now, this was Forrest Sherman too -- they had a swamp defense like the spokes of a wagon wheel, a perimeter thing. No mechanized stuff could get in there at all. They'd have bogged down. They had every path, the whole thing, covered with beautiful fire. And we would have lost, had we gone in and tried to take Babelthwap, -- the slaughter would have been incredible. So Forrest Sherman asked me, in Guam, "What do they have over there?" And I told him. And Forrest Sherman rubbed his hands and said, "Sherman was right again!" He said, "I was the only one who kept those fire-eaters from going in to exterminate the Japs. No one but Sherman stopped it."

Q: Oh, really? CincPac had planned to land on Babelthwap?

Yeah.

Rogers: /Forrest Sherman told me -- that was Forrest talking to me -- "Sherman was correct again." You know, Forrest loved himself.

Q: Was there any indication, to your knowledge, regarding that having taking Pelelia was a good thing or a bad thing? There was some controversy about that.

Rogers: Well, it was just another step toward the eventual defeat of the Japs.

of the Japs. Now, our air had smashed up all the air. They had nothing left there. When Linsbergh led that flight over there with the P-39s, whatever it was, P-37s, one of those twin-engined things --

Q: P-38s?

Rogers: P-38s, twin-engine fighters -- it was just a matter of "Yes, you're right," "Yes, you're wrong." It was a morale victory. It was a further elimination, as you went towards Japan, of all the Japanese troops. But their Navy was out of whack, after that big battle of the Philippines, and they could have been bypassed completely, and I don't think it would have made any difference. But as it was, see, there were 52,000 of them -- something like that -- and they were living on sweet potatoes, and they would have had that thing, but they had no transportation. They couldn't have gone anywhere. They had no air. The Japs' air was so occupied in fighting; particularly after Iwo, and after the Okinawa business, the Japs' air was practically all gone.

Q: It wouldn't have affected MacArthur's invasion of the Philippines at all.

Rogers: I don't think it would have at all. I don't think it would have touched it. Of course, you know, they built a tremendous hospital, expecting terrific casualties in the Philippines, and that's the reason for that gigantic hospital, perfectly staffed--sitting there doing nothing. But it was a necessary precaution. They didn't

Rogers: Yeah.

Q: -- Geiger -- in the San Diego area --

Rogers: I had a funny experience with that Geiger deal. At the surrender of the sword, there was an Ito sword -- a Navy sword with a great big gold hilt, and the blade was built in 1200. It was one of the classic blades, the old sword-making deal. And everyone wanted it. I didn't want to take it by virtue of being CO. I didn't want to use my rank to take it. I said, "No, we'll send this on to Geiger."

So Gene Bourke came out there on an inspection tour for --and I said, "Gene, take this back to Guam and give it to Roy. I don't want to take it, for personal reasons, and it's a priceless souvenir."

So he took it back and gave it to Geiger. And when I went through, Geiger had a big cocktail party, and that girl that was acting as his hostess -- the first thing she said to me was, "That sword you sent General Geiger, he's got all those -- he says ^{I'm} that is the most valuable, most priceless sword ^{I've} ~~he's~~ ever seen. ^{I'm} ~~he's~~ just in love with it," and so on.

^{was in HQ} So, after I'd received the Dear John letter, Field Harris ~~got there~~, and Harris said, "The old man is up here, taking ~~the~~ ^A sword over to the Naval Academy Museum to present it to the Naval Academy." He said, "It's some sort of a fancy Japanese sword." I said, "I'll bet it's the sword I gave him." He said, "Oh, naw, he ain't gonna do nothing like that." You know how Field talks.

Later *USNA* reunion --

^ we had a class at ~~the USNA~~ -- see, Field was in my class at the Naval Academy. I went over to the Museum, and I walked in there, and there was the sword, "Presented to the Naval Academy by Mrs. so and so" -- Geiger's girl -- "In memory of her husband who was killed, lost on a submarine."

So I went to the curator, and I said, "That card -- I don't care what you put on a card, but the true story of that thing, which I wish you'd put on the card, is, that sword was surrendered by Vice Admiral Ito to Brigadier General F.O. Rogers at Peleliu, and was given by General Rogers to General Geiger." They put that. That's on the card right now. It's still there.

Q: It's not one of those that's been returned?

Rogers: It was in the museum, and I can't imagine it being -- the museum giving it up.

Q: Well, of course, you know, a lot of the swords have been --

collecting surrendered swords --

Rogers: I know. When that Jap came here -- ~~when~~ *^* my wife was alive, ~~she~~ *and* was very provoked with me, because I had a whole bunch of them, ~~and~~ *^* sent Admiral Nimitz a thousand of them in a box, to give to naval officers that had not been able to get a sword. I sent him a thousand, crated up. I kept quite a few, to give to people that hadn't gotten them, after I got back. Some of the kids that had

worked for me at various times didn't have them, and I gave them to them -- like Beatty, and I think I gave ~~Pete~~^{AT} one, ~~Pete~~^{AT} and some of these others.

But when there was a big piece in the Washington paper about this Jap coming over, hoping to collect these family heirlooms, my wife said, "Why don't you telephone the Jap embassy and tell him to come down?"

I said, "Oh, I'll do it tomorrow." Well, I forgot it. So then he went back. I'll show you, in that little stow cabin, a whole bunch of them hanging up there. I should have done it, because one was very pitiful. On the tag, written in Japanese, was "This sword has been in our family for three or four hundred years, and I hope that into whatever hands it falls, it will be treated with the same respect with which my family has treated it." They had their names and addresses, but the tags were lost in shipping, on most of the darned things.

Q: You know, when I went out to China with the division, when we left -- I was enlisted then, and commissioned during my career -- I think I got a rifle or something. I couldn't get a sword. What we did -- evidently some enterprising Chinese merchant was building them, and they were crappy. But I had it for the longest time. It finally broke down.

happen with
Rogers: Well, I had a thing ~~about~~ some of George Murray's people. *from*
This irritated me no end. A whole mob of nogoodniks ~~on~~ *from* Guam came

over on a visit to Palaliu, and they wanted rifles, bayonets, pistols and swords for all officers. They also wanted full Jap uniforms. And I said, "Where ^{in the world} am I going to get a Jap uniform? They're all sitting over there in *Babelthuep*. Do you think I'm going to tell a Jap to take his uniform off and give it to you?"

Oh, that hurt their feelings no end. They wanted me to go over there and take a Jap, and undress him, to give them a Jap uniform to take back to their children, and none of them had been in battle at all. There were some lulus that came visiting after that thing was all over. I'll tell you, there were some hot potatoes. They wanted everything in the world they could get, and were indignant if they didn't get it.

This was the funniest experience in the world. I had a Negro orderly, and he got his sufficient numbers and he was going home. He said, "General, can't I have one of them swords?" I said, "*Ridgeway* I can't give you one. Every officer on the post has got 'em and the senior non-coms, but you're a corporal, and if I give it to you, that's a morale-breaker. I simply can't do it."

He said, "Can't I just have a little piece of one of them old swords?" Finally, there was one old thing, all rusty, handle was busted -- it was rusty, wasn't worth anything, no one would want the thing -- and I said, "Now, all right, *Ridgeway* you hide this thing. If anybody catches it in your pack, I'll swear you stole it, and they'll put you in jail." So he wrapped it up in his blanket. But this is the funniest thing that ever happened in the world, with *Ridgeway*. I told the story in the Senate Office

Building, before I retired. The Texas Contingent had to have an Army general from Texas and a Navy admiral from Texas, and they wanted a Marine flag officer from Texas to make a speech at the Texas Contingent, and I was caught at the last minute with no preparation at all. So I just had to get in the car and go down there, and I didn't know what the heck, so I just told them all the funny stories I could think of, and I told them about this Negro Ridgeway, which to me was the funniest thing in the world -- and Readers Digest wouldn't publish it in "Humor in Uniform," cause it was a Negro, I guess. But all the time in Okinawa he kept pestering me to let him go down to the lines. I said, "What in the world do you want to go down to the lines for? You'll get yourself killed. You got no business down there. You're a mess attendant, my orderly."

"I've got to go."

I said, "Why, Ridgeway?"

"Well, I got two brothers that are dogfaces, and they've both been in action. One was in action in Italy and the other was in action in the Philippines. If I go back to Pensacola, I won't be able to hold my head up." *And I said, "Forget it."*

Well, he kept pestering me, and finally one day -- Deiger's headquarters were in Naha -- and so I said, "All right, Ridgeway, we'll go down and see what we can do." So Bill Wallace and I got the jeep, Ridgeway driving, Bill and I sitting in the back. He had his rifle, and he had borrowed my pistol and Bill's pistol.

He had two pistols and a rifle. We got down to Naha and old Geiger was in a good humor. I went in and said, "General, one of your fellow citizens from Pensacola, my colored boy, says he's got to get shot at, for his self respect." I told him his two brothers had been in the army. Well, Geiger was in a good humor. He said, let's "All right, ~~gun~~ take him down there."

So he called his aide, who was a major, and he put Bill and me in his big jeep, and he had one of his orderlies drive our jeep, which Ridgeway had driven down to Naha, and away we go. And we got down right where the 1st and 6th Ex were, and Geiger called Bob Roberts --

Q: -- he was killed?

Rogers: The next day. And said, "Send this colored boy down and let him shoot at a Jap." We were standing behind a rock, and they were using those flame-throwers up against the caves up there and going on. So Bob Roberts called the captain and the captain called the sergeant, and Ridgeway disappeared, and he was gone about two hours. We were standing behind the rock. That was the time that Bob Roberts came up to Geiger and said, "General, we've got this for you, and we'll have that for you tomorrow." And Spencer ^{Bergery} ~~Ready~~ said, "You lying blankety blankety blank, the 1st Division's got it, not that lousy 6th Division." And Geiger said, "Now, boys. Now, boys. Now, boys." So they were just about to have a fist fight. Berger was stripped to the waist and he was going to jump on Bob Roberts.

So that was calmed down. Then Geiger said to me, "You know, those boys shouldn't fight, but it's good for me. The more old ^{dro} ~~Peglar~~ and old Shepherd (Lem) don't like each other, the better they fight. "

Q: I guess there was quite a controversy there.

There was. Yeah.
Rogers: /So, here's part of the story. So Buckner got killed, right where we were, the next day. And Bob ~~Boys~~ ^{ROBERTS} got killed. So the next morning we got the dispatches, and Ridgeway was in there doing something for me, and I said, "Ridgeway, when you get back to Pensacola, you tell them the colonel who escorted you on the way was killed, and General Buckner was killed right where you started out. Now, when you get back to Pensacola you can tell all your friends that story."

Ridgeway looked sad as could be, and he said, "General, I could make 'em believe any lie I told 'em, but I couldn't make 'em believe that."

Q: How do you think the two divisions felt about the air support they were receiving?

Rogers: As near as I know, the Marines were absolutely satisfied. They had no complaints at all. The Army -- when that kid shot up that truckload of Army people -- they were bellyaching to beat the band on that, ~~to~~ ⁷ ~~Lanson~~. But the 1st and 6th were absolutely *on that particular instance.*

satisfied, and they demanded it. They wanted it more than anything at all. There was no -- I never heard of one complaint from either Pedro (del Valle) or Lem.

Q: How were the operations of the planes themselves? Did you have much trouble?

Rogers: Very little. Those bent-wings, those old Corsairs, were the most wonderful single-seater planes, prop-driven planes in the world. There was practically no trouble at all.

Q: You had an Army P-47, a Thunderbolt outfit.

Rogers: Yeah. And that's when Pat sent them up on a night raid.

Q: Over Kyushu.

Rogers: Yeah, and they lost so many of them. So many didn't come back.

Q: We were talking about the P-47s.

Rogers: Yeah. It was those Thunderbolts that shot up that had division. That was one of the indications perhaps of the trouble I had with Woods, because we -- They had come back from a CAP, and up at Hida Misaki they had seen a boat, that they thought was a big dugout canoe, had about 10 Japs in it, heading north. So they called back to

us, and the boat was on the east side of Okinawa, heading north. They called this Thunderbolt CAP, said, "There's a boat, apparently ~~full~~ full of Japs, heading north, off the northeast tip of Okinawa." Said, "Look at them."

So these three green kids went down the east side of the island, where this division was encamped. They'd been taken out of the lines because they were no good.

Q: Up to the north.

Rogers: Yeah, up there to the north, on the east side of the island. With the United States flag flying big as life, our emblems all over the trucks. And these three went down there and shot that place up. Didn't kill a soul, but they burned up their film library. Just shot it up to beat the band. Sows -- who had had nothing to do with it at all -- thank God we had tape recordings of our message from *Heda Muzaki* ² ~~Hetamasaki~~ -- from that AWS squadron up there -- the directions and everything in the world. But these ignorant kids just went crazy and they went down and shot up something. They had just arrived. The ADC was blamed by brother Woods for that.

Q: Now, what was the relationship between ADC and the wing?

Rogers: Well, we ran all the --

Q: -- fighters for ^{CAP} Cap? --

Rogers: -- all the thing, but the major decisions -- For example, Pat ordered those raids against Kyushu. He was the overall commander. And, in the final analysis, Woodruff was the overall commander of all the Air, all the Marine Air.

There was another terrible thing that was never publicized at all, because the great ^{X Richardson} "richman" Kelly Turner had done it. I don't think anybody but Wallace and Pat and I know_x it, and Pat's forgotten it. At GAP, over one of the picket boats -- it was tremendously foggy, and the picket boat said, "Nobody can find us, go on home. " The picket boat failed to notify El Dorado, which was Kelly Turner's flagship, command ship. They notified us. We checked them in to El Dorado, as we were supposed to do. Kelly Turner blew his stack, ^{IT WAS PITCH DARK, RAINING} and ~~fixed~~ --there were none of them ^{oriented} away, they were just coming in. He ordered out, I forgot, ordered a tremendous number out. The story was, he was pretty well drunk anyway. I think we lost nine of them on the take-off. It was pouring down rain and foggy. And they flew into the mountain. And that was nobody but ^{Richardson} "richman" Kelly Turner. He blew his stack completely.

Q: Did you have any run-in or tie-in or relationship with General Richardson?

Rogers: No. None at all.

Q: He wasn't particularly a Marine Corps fan.

Rogers: No, I know he wasn't. But old Buckner was very good.

Q: Yes, so I understand, from some information that O.P. Smith provided, and of course he was deputy chief of staff of the 10th Army. Jimmy Roosevelt was on the staff there for a while and a few others. For joint operation of the size that Okinawa was, it ran pretty well.

Rogers: Well, you know, you were there, when the two Marine divisions started moving. They moved so fast, they only had to move.

Q: Of course, the Army had some pretty rugged territory to fight in.

Rogers: They had some bad stuff.

Q: They had that *Yuza Dake*, that big ~~fighting~~ height, and the fight for *Shuri*. They didn't have any easy road.

Rogers: No, they didn't at all.

Q: I think by and large they had as difficult a fight perhaps as any of us. General Chapman's wife is your cousin?

Rogers: Yeah, something like that. I have two cousins, both married to -- one to a retired Air Force major general -- one on one side of the family, one on the other. They're two of the best looking girls. I think Emily is extremely good looking for her age.

And Dorothy Mansell, who is on the Rogers side of the family, is -- at the age of 55 I think she's the most beautiful woman I've ever seen. They're both in Washington. Mansell is still with General Electric. He's one of the last ones of those people that worked with GE, those Air Force generals.

Q: Well, I can't think of any more questions, really. I wonder if you have anything you think we haven't covered. We've covered World War I, the 20's, the 30's, not completely, but --

Rogers: Well, I'm glad you brought it up about that slow, bit and by miss, progress of training, which started during ~~W/H/H/H/H~~ Smedley's regime in Quantico.

Q: He was a big aviation fan.

Roger: Yeah, he loved Air. Oh, Walter ^{adaghty} ~~McCartney~~ was our old engineer-- officer -- he was an old drunk, but Smedley had an automobile, and old Walter kept Smedley's automobile running. This was one of the funny stories that had no bearing on history at all. Old Mac was a terrible drunk, ^{as} ~~and~~ old Geiger was. Mac and I were living in a tarpaper house down on 2nd Street, right on the river, in Quantico. ~~And Geiger was down there~~ ^{for a visit} We had some alcohol, something or other, and Geiger was ~~down there~~. A telephone call came in. ~~Snow was very heavy.~~ ^{From} Pat, who had flown into the river down by Woodbridge and fished himself out, got out -- the plane was wrecked--and Pat telephoned, that news

and Mrs. Geiger knew that Roy was down there. So Geiger said, "My gosh, Mulcahy, what else are you going to do?" And he hung up the telephone, and he told us, "I'm going to finally give that bird a court martial."

So McCarthy^{ughtry} said, "No, you're not, Roy."

Geiger says, "I am."

So McCarthy^{ughtry} went to the telephone and said, "Give me General Butler."

Geiger said, "My God, I'm getting out of here!" Geiger went out in a snowstorm, and Mac called General Butler, Smedley. Said, "Smedley! Roy's down here, going to punish one of my boys for falling in the river in an airplane. I don't want him to do it."

Smedley knew Mac was drunk. He said, "Mac, go on back to bed."

Q: You know, we've got quite a few good stories about ~~Geiger~~ Butler.

Rogers: Oh, Lord yes. One of the funniest ones that ever happened in the world, pertaining to aviation to a certain extent -- at Quantico, the post team had two or three boys from the flying field on it, and there was some in the ^{friction} ~~captain of the~~ management. They put these boys off the post team. So the flying field personnel were a little bit sore with post. Then the ^{post} ~~Diamond administration~~ was turned up. So the Naval Air Station from Norfolk came up to play the Quantico Marines, and they had to go out to the flying field to play. It was on a Saturday afternoon. So old Geiger was in

Washington. The officer of the day was Jackie Flachte, and he was off down the river, anchored, fishing. Aviation personnel started cheering for the Naval Air Station. G.J. Miller, who was athletic officer -- Charlie John Miller, who died before the war -- G.J. became very indignant and cursed out all the aviation personnel, and some little old World War I kid who'd been decorated in battle said, "You can't curse me and call me yellow for cheering, I'll cheer for who I please -- " Oh, there was a terrible stink.

So G.J. went up and reported to Smedley, that there was Bolshevism and no ~~patriot~~ patriotism in the Marine Corps down at the flying field, they cheered for the Navy Air Station against the post team.

Poor old Geiger was up in Washington. Monday morning, the telephone rang. Smedley says -- Geiger was a major, I guess, then --

"Put the entire command in uniform and march to my headquarters."

Geiger asked something about, "Any reason, General?"

"No reason. You put them -- "

"The entire command, Sir? The telephone operators and the cooks?"

"Every man in your command. March them up to headquarters."

So he did. They all marched up to headquarters, where the museum is now. Stood there. At attention. Geiger standing there, and all of them. Not a sound.

The window flew up. Smedley's head came out the window.

"Rogers! Rogers! Come up here right away!"

I knew I'd done nothing. I hadn't been there. I knew nothing about it, had no idea. My heart was free from care. So I went up there. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. was Assistant Secretary of the Navy, and I had been flying him everywhere, so he'd called me to get to Washington right away. So I said, "General, everybody in the command is here, and the planes are all locked up in the hangar and the hangar doors are closed. I can't get a plane out by myself."

"Take anybody you want. Take my car." So I picked up all my mechanics and got in the car, went back, got the plane out. I said, "You all stay here." I got in the plane, got to Washington, picked up Mr. Roosevelt, had to go up to New Jersey somewhere. And what happened? After he let them stand there for a long time, he went out. He says, "Any Marine who cheered for the Navy against the Marine Corps ^{is} ~~are~~ going to be punished. The whole command, go down to the dock and unload that coal barge. Geiger too."

Officers and men all went down and unloaded the coal barge.

Q: He was pretty much a Marine Corps sports fan, wasn't he?

Rogers: Oh, my yes. Wild. At those football games and baseball games, he'd lead the cheering section.

Q: What did they think of him? What did most of them think?

Rogers: Well, everybody was highly amused by him. Nobody -- I never got, I never could get mad at him. I never was the least bit

provoked at him, he was so funny.

Q: A little bantam cock of a man, wasn't he?

Rogers: Yeah. One day they were having -- he came from West^C/chester, Pennsylvania, and they had a big homecoming. That's when his father was chairman of the Naval Affairs Committee in the House. So Smedley wanted to go up home. So I took him in the plane, flew up there and we landed in a little cow pasture, and I spent the night with them. And whatever Smedley's father was named -- I think we called him Mr. Tom, or Uncle Tom. They were having a parade, and Smedley was there. He came up in civilian clothes, and he had his old Spanish American Marine Corps hat -- he had that on, leading the parade, and Uncle Tom and I were standing on -- they had one of these old-fashioned Pennsylvania houses with a little stoop out in front, and we were standing on the stoop watching the parade go by. And Uncle Tom looked at Smedley. He turned to me and said, "Isn't Smedley the damn fool, though? Look at him strutting around!"

Q: I guess the old man wasn't too much of a Quaker.

Rogers: No, no. Called him a damn fool. "Isn't he a damn fool?" He was funny.

Index

21-22
Axtell, George ~~23-24~~
~~Sayden, Wayne~~
Boyington, Major Gregory "Pappy" 11, 15-16-17, 19 15-16, 17, 18-20
Brainard, 15, ~~51~~
Brice, Oscar 7
Buckner, Simon Bolivar 3, ~~21~~
Butler, Smedley ~~51~~, 61-62, 63, 64 51, 53, 60-61-62
Byrd, Richard B. 16, 17
Carey, John 10 Cates, Clifford 16 49-50-51
Chapman, Lt. General L.F. ~~27~~ 25-33
Cunningham, Lt. Alfred A. 27-28, 36, 38, 52-54 25-26, 34-35, 36, 39, 50, 51
Davy, Brock 29 27
De Lanto, Diaz 13, 27-28, 32
Derbyshire, 29, ~~31~~
De Valle, Pedro ~~54~~ 66-67, 64-70 - 97
Doelittle, James H. ~~68-69, 72-73~~
Durgin, Admiral 5 ~~51-85~~
Ellis, Earl ~~22-23~~ 62
Ferrell, Walter G. ~~63-64~~
Fike, Charles 70 76
Fontana, Paul ~~22~~ 20 11, 26-27, 29-30, 32-33, 34, 42
Geiger, Brig. General Roy B. 14, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 41
~~56, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 67, 90, 91, 95~~
Hamilton, Charles K. ~~23-24~~ 31
Harris, Field 14
Henderson, General Frederick 1-
Hoffa, Benny ~~41~~
Holman, Charles "Speed" ~~27~~ 25
Laughlin, George ~~40~~ 37
LeJune, ~~53~~
Little, Louis ~~25~~ 23
Lund, Frederick ~~27~~ 25
Lytle, Robert ~~40~~ 42
McNair, Admiral ~~13~~ 12
Mangrum, Richard 15
Megee, 4, 11
Melgo, 13
Minnis, Scotty ~~62-64~~ 61-62
Mitchell, William ~~51~~ 59
Mitchell, Ralph ~~62~~ 64-65, 67, 69
Mitscher, Peter ~~22~~ 30
Moore, "Nuts" 11-~~12~~ 12, 21, 22
12, 13 21

102
Mulcahy, Patrick 2, 3, 20, ~~104-105~~
Parnelle, Perry 2, 3, ~~2~~, ~~21~~ 20
7
Petras, Ted 16, ~~17~~, ~~20~~
Plachta, Jack ~~11~~ 10
OK
~~Quigley, William 13~~
33-34 42
Roben, ~~35~~, ~~36~~, ~~37~~
Rowell, ~~14~~, ~~15~~, ~~16~~ 63
13-14 24
Sanderson, "Sandy" ~~7~~, 16, 20, ~~20~~
Shepherd 16
Sherman, Forrest ~~27~~, ~~28~~ 27-28
Smith, Bernard L., ~~25~~ 25-26
Turner, Richmond "Kelly" 4, ~~20~~ 100
Turner, Thomas ~~25~~ 25-15
Vandergrift, 16
Wallace, General 1
Wheaten, Iven ~~37~~ 39
White, T. B. 11
Yates, Clifford 16