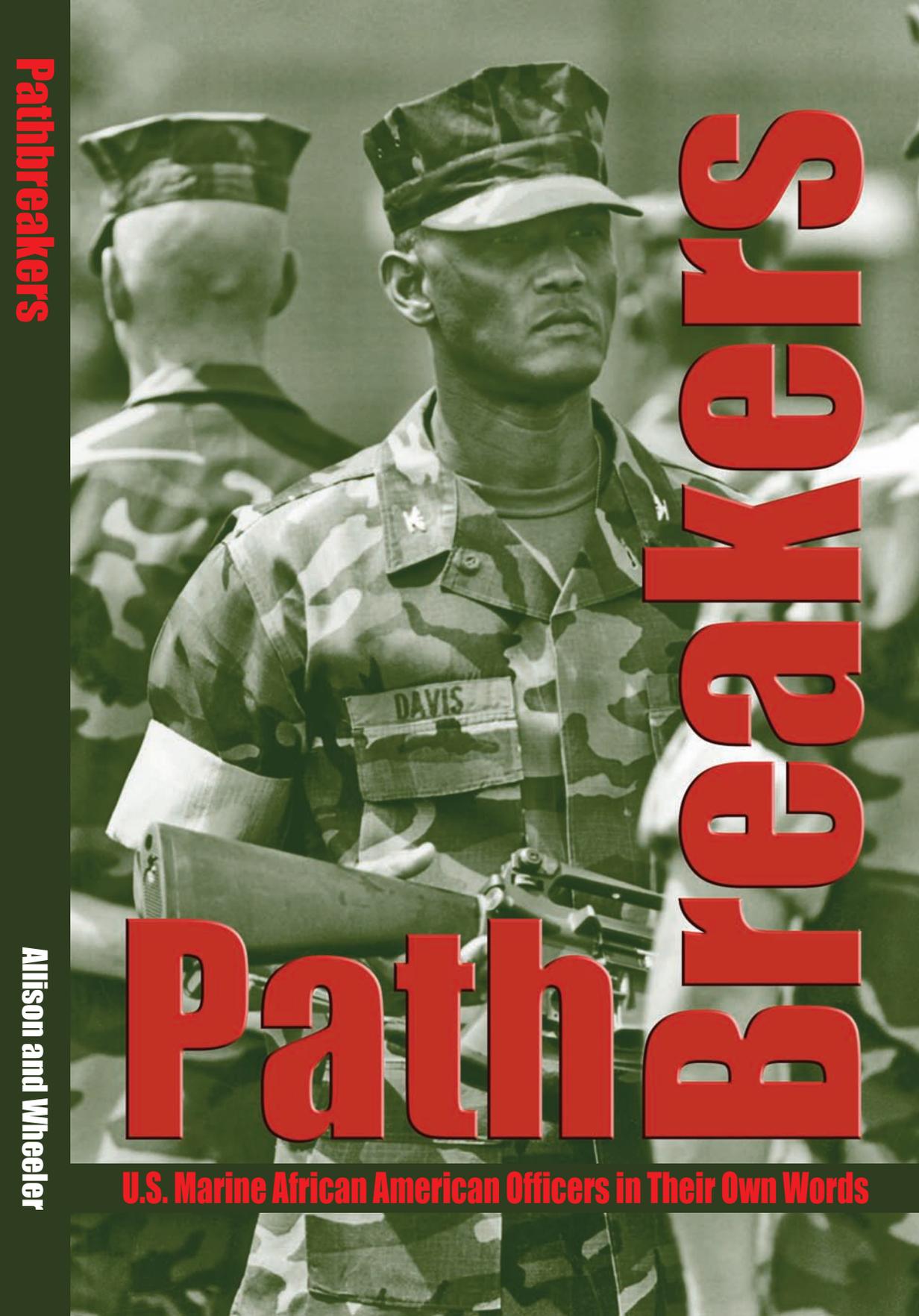


Pathbreakers

Allison and Wheeler



Pathbreakers

U.S. Marine African American Officers in Their Own Words

Cover Photo: *Commanding Officer Col Alphonse G. Davis inspects candidates at the Officer Candidates School at Quantico, Virginia. This was a critical leadership post at what is known as the “Crossroads of the Corps” and provided tangible proof of challenges met.*

Courtesy of Col Alphonse G. Davis

Pathbreakers

**U.S. Marine African American Officers
in Their Own Words**



Compiled and edited by Fred H. Allison
and Col Kurtis P. Wheeler, USMCR

History Division
United States Marine Corps
Washington, DC
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Foreword

This oral history anthology provides insight into the history of the African American officer experience in the U.S. Marine Corps. In the personal accounts of the 21 officers included that cover 60 years of service, the reader comes to understand how these men and women succeeded individually and also gains considerable historical perspective on the progress of integration in the Marine Corps.

This project grew from two sources. One is the emphasis that the current Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James F. Amos, is putting on educating the Corps on the proud tradition of diversity in the service, an effort that has been staffed by Lieutenant General Willie J. Williams, the director of Marine Corps Staff. The other source was my conversations with Lieutenant General Walter E. Gaskin Sr. about the need for a broader understanding of the contributions of the pathbreaking Marines who established, built, and carried on the African American presence in the officer corps (as he explains in more detail in the preface). Generals Williams and Gaskin contributed their own stories to this volume.

As the editors note in the introduction, this book is not intended to be a comprehensive study, and in fact it augments three books that the Marine Corps History Division has previously published on the African American experience in the Marine Corps. The stories of the key pathbreakers that are included in this collection add flesh and blood to the historical literature, providing an intimate understanding of the struggles and triumphs as these individuals and their colleagues, both black and white, worked to overcome societal prejudices for the ultimate improvement and strengthening of the Corps.

This book is the result of the collaboration of the History Division's oral history section, headed by Dr. Fred H. Allison, and Reserve officer/historians of the Field History Branch, with Colonel Kurtis P. Wheeler serving as the lead for this project. The field historians conducted interviews and collected photographs on which the book was built. Allison and Wheeler formed the interview commentary into a chronological and thematic-based book. Mr. Charles

D. Melson, the chief historian, and Mr. Kenneth H. Williams, the senior editor, shaped the final product. The many others who contributed to this effort are acknowledged in the introduction.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C.P. Neimeyer". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a prominent loop at the end of the word "Neimeyer".

Dr. Charles P. Neimeyer
Director of Marine Corps History

Preface

The racial integration of the Marine Corps is the story of the journeys of so many African Americans through one of many chapters in the history of these great United States. Yes, it is the story of real triumph, and also a story of ordinary men and women facing extraordinary challenges. Although the collective journeys of these men and women are not yet at an end, they have marked the trail for others—and in doing so changed the course of history and shaped the fabric of the society.

In July 2011, I attended a Department of the Navy ceremony at the Pentagon that recognized trailblazing African Americans who played significant roles in the integration of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps. While the ceremony was impressive and inspiring—and included recognition of 11 Marine African American leaders—I believe that the struggle to integrate the Marine Corps was an experience shared by many others beyond those 11. In subsequent conversations with Dr. Charles P. Neimeyer, director of the U.S. Marine Corps History Division, he recommended producing an anthology based on the oral history interviews of a selection of Marine African American leaders, or “pathbreakers,” who could more broadly represent or symbolize the experiences of all. I thought it was a good concept and lent my support to the project that led to the publication of the book you are now reading. It presents the Marine Corps careers and life experiences of a selection of Marine African American officers, some who served at the very beginning of Marine integration and others who are still on active duty today. It presents the Marine Corps as it was and is. Moreover, it reflects the connectedness of the Marine Corps’ struggle with the integration struggle happening then and now in the United States. Certainly not all pathbreakers are represented, an endeavor that would have been beyond the timing or scope of this project. The intent was to depict how integration and assimilation occurred in the Marine Corps over 70 years, from 1942 to 2012, through the words of some of those who experienced it. As such, they speak for all the pathbreakers, for the black officers who broke barriers with their honorable and effective

service, mainstreaming African American leadership in our Corps and shaping the social fabric of this great nation. Those who went before us have earned every right to be judged on the merits of their skills, not the color of their skin. There is no question today that each has fully earned the privilege and honor that comes with wearing the uniform of an officer of Marines.

While I am honored and humbled to have my experiences and perspectives included, there are so many others who could flesh out the story equally well. There is no doubt, however, that this topic is one that is close to my heart. I have lived it. I am a product of the “big push,” that special effort demanded by Commandant Leonard F. Chapman Jr. in the late 1960s and pressed forward by his successor, General Robert E. Cushman Jr. The goal was to dramatically increase the recruitment of black officers. At the time, the number of African American officers in the Marine Corps was embarrassingly low. In 1967, there were only 155 African Americans among 23,592 total Marine officers. It was no coincidence that racial troubles present in America at the time were reflected and embroiled the Marine Corps and all services.

I attended Savannah State University, a historically black school, and became the first midshipman commissioned into the Marine Corps from the Reserve Officer Training Corps unit there. I was recruited and trained by another pathbreaker, our Marine officer instructor, Colonel Fred L. Jones. I was commissioned in 1974 and became part of what was up to that time the largest number of black officers ever in a Basic School company, Alpha Company. Future Lieutenant General Willie J. Williams, Colonels Henry Gobar and Kenneth D. Dunn, and Lieutenant Colonel Doris A. Daniels were in the same company. Along with the future Lieutenant General Ronald S. Coleman, who was assigned to a different company, we were all at The Basic School at the same time.

The reader must realize that the wave of black officers who came in the Marines in the early 1970s were a result of a pointed effort emanating from the top of the Marine Corps. Success required overcoming cultural norms, not just in the Corps, but in black families who might not have a heritage of military service as did many white families. Additionally, the many opportunities opening up for



Courtesy of Col Fred L. Jones

Then-Capt Walter E. Gaskin Sr. (left) with Col Fred L. Jones (center), who had been the Marine officer instructor at Savannah State when Gaskin was a midshipman in the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps. Both Gaskin and then-Capt Ronald L. Bailey (right) rose to become general officers in the Marine Corps.

talented young blacks at the same time created competition for the Marine Corps. These are among the many hidden barriers that have blocked our efforts to recruit blacks at a level such that the ranks of Marine officers reflect the racial mix of the U.S. population.

We hope this book, and the many success stories herein, will serve to encourage African Americans to become Marine officers if they are so inclined. Not everyone is cut out to be a Marine, and certain personal qualities are required to succeed in the Marine Corps. But our Corps offers an equal chance for success to all who possess those qualities. We also hope the anthology will serve as a motivator for recruiters who play such a vital role in fostering a Marine Corps that is representative of our society. The narratives in this book make it clear that recruiters must make the case for the Marine Corps so that young people who have it in their gut to perform successfully as Marines are aware of the possibilities and rewards of a Marine Corps career.

My story is just one of many brought to life in this volume that reveal a Marine Corps we can all be proud of. The collective experi-

ences recounted here illuminate a Corps that, while imperfect, has learned from its mistakes at every turn and maintained a steadfast commitment to become an institution that is diverse and reflective of American society. That goal is not distinct from, but rather a central part of, our core mission to be the “first to fight” in defense of our nation.

Semper Fidelis

Walter E. Gaskin Sr.
Lieutenant General, USMC
NATO Headquarters
Brussels, Belgium, July 2012

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Courtesy of Col Kenneth D. Dunn

Marine African American general officers at the Department of the Navy's African American flag and general officer ceremony at the Pentagon in July 2011. Seated (from left): MajGen Clifford L. Stanley, MajGen Jerome G. Cooper, LtGen Frank E. Petersen Jr., MajGen Charles F. Bolden Jr., LtGen Ronald S. Coleman. Standing (from left): MajGen Arnold Fields, MajGen Anthony L. Jackson, MajGen Ronald L. Bailey, BGen George H. Walls Jr., LtGen Walter E. Gaskin Sr., BGen Craig C. Crenshaw, LtGen Willie J. Williams, BGen Vincent R. Stewart, BGen Johnny R. Thomas, MajGen Leo V. Williams III, MajGen Cornell A. Wilson Jr.

Introduction

African Americans have served in the United States Marine Corps since 1942 and as officers since 1945 in the Reserves and 1948 on active duty. This volume presents the stories of African American Marine officers across 60 years of that period, from Lieutenant General Frank E. Petersen Jr. (commissioned in 1952) through several who are still serving in 2012. It includes the testimonies of a selection of individuals—some prominent, some not—with the goal of documenting a broad range of experiences. The intent is not to share the story of every African American officer who achieved a “first” or was considered a “pathbreaker”—a task well beyond the scope of this project—but rather to represent the progress of ever-increasing integration of African American leaders in the Marine Corps.

In contrast to the prominence of black enlisted Marines, it has proved more difficult for the Marine Corps to attract and retain representative numbers of African American officers. The reasons for this struggle are varied, and there are many perspectives on this issue in the testimonies that follow. Although the Marine Corps has made considerable progress, beginning in the 1960s when a deliberate effort to recruit and retain black officers became official policy, its work is still not done.

As the Marine Corps History Division undertook this project in 2011, we identified three basic goals to guide our efforts. First, we desired to acknowledge and build on previous official work on the topic, especially Henry I. Shaw and Ralph W. Donnelly’s *Blacks in the Marine Corps*; Bernard C. Nalty’s *The Right to Fight: African-American Marines in World War II*; and most notably, Colonel Alphonse G. Davis’s *Pride, Progress, and Prospects: The Marine Corps’ Efforts to Increase the Presence of African-American Officers (1970–1995)*.¹ Our goal was to provide the human experience to these accounts and extend the story to the present day. Second, we sought to create a work that could serve the broader goal of the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James F. Amos, of educating all Marines about the heritage of African Americans in the Marine Corps. Finally, we hoped to highlight philosophies and strategies that have helped some of our Marine leaders achieve success in their careers. By exposing a broader audience to these proven attitudes and ap-

proaches, the anthology can supplement interpersonal efforts to enhance the retention, promotion, and success of minorities in the Corps.

As the members of the project team began to interview these prominent Marines, a series of core principles emerged. Foremost is the necessity to be honest and candid about the Marine Corps' challenges and failings in the past. Sugarcoating the obstacles and adversity that black leaders overcame would understate what they have achieved. Second, it is imperative to note that this anthology is not just for African American Marines, but for all Marines and for those interested in the history of the Corps. Third, we hope to cultivate a culture of candor on issues relating to race. By continuing to acknowledge and confront racism head on, as it has at many times in its past, the Marine Corps can build on its reputation as a meritocratic institution.

The book is organized chronologically, with certain themes emerging predominantly in each era. It opens with the stories of the future Marines in their formative years and their encounters with "Jim Crow" America and the early effects of the civil rights movement. Chapter 2 covers the first generation of African American Marine officers as they entered the Corps in the 1950s and early 1960s. They experienced a gradual expansion of opportunities created by the demands of the Korean War and the Cold War combined with societal shifts flowing from Montgomery, Topeka, and Little Rock.

The Vietnam era, characterized by both combat in Southeast Asia and the dramatic events of the civil rights movement, brought new opportunities and new tensions, which are the themes of chapter 3. Marine pathbreakers commanded combat units on the ground and in the air, and the demand for manpower sharply elevated the overall numbers of blacks in the Marine Corps. Unfortunately, selective service policies allowing college exemptions created severe disparities between the percentages of African Americans among the enlisted ranks versus in the officer corps. Many black Marines were also influenced by the growing sense of black nationalism that created rifts in traditional Marine Corps culture. The small cohort of black officers serving during this era played a pivotal role in addressing the concerns of their enlisted counterparts and bridging the cultural gap.

Chapter 4 details the efforts of the Marine Corps, starting in the 1960s and accelerating in the 1970s, to significantly expand the number

of black officers. Some of the pathbreakers were called upon to form new Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps (NROTC) units at historically black colleges and universities or to play guiding roles on the staffs at Officer Candidates School and The Basic School. African American Marines who hold senior positions at present entered the Corps during this era.

Chapter 5 outlines the opportunities and experiences of those growing waves of African American officers as they entered the mainstream of the Corps during the 1970s. As during the late 1960s, these black leaders were instrumental in guiding the Marine Corps through the tumultuous years of the post-Vietnam era. Beyond the Marine Corps itself, organizations like the Montford Point Marines Association, formed in 1965, and the National Naval Officers Association, founded in 1972, played an increasingly important role in mentoring and influencing the growing numbers of African Americans in the ranks.

Chapter 6 outlines the advances of the late 1970s and 1980s as black officers experienced a series of noteworthy achievements, highlighted by Frank Petersen's selection to brigadier general in 1979. This era represents a success story on several fronts as the Marine Corps' institutional approach supported the progress of minority officers on many levels. Proven black leaders were assigned key billets throughout the pipeline of the recruiting, training, and promotion process.

Chapter 7 outlines trends and events of the 1990s and warns of the detrimental effects of complacency and inattention. While the intentions of the Marine Corps remained positive and established leaders continued to achieve successes, the upward trajectory of prospects for minorities flattened. The combined effect of diminished attention to continued progress and a small number of voices questioning the approaches used to achieve previous successes threatened to undermine the overall climate. Competition with corporate America for qualified African American leaders also played a role.

The book concludes in chapter 8 in the first years of the twenty-first century with African Americans reaching the highest levels of command during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. It also includes observations from the pathbreaking Marines on what remains to be done.

As with courtroom testimonies, oral histories are told from one person's perspective and may include discrepancies with, or even con-

traditions of, another's. They are not a complete history, but they help to flesh out an academic study of a topic and thereby provide human drama to the subject.

The selections used in this publication are excerpts drawn from longer interviews. They were chosen to develop the themes for each chapter and the book overall. They were transcribed and edited to maintain the integrity of the interviews. Details added for clarity and accuracy are indicated by square brackets and any deletions by ellipses. Some false starts and interjections have been silently omitted. In some cases, the chronology of the comments has been rearranged to facilitate reading or to reflect the order of the book and to develop its themes. In other instances, the questions were rearranged with the aim being to facilitate ease of reading. The full transcripts are available for review at the U.S. Marine Corps History Division pending further review and documentation to scholarly standards.

This anthology is drawn from oral history interviews collected by the two editors, Dr. Fred H. Allison and Colonel Kurtis P. Wheeler, and other historians associated with the History Division. These include Mr. Henry I. Shaw Jr. and Dr. Thomas M. Baughn. Mr. John J. Lyles of the Gray Research Center and Colonel Eleanor M. Wilson of the Women Marines Association also conducted interviews that are included. The following field historians from the History Division's Field History Branch made contributions by either conducting interviews or collecting documents and photographs: Colonels Reed R. Bonadonna and Nicholas E. Reynolds; Lieutenant Colonels Mark D. Andrasi, Melissa D. Mihoko, Richard S. Sellards, and Mark E. Wood; Majors Robert F. Williams III and Beth M. Wolny; Chief Warrant Officer-4 Timothy S. McWilliams; and Chief Warrant Officer-3 William E. Hutson.

The editors of this volume acknowledge and thank a wide array of people for their support on this project. First and foremost, we thank the people whose stories are included for their time and candor. We especially acknowledge Lieutenant General Walter E. Gaskin Sr., who supported the project since its inception, and his former Marine officer instructor, Colonel Fred L. Jones. Colonel Jones was the first person interviewed for this project and offered helpful insights from the beginning. Colonel Kenneth D. Dunn provided helpful guidance and encouragement throughout.

Dr. Charles P. Neimeyer, director of the History Division; Mr. Charles D. Melson, chief historian; and Mr. Paul J. Weber, deputy director, provided guidance for the project. Mr. Kenneth H. Williams, senior editor for both the History Division and Marine Corps University Press, oversaw the editing and publication process, assisted by Ms. Wanda J. Renfrow. Mr. William S. Hill designed the book.

Field historian Major Robert F. Williams III supported the project with logistical planning, liaison with various parties involved, and scheduling and coordinating interviews. Captain Joseph L. Rossiter provided general coordination and support, and former History Division oral historian Mr. Anthony R. Taglianetti coordinated the timely transcription of the interviews. Historians from the Reference Branch, Ms. Annette D. Amerman and Ms. Kara R. Newcomer, as well as Ms. Sheila Phillips provided essential research support.

Those who assisted in scheduling interviews or providing photographs include: Major Ryan M. Hoyle, aide to Lieutenant General Gaskin; First Lieutenant Jeremy J. Pilachowski, aide to Major General Ronald L. Bailey; Ms. Gina S. Simpson and Captain Andrew C. Sylling in Lieutenant General Willie J. Williams's office; and Ms. Kathryn Manuel and Mr. Bill Barry in Major General Charles F. Bolden Jr.'s office.

Many others labored to bring this project to fruition. If we omitted anyone, it was inadvertent and not from lack of gratitude.

Dr. Fred H. Allison
and Col Kurtis P. Wheeler, USMCR



Chapter 1

Roots in Jim Crow and Civil Rights America

The African American Marines who became the pathbreakers of the later twentieth and early twenty-first centuries grew up before or at the dawning of the civil rights era. American society at that time was distinctly discriminatory against African Americans, and the level of severity varied from region to region. In the South, where many of these Marines grew up, segregation and the heritage of slavery, black codes, and “Jim Crow” laws still had a powerful effect on social relationships. In the North and West, although racism was not as codified, it still existed in subtle ways. In all regions, discrimination was socially acceptable. The time was coming, however, when racism and unfair treatment would not be socially or legally tolerated. The pathbreakers came of age on the cusp of revolutionary changes in how Americans treated and viewed African Americans.

During their lives, these Marines witnessed the civil rights movement blossom. The U.S. Supreme Court handed down landmark decisions such as *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, the lead case of which involved the circumstances Frank E. Petersen Jr. describes below in his hometown of Topeka, Kansas. Congress passed legislation that included the Civil Rights Acts of 1957 and 1964 and the Voting Rights Act in 1965. Martin Luther King Jr. emerged as a leader of a sweeping social movement against racism that changed the nation forever. Societal impact was profound and had a significant effect on young African Americans growing up at this time.

In this first chapter, some of the pathbreakers relate memories of their youth from before and during the civil rights era, which represent the starting point for the progression of African American advances in the Marine Corps.

Photo Left: 2dLt Frank E. Petersen Jr. flew with Marine Fighter Squadron 212 in Korea in 1953, one of only two African American Marine officers to serve in combat during that conflict.

Department of Defense (USMC) Photo 01236360188

Lieutenant General Frank E. Petersen Jr.

Petersen: With the coming of junior high school, an almost complete disenchantment with the school system, and Topeka [Kansas] itself, seemed to take hold of me. Paul Tyler and I were singled out because of our high intelligence test results, and we were put in the category called “gifted children.” We were immediately pulled from the city school to attend the special course for gifted children. That made me angry, because to get to the “gifted student school,” I had to walk five miles across Topeka, whereas the school I ordinarily attended was right across the street. . . . The course of instruction at the new school was interracial. There were some students we liked and some we didn’t like. . . . After a couple of sessions in this “rarefied” atmosphere, Paul and I rebelled and went back to our old school.

My sojourn at Topeka High School completed my disenchantment with the city. I didn’t care if I went to college or not. I simply wanted to leave Topeka. . . . If the high school reflected the real lifestyle in Topeka, I wanted no part of it. I hated the quasi-integration, which highlighted, even celebrated, the segregated way of living. Although youngsters of all races sat together in the same classrooms, underneath the [banner of] “integration,” social exception ran deep. There were two school proms: one black, one white. There were separate homecoming kings and queens. There were two basketball teams: one black (the Ramblers), one white. Football was integrated, probably to gain the brawn and speed realized by letting everybody play. The beautiful indoor swimming pool was closed, to prevent the possibility of white and black students swimming together.

Yet things were going on in the world that flew in the face of all this separateness. In 1947, when I was 15, black men did things of note—like Jackie Robinson breaking the color barrier in baseball.

Joe Louis and Jackie Robinson were my role models, because I was focused on issues of race. I viewed their success as a sign that things were going to change, that discrimination would soon be illegal.¹

Major General Jerome G. Cooper

Cooper: I grew up on the south side in Mobile [Alabama]. I was very fortunate in that my grandparents graduated from Fisk Uni-

versity and my mother and father graduated from Hampton. So I was fortunate enough to grow up in a home where my parents had a college education, which meant that they had us in reading clubs and doing a lot of mentoring that made us always aspire to higher education. That happened here in Mobile. I went to a Catholic elementary school and high school and was fortunate to have parents that taught us a number of things. One big one was integrity. I can remember, boy, you don't ever lie, cheat, or steal. That was so clear, and it had a great impact on my life.

Mr. John J. Lyles: Can you think of anybody who inspired you in terms of becoming a Marine?

Cooper: My entry to the Marine Corps was sort of stimulated by growing up in a racist southern town. Near where I lived was a theater called Harlem, and on Sunday, the Harlem had double features, and that meant they played the same movie twice. The movie that I saw was the *Sands of Iwo Jima*, starring John Wayne. I remember [he played] Sergeant [John M.] Stryker.

After graduating [in 1953] from a small Catholic high school here, I was fortunate enough to get an academic scholarship to the University of Notre Dame. . . . To become a Marine, I think it was the Marine Corps' reputation, because I never saw a black Marine officer, maybe hadn't even met a Marine officer when I went off to college. One person that inspired me as far as higher education went was a television personality in those days by the name of Fulton J. Sheen. Not many people have heard of the famous archbishop of New York, but he was one of the first television evangelists. During those days, blacks could not get in hospitals here because of segregation. My father started a fund-raiser to build a hospital. Archbishop Sheen heard about this, and he came to my house one day and brought with him a lady named Clare Booth Luce, who was [one of] the first women to serve in Congress and the wife of Henry Luce, the founder of *Time* magazine. In the course of the conversation—and I barely remember this, but I had to be 11 or 12—he asked me had I heard of Notre Dame? I really had not. He told me about Notre Dame and told me that if I decided that I wanted to go to Notre Dame, that he would write a letter for me and help me get a scholarship. I'm pleased to say he did that, and I still have that letter in my

files. That's how I ended up at Notre Dame and got a scholarship. At Notre Dame is where I made my Marine Corps connection. . . .

I never participated in the civil rights struggle here in the South because before Dr. King got kicked off, I'd already left the South back in '53 going to Notre Dame. But friends of mine, they did the sit-ins, and my younger brothers and sisters did that. I think my role, really, I played in the Marine Corps. And how did I play it? I guess by trying to be the best Marine there was.

Lieutenant Colonel Edward L. Green

Green: I was born in Henderson, North Carolina, in 1937. Spent very little time living there. My parents were divorced when I was about two years old, so I actually grew up in the suburbs of Philadelphia, an area called Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, probably better known for Bryn Mawr College, which is a girl's school.

Dr. Fred H. Allison: Was the area around Bryn Mawr predominantly white?

Green: Yes. We had segregated streets that we were on with the majority African American. But for all intents and purposes, schools were integrated.

Allison: So you really didn't face anything like they would have in the South at the time?

Green: No. The only time I ran into stuff in the South was my grandparents lived down in Henderson, North Carolina. I'd go visit them in the summer. There I was in a heavily segregated environment as far as the theater and restaurants and all that stuff. . . . As a matter of fact, once the train ran past Washington, DC—I got on in Philadelphia—once you ran past Washington, all of a sudden, they'd flip the signs where they'd have to have colored cars and white cars. You had to move to a colored car.

Colonel Fred L. Jones

Jones: I remember the excitement of everybody when World War II ended and when the Korean War started. We were still living in Pascagoula [Mississippi], going to a segregated school. It was like [grades] one through twelve at this school. . . .

[After I finished fifth grade], my father, for whatever reasons, economic reasons, decided to go west. So we moved to Hawthorne, Nevada, where there was a naval ammunition depot at the time. Now it's Army, but at that time it was a naval ammunition depot. The whole family—at this particular time there were four boys and two girls, six of us—we crowded onto the Greyhound bus—in the back of the bus of course, since we were in Mississippi—and headed west. When we got halfway across Texas, then the seating was no longer segregated. The eastern part of Texas was still pretty segregated.

This was the first time in my childhood that segregation was not rigidly enforced. But up to that particular time, my parents never taught us to hate anybody. My mother was from Butler, Alabama, and she was a very mild-mannered, very nice domestic worker. She emphasized good character, work hard, and that sort of thing, and you could overcome all this stuff. So that was instilled very early—work hard, treat people right, things will work out. She didn't teach hate at all. None of us were taught that.

When we got to Nevada, it was the nicest house that we'd ever lived in. It was government quarters at that time, a nice house. But the interesting thing about it, I didn't note it at first, but . . . in the city of Hawthorne, the military housing area was called Babbitt Housing. And I noticed that there was a very large open area between, like sections of housing. As kids we played in that area, white and black. Then it dawned on me that it was all black on one side, so the housing was segregated, even on this government facility. And I thought, "That's strange."

This was not a segregated school; this was an integrated school, the first integrated school I went to, sixth grade. The thing that struck me was, I was old enough to realize that my sixth-grade teacher seemed to be really surprised that I was a good student and I had some intelligence. And I thought, "Damn, that's strange." I had never had that feeling before, because I had always been in a segregated school. They expected you to know what the heck you were doing and be good at this stuff. So the reaction was a little strange. I thought, "Hmm, I wonder."

In that little community, most all the black people were from the South. They had all migrated north. This is the early '50s, the

great migration. Blacks went west, they went to Chicago, they went east. So I was among the bunch that went west. And we stopped in Nevada, briefly. But I remember that it was almost as if they were making exceptions for me because I was such a good athlete. And I noted that. I was able to do things and kind of gain a little more acceptance than perhaps some of my other black friends. And I thought this was kind of strange.

Colonel Kurtis P. Wheeler: Did you ever have conversations with your parents about racism, or was it something you just deciphered on your own?

Jones: It was on my own. Even in Mississippi, I knew that white people were not born as racists. Even in Mississippi, when we were little, I had played with some white kids that lived a street over. Their parents may not have known, but we played together. And in the South, domestics like my mom, they raised white kids, basically, in their homes. So, on a human, person-to-person basis, I knew there was something else that was going on.

But I also knew that whatever barriers that were put up in front of you, you had a choice. You either got bitter and did nothing, or you worked hard and you just overcome the barriers, and do all that you can do in your circumstance, and the example that you set would kind of make things better. I found out that this was true even in high school in Oroville, California. I used to tell my children, you know on Friday nights, that community just loved me, seeing me run the ball, make touchdowns and all that stuff, and tackle people. But when it came to me getting a part-time job downtown, the only job I could get was shining shoes. It was very difficult to reconcile that attitude and that relationship.

Colonel Henry L. Reed

Reed: I was born in 1943 and raised in Burton, South Carolina, which is the location of my family, just about five minutes from the main gate of Parris Island. My grandfather was a World War I veteran, my father is a World War II veteran. My father and my mother both worked at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot at Parris Island. As a kid growing up, I don't think I had a choice of not being a Marine.

Because we lived so close to the base, on Fridays, when they had graduation, me and my brothers could listen to the band playing the music, and we would march to the music of the band.

I graduated from Robert Smalls High School right there in Beaufort. From there, I graduated from Hampton Institute in Hampton, Virginia. When I was at Hampton, I was in the Army ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps] because at that time, all predominantly black colleges were land-grant colleges, so you had to take ROTC for at least two years. While I was in ROTC during that period, I noticed that it was a big difference from the Army and what I knew that the Marine Corps was all about. So I decided that one day when the recruiter came on campus—his name was Captain Nixon, out of the Richmond office—and automatically I signed up to be a Marine.

Wheeler: How would you describe the environment in which you grew up? Was it integrated or fairly segregated?

Reed: The environment, naturally during that period of time, it was a segregated environment. I grew up knowing white kids; we'd pick pecans and all that stuff. But we were still separated from each other. I remember when I first came to OCS [Officer Candidates School], one of the guys that I picked up pecans with, I think his name was Brightstreet, but I met him, and I said, "Look, we lived across the field from each other." But the thing is, when you talk about the social environment, the social environment didn't let us, as kids, to grow up [together]. He went to Beaufort High School and I went to Robert Smalls High School. It was not until I came into the Marine Corps that I experienced the social environment of having to learn how to accept, work with, and deal with individuals of a different race and different colors.

Major General Charles F. Bolden Jr.

Bolden: I was raised in Columbia, South Carolina. My mother and father were career educators. They had grown up in Columbia also, and my mother was a librarian, actually had opened the first library in a public school for blacks in South Carolina. My father was a history teacher, he taught government, and was a football coach.

They both graduated from Johnson C. Smith University in 1940 and then came back to Columbia and started their teaching careers. My father actually taught a couple of years before he was drafted for World War II. He was drafted into the Army and spent World War II in the Army, mostly in Northern Africa and Europe, and then came home when the war ended. He came back to the classroom and taught the rest of his life. In fact, at the time of his death, he was the athletic director at one of the high schools in my hometown. His number-one saying was “it’s not the size of the dog in the fight, but the size of the fight in the dog.”

Allison: How did segregation and other discriminatory practices influence your life as you grew up and looked to the future?

Bolden: The schools in South Carolina remained segregated—I graduated in 1964, and I want to say the schools were integrated around ’67, ’68 or so. When they integrated, both my mother and father moved to different schools, to what had been all-white schools, to work. . . .

My preparation for life in a segregated school system and in the segregated South just came from my mom and dad. They taught my brother and me several things. One was you can do anything you want to do. Don’t ever let anybody tell you [that] you can’t. You’ve really got to work hard. You’ve got to make sure that you study hard. So that was a rule in our house. It wasn’t optional.

Allison: As you were growing up, the civil rights movement was in full swing. What did you hear about that and the activities of Martin Luther King Jr.?

Bolden: I heard about him all the time. . . . He would come to town periodically, so we knew exactly what was going on, when, and everything. My mother would not let me do any of the lunch counter [sit-ins]. I didn’t do any of the freedom marches or I could not go downtown and participate in protests when that was going on.

Allison: Those were occurring in Columbia?

Bolden: That was going on in Columbia, . . . to a lesser extent than it was in Greensboro, North Carolina, where it all started, but it was going on. Columbia had two black colleges, Allen and Benedict. They were very active. Of course the civil rights leadership came through the churches, but colleges and universities were helpful be-

cause they gave you a place to organize and operate from. Columbia, as the capital city of South Carolina, was a place where people came to protest. So it was very active in my time in high school.

Allison: But your mother wouldn't let you participate. Why?

Bolden: She was afraid that I would be hurt or something like that. We could march, and we belonged to the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People]. We could go to meetings and stuff, but we could not do the lunch counter demonstrations. That was a little bit too serious. And if she ever got the idea that the police were going to become active, which they very seldom did in South Carolina, then no way.

Major General Arnold Fields

Fields: I grew up in Early Branch, South Carolina. Early Branch is a small town in lower South Carolina—Hampton County. It was, of course, one of the segregated areas of the United States. My upbringing was characteristic of that environment. I was raised up a poor child, but a generally happy child; never really wanted for food or clothing in that regard. When I say poor, I mean we didn't have very much, but it doesn't mean that I was hungry or in considerable need. So I'm proud of that.

I grew up on a small farm. My grandfather was a farmer, and my mother, upon her marriage, built a home along with my father on that property, 25 acres of it that my grandfather bought in 1903 for three dollars an acre. I couldn't afford it if I wanted to buy it right now because it has increased in value that much. We farmed it as I grew up, and as such, I learned to appreciate the country and simple living.

I graduated from a segregated high school in 1964. The school was eventually integrated a few years thereafter, I think in the very late '60s. The first job I remember having on a fairly consistent basis was picking cotton for a modest two to three cents a pound. I mention that because I still speak to those matters in my talks—working for very little and working hard—for it helped to shape my life as a child.

Lieutenant Colonel Mark E. Wood: You said you went to a segregated high school. What are your memories of that, of the segre-

gated school and race relations during that time?

Fields: I would be remiss if I were to say that race was transparent because it was all around. But segregation was such an integral part of life. One didn't pay that much attention to it from the standpoint of whether it was right or wrong even though there were thoughts, of course, that crossed my mind, and I'm presuming other people's minds, as they grew in age and understanding. But I knew my place, and we all basically knew our place, if you will. And we operated within that environment. But absolutely, . . . my home area was a segregated environment, even after desegregation had been mandated by the government of the United States.

It didn't mean that things were really desegregated. I couldn't go to some churches there and feel comfortable, or I maybe couldn't have gone anyway. But they could not invite me, because of the nature of the environment. . . . When my mother would take me to the doctor, there was a separate room for the whites and the blacks. There was the "colored" and the "whites only." Restrooms were the same, even the little grocery store. I lived in a town, Early Branch, which had basically two grocery stores, one more significant than the other, and a post office and a passing train stop. That was it for that town of Early Branch. But that little store had a restroom, and there was a white side and a colored side, as it was referred to back then. So I'm well acquainted with the Jim Crow laws and so forth under which the South more or less was guided back in those days.

Major General Clifford L. Stanley

Stanley: I was born in 1947. My father is from South Carolina and my mother is from the hills of Virginia. I was raised in Washington, DC, though, and my father and mother saw fit to get us to South Carolina just about every summer. . . .

We had a very close family. My father was a trustee in a church, his brother was a minister, and their father was a minister. On my mother's side, in fact, my mother is a deaconess. . . . The place of religion in our family was very close. So we were raised on a very solid foundation.

We grew up in some tough times. I remember my father showing us character, real character. When we used to drive to

South Carolina, and sometimes drive to Virginia, we had to pack lunches because we couldn't go to restaurants and we couldn't stay in places that you would normally stay in now. . . . I remember one incident. . . . We stopped at a gas station to get gas, and my father gave the man money. I forgot how much it was, but there was supposed to be change coming back, and the man wasn't going to give him any change. So my dad just very nicely said, "Can I get my change?" The man was not nice and said some pretty negative things. My dad showed what I would call the right kind of leadership. He said, "Let's go," and we went. Never saw him lose his temper or anything like that, or close to it. Even though I understood what was happening, I understood it better a decade later.

Before I joined the Marine Corps, we had something called the Orangeburg Massacre in South Carolina. We were integrating a bowling alley in Orangeburg, South Carolina. This was February 8, 1968. Three students were killed. One was a high school student; two were college underclassmen, I believe, but [Henry E.] Smith, [Samuel] Hammond, [Delano H.] Middleton are the names, killed by state troopers. . . . That year I was junior class president [at South Carolina State University]. We had Stokely Carmichael, H. Rap Brown, folks like that down there. I never really fully resolved what happened, but we didn't have weapons on our campus or anything like that.

Major General Leo V. Williams III

L. Williams: All of my early education was in the public schools, the segregated public schools of Norfolk, Virginia. At that time, Virginia and its education system, and most of its social systems, were still completely segregated. . . . I was born in 1948, so we're talking now 1948 through 1966, which was when I graduated from high school. During that time, as we're all well aware, in the '50s, the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling became law, but it didn't happen very quickly anywhere in the South. . . . All of the education systems dragged their feet until they were forced to do something in terms of integrating the schools.

I was one of the first back in 1963 who actually had a choice to go to a predominantly white high school or to go to the same school

that my father and all of my aunts and uncles on my father's side and actually my grandmother attended. That was Booker T. Washington High School, and that was my choice, mostly because of heritage. I actually had to catch the bus, the public bus, to get to school. The predominantly white alternative was a five-block walk, but everybody I knew, and all of the folks that I really enjoyed being around, all made the same choice that I did, and we had a tremendous three years of high school.

In my senior year, when I was about to make the choice of college, we had for the very first time in my school's history—and the high school that I attended went back to the 1920s—the very first time anyone had ever come into my school to discuss the [U.S.] Naval Academy as a college option was in September of 1965. It was not an officer who came in to talk with us; it was a chief petty officer, a white chief petty officer. Most of us who listened to his presentation found ourselves scratching our heads wondering, “This is a Navy chief who tells us that he does not have a college education. How come he's here?”

Lieutenant General Ronald S. Coleman

Coleman: When I went to school [in Pennsylvania], . . . there were white people, black people. I was always around integration. We moved at one point, and it was less integrated than before; we moved for about four years to another town, so it was less integrated but not completely segregated. But I would say, I think it was easier for me to adapt, but still, you notice it.

When I went to Navy boot camp, and you look around . . . there was another [African American] recruit in there named Banks, and he was from New Jersey, so it was only the two of us. You notice when you're on the short end of the stick number-wise. But I think that helped me to talk to, relate to, those types of things because of where I grew up. I think that really makes a difference. . . . I think folks that come from a segregated society have a harder time adjusting. I did go to a predominantly black college [Cheyney State], but then when you went home, the neighborhood and everything, you're still around both blacks and whites.

Colonel Alphonse G. Davis

Davis: I grew up [in New Orleans] in a large family. I'm the oldest of 15. I had eight sisters, six brothers, all of whom are still living. My father and mother were married 55 years when my dad passed away. My dad started out as a truck driver and a school custodian, a hard worker. He worked two or three jobs and was really my role model. He passed away after [Hurricane] Katrina. My mom was a homemaker, a mother, wife, and a business lady. She worked at a restaurant and eventually came to own the restaurant. So for us children to find role models, we had to look no further than our front door.

Both of my parents just had high school educations. They got married very early; my mother was 19, I believe, and my father was 20. And all 15 of us had a chance to go to college. Not everybody finished, but everybody went, graduated from high school and went to college.

Allison: What sort of schools did you attend growing up?

Davis: I started elementary school in a Catholic school, Saint Monica's, and went to public school for middle school. My high school was an all-boys' high school, Saint Augustine High School, which was kind of my saving grace, other than my family.

Allison: Were the Catholic schools integrated?

Davis: No, they were not. All-black schooling. But in my high school, the priests, the majority were white. So I had in high school black and white as far as educators.

I always saw in my life a white gentleman named Ray Rieckie as a significant influence. He was a businessman who my mom actually worked for, a young guy. He owned a Chicken Delight restaurant. This was back when the racial tensions in New Orleans, and really around the country, were high. New Orleans wasn't very progressive. But he was like an extension of our family. The reason I always mention his name is because I remember when I was in college, I went to Southern University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana—again, an all-black college, historically black university. When I was getting ready to graduate, I had been playing in the band, and they were paying me to play in the band to help with tuition and what have you.

The last year I didn't play in the band, and I decided to get an apartment. Well, unbeknownst to me at that time, I had to pay that \$500 back for that last semester that they had paid me to play in the band. I went to Ray Rieckie, and he gave me a blank check and signed it. He said, "Don't let your mother know this." And, "But you're going to pay it back, and don't let your mother know because I don't want you to disappoint her." That had an impact on me, racially.

Now to get to college, I remember going with my dad, and I needed \$500 to start school. I'll never forget. My dad said, "Come on, you're going to come with me and we'll go borrow this money so I can get you started in school." We went down to the Claiborne Company, a loan company, and this was like in 1968. Black power was big then, the whole racial climate was just tense. For instance, at my high school, Saint Augustine, our valedictorian, a guy who's a prominent medical doctor now, when he finished his valedictory speech, he did the black power salute, and we all stood and did the same thing. As a matter of fact, they still do it now at the football games when they sing the alma mater. But at the Claiborne Company, there was a white gentleman, Mr. Bridgeman. We went there, and Mr. Bridgeman said, "Come on in." We went in, and I remember the conversation. "Hey, Alphonse, how you doing boy?" I'm thinking, "Boy?!" My dad, just tapping me, saying, "You be quiet." So my dad goes in and says, "Yes, Mr. Bridgeman, how are you doing, sir? My son wants to go to college, and we need some money to get him started."

"Well, what do you need, boy?"

My dad says, "Yes, sir, I need \$500."

He says, "No problem." He went in this drawer and pulled out a cigar box. He peeled off \$500. He knew my dad. And my dad said, "What do I need to sign?"

"You don't need to sign anything." And so here's Mr. Bridgeman, an older white gentleman, not as progressive, but obviously good at heart, and I'm like, "Wow." That sort of shaped in me how you treat people, by the way they treat you. And you don't judge people just because of the color of their skin—black, white, purple, or blue.

Lieutenant General Willie J. Williams

W. Williams: I grew up in a single-parent home, was raised by my mother, and [in] my early childhood, we moved around quite a bit. I was born in a little town called Livingston, Alabama, and I remember we stayed there a few years, and then we ended up in another little town called Epes, Alabama. . . . That's where I started school. I think I went there the first and second grade, the first two years. We ended up moving again from there, by the time I was in third grade, to another place called Theodore, Alabama, which is out in Mobile County, because we had relatives down there. . . .

My mother usually worked as a maid or as a domestic worker, and we as kids, we just worked in pretty much the same type of stuff—domestic labor around individual homes and things like that—as we were growing up. Sometimes our moves were associated with that, or it was with our families, or family getting sick or something, and so we relocated. That went on up until, I want to say I left the fifth grade, then we relocated to Moundville, Alabama, and I stayed there all the way through high school and then went from there to college. That's where we spent most of our time, and that's where my mother lived up until the time she passed. That's where my brothers live now, so that became our home. . . .

Moundville is where I think a lot of my shaping began to take place. A lot of it came from my mother, and then we had an uncle who was there and another uncle who was down in Livingston, who really began to influence me and things. My church was there in Moundville, and I was going to church there. . . .

I think it's indicative somewhat of the way some of our small-town African American communities were. The community as a whole began to have an interest in you. A lot of it I think was, I don't know if it was encouraged at the time, or that's just the way it was, but there was a lot going on having to do with advancement, if you will, of the African Americans in our society. There was always this dialogue that was taking place of preparing the youth, and registering to vote, of getting education and things. There was this encouragement by the community that took me, as well as others, and said, "Hey, you're going to do something with your life. You're going to go on."

Allison: Do you think that was coming out of the civil rights movement that was going on? I mean, you were born in what year?

W. Williams: I was born in 1951.

Allison: So that's sort of percolating along there, as you're a young man?

W. Williams: Absolutely. . . . I know that was part of it, because during Martin Luther King's days, [when he was] doing a lot of his work throughout the South down there, we would have what we called mass meetings, where we would have meetings in the church where we would talk about those things. Some of the leaders from Dr. King's movement would come into our communities, and they would have the meetings. We'd have the meetings at the church. . . .

Part of King's teaching—and a lot of the ministers and pastors took it up—was this educational aspect of things, and how that was the path to progress. So all our teachers, other parents, my mom, that was one thing [she always said], "You're going to school, and you're going to graduate high school." That was the goal, that was the vision. For a generation, that was a leap in itself. It wasn't necessarily talk of college per se, but as time went on, we ended up doing that. As I was growing up in Moundville, our teachers, most of them had come out of historically black colleges and universities. . . .

The teachers that came in to teach in our schools actually lived right in the community . . . up the road from you. The teachers then became pretty much an extension of your family. They had a passion for it; it was more than a job for them. Again, it was segregated. We were the last class to graduate from that school, a segregated school. . . .

Allison: What are some of your memories of growing up in a segregated environment?

W. Williams: Sometimes it's not so obvious to you, but growing up in it, and seeing even the little subtleties that are associated with discrimination and so forth, you begin to be able to discern and be able to pick up on it I think a little bit more readily than not growing up in one. Again, this little town that I was growing up in, we still had the bathrooms that you could not go in and those sorts of things, and the restaurants that you could not eat in. We could buy food there, but we had to get the food from the back door. I remember my teachers, if they wanted something from the restaurant, they

would send some of us little boys to go there, and we'd pick it up and bring it back to the school. . . .

You had the truck that would come around after school to pick you up to take you to the cotton fields so that you could pick cotton. You would pick cotton from the time we got out of school until dark, and then you would go home. Even in that environment, the kids who were doing the picking were all the black kids. If there were white kids out there, they would either be driving the tractor or they would just be doing the weighing and stuff like that.

You had talked about it in the community, and it didn't take you long to understand that the only reason it was that way was because you were born with black skin and the others were not. It had nothing to do with your abilities, and that's what my mother always taught me, that it has nothing to do with your abilities. That's just the state of play as it is now. So again, you prepare yourself for those sorts of things, realizing that this is a journey, and that that was not the end. So you went through that.

In my younger days, it was not so much an issue, early on, because I just knew that. After I got to college, and coming out of college, now you become more aware of things. Then it became an irritant at that point, because now you can really see that there's nothing except [your skin color], and there's no reason for that. You can't see the rationale. Certainly, from growing up in the church, you know that it was nothing that the Lord had decreed, so why does man all of a sudden decide that this is your lot in life, and here's where you have to go? . . .

The other thing that I think taught me a valuable lesson is that there are those—I think it's on either side of the race issue—there are those who see themselves as privileged, and then those who maybe see themselves as not privileged, but then having to earn what it is that you get. Of course I see myself as one who has had to work hard to earn whatever it is. When you see someone who has not done the same, has not earned it, but because they feel that they are privileged and that they should have it, even if they don't deserve it, it begins to rub you the wrong way. I think if you understand that, you go, "OK, I see it. That's the way it is." Some great lessons learned growing up, and still learning lessons daily.

Allison: To grow up in that environment, you really had the deck stacked against you.

W. Williams: But I tell you, and I'll go back to my teachers, and I'll tell you the story. This is what really led me to college and from there into the Marine Corps. Even with things that you have stacked against you, but with family, with the community and the teachers all saying, "No, you're going to do it differently, and if we need to, we're going to help you to get you to where you need to go." This is the story. [When I was] getting ready to come out of high school, I knew that I didn't have resources to go to college . . . so it became, OK, well, what are you going to do?

I was an honor student coming out of high school. I always did well in school, no matter what level I was in. There were three of us buddies, we did everything together. . . . We talked about it, and we said, "Hey, let's go join the Air Force." We didn't know anything about the Marine Corps or anything like that. . . . One day we got into our little car and we drove from Moundville to Tuscaloosa, which is only about 15 miles or so, but Tuscaloosa was where the recruiters were—the "big city." So we went up there, and we went in to see the recruiter because we knew there would be no issue with asking our score or anything like that. We could do those. That wasn't an issue. We went in and we said, "We want to join the Air Force." We got all the information, had everything all ready to do that.

No sooner than we get back to the school—and I'm sure we told somebody, little girls, because they talk too much. They went and they reported us to the teachers and the principal. The teachers and principal were just beside themselves. Here we are, the leaders of our class. We were honor students, we were in honor society, we were always either the president or the vice president of the class. They basically called us in—and I like to refer to it as kangaroo court—they called us in and held kangaroo court on us. They put three chairs across the front of the classroom, they had us sit down, and they began to question us as to what did we think we were doing? Why [was it] that we weren't going to college? I think I was the one who had a legitimate excuse, if you will, and so my response to them was, "OK, you know my situation. You know that my mama doesn't have the money to send me to college. You know that I don't

have the money to go, so that's what I'm doing."

Then they turned to the other two. They grew up in a family with mom and dad, so they were better off. They turned to them and asked them why they were not going, and their answer was that they were not going because I was not going. They were following me. The teachers sat for a while and talked about it a little bit, and then they said, "OK, what if we get you some help? Then would you go?"

I said, "Well, yes, I would." They had us do everything we were supposed to do with paperwork and all that stuff, and in fact they got us help. At graduation, the three of us went on to the same school, Stillman College. It was that thing of using whatever of the community, the teachers, using whatever influence they had to help take away my excuse for failure. That's pretty much what happened. They took away that excuse that I had. I gave them an excuse, they took it away, and that really is what got me started on this path.

Lieutenant Colonel Doris A. Daniels

Daniels: I was born and raised in Prentice, Mississippi. That's in Jefferson Davis County within the central portion of the state. It is primarily farming and industrial. My father was a big farmer. I grew up with lots of siblings, and we were required—a very strict family, and when I say strict, I don't mean in terms of religion or whatever, but all of us had jobs, whether it was attending the chickens or bringing in the cows. My father felt that if we could do nothing else in life, we'd know how to provide for ourselves because we were willing to work hard and commit to something.

My father was a great agriculturist and very successful. He was one of the few black farmers in that county at that time that owned his own land, his own farm. Most of the other black men and women were, I guess for lack of a better term, sharecroppers, and they lived on the land of white owners. I didn't know all that at that time, because I was growing up, and I played with their kids, we were just little country kids. I didn't know why, but I kept losing these little friends because at any period of time when their parents had to leave off the farm, of course, then they did.

I grew up in a segregated school. There were only two schools in the county. There was a black school and there was the white school.

Major Beth M. Wolny: What years were these?

Daniels: I graduated in 1969 from J. Johnson High School. . . .

Wolny: Any special memories from your school days?

Daniels: I remember that they used to have in the fall, about August, this big festival, all the black parents. And they would have it at the school. I remember the ladies would be baking pies, and people who could sew, and it was just a gathering of talents, and the men who did carpentry work, they would go early in the morning. I later learned that this was an annual event, but it was a necessary annual event. They would show up at the school primarily to fix the furniture that had been given to our school from the white school and the books that had been given to our school from the white school. What many of the ladies who were more literate would do was go through every page, and many times they could be missing as much as 10 to 20 pages of essential information. But what they would do, they would scratch out and remove racial epithets that had been written in them, because the white school kids knew that we would receive the old books and they would receive the new books. The men who had skills . . . would sand down and remove racial epithets off where they carved it into the wooden desks, remove all that, sand it down, and get it ready for us for the fall opening of classes.

It was not uncommon for my class of maybe 30 kids, for example, to have 10 books. We shared those books. But the interesting thing—and today I understand it and even embrace the concept—they would identify those students who they felt would be successful, such students as a teacher's child, a preacher's child. And those children would get the new books because it was a common understanding that they would have greater training and would be able to go further than those that just may become an old whatever. So they would get the new books. And I remember in a couple of my classes trying to follow a lecture or a class when the whole 10 pages were missing, and sitting and looking at these kids and thinking how brilliant they were, wondering how they knew those things, not realizing that the first 10 pages in my book were missing. . . .

But at that time, the way the community pulled together, the way my mother and father addressed certain issues to those of us who were children and didn't understand it, was so unique that you

never really felt it. We were always so separate. I had a couple of white young ladies who were my playmates on the farm because you had such big farms that would connect, and we were the only blacks. We would not think anything of it in the mornings on our way to school, to wave at each other. We never thought to question why are you going one way and I'm going the other? That was kind of my growing-up experience early on. . . .

Wolny: How did you get to college?

Daniels: When I graduated at J. Johnson High School, I had looked in every magazine I could think of, because I had no counseling of what to do and how to do it. The counseling was set aside, again, for those students that we felt would make it. It's almost like the strongest person that can run the greatest distance; those of us that are weak, give them our water so that they can make it. Somebody has got to make it. And so these individuals would be counseled, told about schools. The counselor would help them apply for whatever they needed. If you weren't in that queue, you didn't even know it happened.

Wolny: So you were not one of the "chosen" but still got to college. What happened?

Daniels: I remember distinctly the day. We used to have at our home what we called a French porch, a little bitty porch. On the side was the window to the kitchen. And I remember my mother yelling to me, . . . she said, "Go to the mailbox." I got up, I went to the mailbox, and there was one single, sole letter in the mailbox, and it was addressed to Doris Jean Armstrong. I've got to remind you, I never got any mail. I'm just a country girl, but it was a two-pager, and it was from Texas College. It was introducing me to the college; it told me that I had been accepted to the college. It told me [everything] down to how many bars of soap to bring and when to be there. I could not believe it. I took the letter in, I showed it to my mother. She knew nothing of it. I went to school the next day, I asked all the kids, "Did you get the letter? Did you get a letter?" Nobody got this letter. . . .

One night [at college I was] sitting under the trees, socializing—because at that time we had curfews—when all of a sudden this tall, very light-complexioned, good-looking, silver-haired guy—and had two ladies with him that was very light complected, very pretty ladies—

walked out. Apparently they had come to the dormitory looking for a Doris Jean Armstrong, and they told him where I was. When I looked up, he introduced himself. I stood up, and he told me who he was. This is the man that had caused the letter to be sent to me. . . .

[Here is] how he found me. Years ago, he attended Prentice Normal Industrial Institute. He had since gone on to [college] and got his degrees, and he was a professor at some university, a dean of students or something. And he had made a promise years ago. He said what had happened was while he was attending Prentice Normal Industrial Institute, something happened to his mother and his father. They were killed in some kind of tragedy, and he was left out there, and he had nothing. He said a family took him in. The family didn't really have much but told him, "When my children eat, you eat. When they get shoes, you get shoes." And "you have to do chores around here, we'll make sure that we pay your tuition," or whatever it was he needed at Prentice Normal Industrial Institute. He said he'd always promised to pay that back to the people who helped him. . . .

He said, "The only thing I could remember was the name Armstrong." And he said, "I figured that in that small town if I helped any Armstrong, I would somehow touch that family, because it's such a small town, they'd have to be related." He said, "So I went to that town and I asked, 'Is anybody graduating this year with the last name Armstrong?'" Tell me about a Hail Mary. And that was my name, at the top of the list.

Yes, that's how I got to Texas College, that's how I started my academic career. I was there for two years. I worked, did the work study. That's how I survived. He died I think two years later, but by that time I kind of knew how to do what I needed to do. He was paying back, reaching back to the community, paying a debt. He said, "All I remember was the last name Armstrong, and it's taken me years, but before I die"—he died of cancer—"I was going to pay back that debt." He paid for my tuition, he paid for my room, he paid for my books, he paid for everything.

Lieutenant General Walter E. Gaskin Sr.

Gaskin: I grew up in segregation. I was the first group to integrate [into] the high school in Savannah. We integrated by grades.

The first year, we integrated the ninth grade, and the next year the tenth grade. My first year at Savannah High, I was in the ninth grade. I came straight from middle school. I was a part of the cohort that integrated. There were 12 of us out of a total of 2,400 students there.

When I came to the Marine Corps, I was not a typical person who had come straight out of a historically black college and university. I had already had the experience of integration. Coming into the Marine Corps, where you are one of 3 or 4 percent, that did not intimidate me as [it did] a number of my peers who came from historically black colleges. They had come from black high schools, started at a black college, and then the Marine Corps.

I had learned some valuable lessons as it relates to race coming from a segregated society where you saw blacks entering the back doors to buy clothing, not being able to sit at counters. I went through all of that. I grew up with the demonstrations, and my family was there at the march on Washington, DC [in 1963], so I grew up with all of that. But I also had a broadening view of integration. And everybody—I guess that's the first time that I really was exposed with meritocracy and [that] performance counts. I was in classes in high school where the teacher would not call on you, or there was very little interaction between you and the students because they were still trying to feel each other out. But my performance counted. I mean, you may not talk to me as a teacher, but you gave me a grade, you gave me what I earned. And if I did well, you gave me a good grade.

I also learned that if the leadership doesn't set a certain tone, that integration is a two-way street, and the student or other person can become a victim of the politics of it all, and you are kind of caught in the middle. I saw all of that. I saw teachers who didn't like the idea and thought that the only reason I'm going to teach you is because you are here and I've got to; to other teachers saying, if you want to be a part of this, you have to engage this, you have to do the same thing as everybody else. I remember one teacher saying to me whether you do good or not, you're going to be accused of something being given to you, so you'd better get the best out of this that you can, because you're going to have to demonstrate what you know every time. You don't have the luxury of staying on here like you are an athlete or

something, that you were given this spot because you play ball well. This isn't about ball, this is about academics, this is about knowledge, and so you need to make up your mind that that's what you're going to do. So that was a learning experience for me. . . .

You can be angry about it, or you can sit back, or you can deal with it. You can prove that you have what it takes to do this. That became a challenge for me through school, and I found out that learning, and the challenge, in spite of the circumstance, was fun. I was taking college classes in high school and got an academic scholarship. However, I wanted to go to a historically black college or university. It was a choice. I looked at Howard, Tuskegee, Florida A&M, and Southern. I ended up going to Savannah State. I was impressed by the president of the college, who had moved the ROTC unit there. He was a member of the community and had helped organize the preparation for integration for the students, and tutoring. . . . I was interested in that because the thing is, we have a vested interest in the community. You're given an opportunity to get educated, you cannot turn it down, because it is truly the freedom that you want. . . .

I was in ROTC in high school. It was mandatory for the first two years, ninth and tenth grade. I had been exposed to the Army, Army ROTC. One of the things that I learned from Army ROTC was [that] rank structure meant something, regardless of color. When I got the ROTC scholarship to Savannah State, I discovered that you had a choice between the Navy and [the Marines]. . . . I went through college with every intent of joining the Marine Corps.

Major General Ronald L. Bailey

Bailey: I was born in Florida and raised in Florida. So all my life, kind of up until my sophomore year, was all the civil rights [movement]. [The year] 1970 was when the state of Florida integrated its school systems, so their systems integrated when I was a sophomore in high school. But up until that time, the entire South was segregated, and I clearly remember, vividly remember, the "colored" and "white" signs. That was how the city was labeled, and that was how our school system [operated].

I had a very interesting experience. My parents sent me off to private school, so my first four years of school, . . . I went to a private

Catholic school. In the private Catholic school, all of our teachers were white nuns and priests. So I had a kind of different experience. It wasn't until I went off to public school that I realized that it was segregated because, while there were no white students in my private school, my teachers were, so I didn't equate it [with segregation]. Outside of those walls, you walked back into a segregated society, but inside the walls of the private school, you couldn't see it. So it wasn't until fourth grade, from fourth to ninth grade, that I went to public school, and I was in a segregated school system. And then sophomore, junior, senior years were in an integrated school system. . . .

But even into the '70s, from '73 to '77, I experienced my share of racism while in college and driving from Florida to Tennessee. You know, you stop at the various restaurants. During that time frame, they would not serve you. I had it happen on a routine basis. And you know what I did? I got in my car and left. You don't want to serve me, I don't want to eat there. Why? I am not going to force it. It wasn't my place to decide that I am going to show you even though the federal government and everyone said, "Hey, listen." They were vital lessons because they taught me about people and how people can hate for no reason other for than the color of your skin.

Colonel Kenneth D. Dunn

Dunn: I was born in Louisville, Kentucky, the home of Muhammad Ali, and went to Catholic schools. Louisville was a moderately segregated town. It wasn't like Birmingham or anything like that, but I went to all-black Catholic schools in Louisville—Saint Augustine Elementary School. When we moved to the West End, it was integrated. Saint Benedict was integrated. . . . In Valley High School, the school that I graduated from in 1974, they had always had black students there [since Louisville schools integrated in 1956], but it was a predominantly white school. As a matter of fact, my high school class only had four black students out of 550 students. That was a unique situation. I never had any unpleasant memories of going to school in Louisville. None. I think it would have been

a lot different if I had come from Alabama, because my mother's from Alabama, and we visited Alabama a lot.

Allison: And there was a difference?

Dunn: Very much so, but that was a very tough environment. We spent a whole summer there when I was in the first grade. My mother packed us all up, and we stayed with my grandmother in a place called Florence, Alabama, which is a rural community. Everything was segregated. I never saw any white people. I think we went to a movie once, and we sat in the balcony, and the white patrons sat downstairs. There was no integration. That was 1958. So I do remember that. Coming back to Louisville was just very, very different.

Allison: How did the ongoing civil rights movement affect your growing up?

Dunn: When I was born, we were called Negroes, then we became colored, and then we became black. We developed this sense of pride and confidence. I mean, when I went to the Naval Academy, I was probably one of the most cocky people there. It was mostly because of coming out of Louisville. Muhammad Ali came out of Louisville. I just never had this attitude of "I can't." I never had that. I still don't.

Another thing is the things we were reading back in those days, and the music, all told us that we could do whatever we wanted to do. At the conclusion of World War II, we had black veterans coming back home, and they just weren't going to accept the status quo. Soldiers and Montford Point Marines, at least one Montford Point Marine, marched in 1963 with Dr. King. The real significance of the Montford Point Marines and those black veterans who fought in World War II is that when they came off those battlefields, or wherever it is they served in the military, they went back home, and they said, "We have to change the status quo. We can't continue to live like this." They were extremely patriotic. And that's what Dr. King said all the time. He said, "It's for the country." If you were born in 1952 like I was, seven years after World War II, during my life, I was able to see all of this change, and able to document it and think about it. When you talk to youngsters these days, you just

don't know if they really understand what happened regarding civil rights.



Chapter 2

The Formative Years, 1950s–1960s

World War II proved to be a major stimulus for racial integration, and the first inclusion of African Americans in the Marine Corps occurred during that conflict. These men, known as Montford Point Marines because of the camp at which they trained, were all enlisted and served with great dedication and sacrifice. Although no African Americans were allowed to serve as officers, a few achieved promotion to first sergeant and sergeant major and served in significant leadership positions. These men, such as Edgar R. Huff, Gilbert H. Johnson, and James E. Huger, built a foundation of leadership for those who would follow.

In 1944, the first African American Marines participated in the V-12 program, a pathway for promising enlisted men to earn commissions. Three Marines were commissioned from this program in 1946. Prior to this, however, three enlisted black Marines had been selected in 1945 to attend the Platoon Leaders Course at Quantico, Virginia. Two failed to maintain the required military and scholastic ratings, and one was dropped due to a physical condition. In late 1945, five black Marines were again admitted to officers' training in the Platoon Leaders Course at Quantico. One of them, Frederick C. Branch, was commissioned in November 1945 and became the first African American Marine officer. Like the rest of this class, he was placed on inactive duty as a Reserve officer. He continued to participate in Reserve activities and eventually commanded a black volunteer Reserve unit in Philadelphia.¹

More followed, but not many. Three African American Marines were commissioned in 1946, and all became inactive reservists. One, Herbert L. Brewer, remained in the Reserves and eventually reached the rank of colonel. This made him the highest

Photo Left: Capt Edward L. Green, who was commissioned in 1959 and served two tours in Vietnam, shown in a recruiting photograph from the 1960s.

Courtesy of LtCol Edward L. Green

ranking black reservist as of 1973. Lieutenant William K. Jenkins, who was a product of the V-12 program and had gone into the Reserves, was mobilized for the Korean War and led a platoon of Marines in combat. The first African American to hold a regular commission was John E. Rudder, an enlisted World War II veteran who was commissioned in 1948 after graduating from Purdue University and participating in the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps (NROTC). Frank E. Petersen Jr. became the first black Marine aviator and flew combat missions in Korea. Petersen also obtained a regular commission.

Lieutenant General Frank E. Petersen Jr.

Petersen: When I joined the service [U.S. Navy] at the age of 18 [in 1950], with one year of college, I had always sort of dreamed of being a pilot. I wound up in the Navy's Electronic Technical School. I then discovered that we also had the option to apply to the naval aviation cadet program, and so I applied for that and was selected and went to Pensacola.

Arrival at Pensacola Naval Air Station's Basic Training Com-

Frank E. Petersen Jr. in November 1963 just after his promotion to major. He was serving as aviation safety officer at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan.

Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A420863



mand for air cadets in Florida was traumatic [in 1951]. I knew I had a problem as soon as I assessed the racial climate. I had fled my hometown to escape racism, only to find myself caught in a deeper kind of prejudice than Topeka [Kansas] ever knew. Separate water fountains in the gym. Designated latrines. The back-of-the-bus routine. . . .

In preflight, we were required to go to Sunday services. We'd march in as a unit. This was particularly trying for me, and it turned out to be almost an insult, because as I walked in, I could almost feel the nudging, the turning, twisting, and craning of the necks of the people there. Turning and looking at this "new one." This "black one." . . . I absolutely hated walking in there, being the only black in the entire place, and somehow being "the show."²

Mr. Henry I. Shaw Jr.: Were there other blacks going through training with you?

Petersen: At that point in time, there was one other black cadet, a fellow by the name of David Campbell. He had made [cadet] regimental commander in preflight and was a real sharp cookie and was shooting to take the Marine option upon graduating and had me talked into doing it as well. Dave washed out in the final stages of flight training.

I decided I would try for the Marine Corps program because at that point in time, there were no black pilots in the Marine Corps. The Navy had already had three black pilots, and one of them had already died [Ensign Jesse L. Brown, USN]. So then I picked up the next black to come into the program, behind me, and had him pumped up to go in case I didn't make it. But as it turned out, I applied for the Marine Corps program, and after some debate, it was decided that I would be accepted, and I was commissioned as a second lieutenant in October 1952. There are some funny stories with that in that one of my records at headquarters carried me as white, and there were some back-channel messages upon my request to go into the Marine Corps as to whether or not I should be taken. It was eventually decided that yes, I would be allowed to go Marine Corps.

Shaw: When you finished flight school, you were assigned to VMAT-10 [Marine Attack Training Squadron 10] at El Toro [California]. What do you remember about that assignment?

Petersen: El Toro was my first duty station before going to Korea, and that started off a little hectically. Of course there had been no black pilots before. My first night on the base, at the O [officers'] club, I was challenged by a Reserve captain who questioned my authenticity to the point of calling the duty officer down and asking that I be locked up for impersonating an officer and the whole nine yards. The following morning, I was called in by my commanding officer and questioned as to why I had started a ruckus in the O club. . . . After he had heard the chain of events, my side of the story, he took action . . . on my side. An apology was rendered, and the man who had caused the incident was immediately transferred to Korea. It was thought that to publicize my arrival that articles in the base newspaper should be put out so that I would not have any further encounters. That was pretty much a low spot for me because I had not had problems while I was going through the cadet program and throughout the South—Pensacola, Alabama, and Texas. Then to go to California and run right into it. That sort of tightened me up a little bit.

[As a fighter pilot, Petersen flew Chance-Vought F4U Corsairs in combat in Korea in 1953. In his autobiography, he described the conditions he faced with the unit.]

In early morning, we replacement pilots were flown out of Itami [Japan] in a DC-4 . . . across the Korean Strait directly into Marine air base K-6 to join my squadron at Pyeongtaek, South Korea, about 30 miles south of Seoul. I imagined that my arrival there was going to cause quite a stir, because there'd never been a black U.S. Marine aviator. This was going to be interesting. The name of the game, I thought, was to keep cool even though I knew it would probably be tough. The focus for me was just to do my job and do it damned well.³ . . .

Initially, for example, the question of who was going to sleep in my tent kept surfacing. Even socializing with me was cause for small discussions, although these guys were few and far between. And every time the issue of race came up, one of the others would intercede and threaten to knock some guy on his ass if he didn't come off it.⁴

Shaw: It sounds like you had a pretty solid support group in the squadron.

Petersen: Being in a squadron with about 25 pilots or so, and other officers, it doesn't take long for word to spread, who you are and so forth, and most of the guys were pretty straight shooters. . . . A fellow named Bill Clark from Atlanta, Georgia, . . . and several others just made damn sure that there would be no problems, whether it was going on liberty in Japan or what have you. I'll never forget the first time we went on R&R [rest and recreation leave] and I was 21 at the time. They [naval officers] weren't going to let me in this officers' club, and they [his squadron mates] just flat laid the rule down there: "If he doesn't come in, we are going to tear this place apart." These were Reserve officers, captains and majors who were in for a second time around. They had seen the ropes, most of them were from the South, and they just said, "No, it's just not going to be that way."

[From the autobiography, discussing a significant mission:]

Perhaps the mission that really helped define my entire career as a Marine officer happened while I was assigned to the Devil Cats [Marine Fighter Squadron 212] in Korea. I'll never forget 15 June 1953. I had maybe a little more than 40 combat missions under my belt. We were on a mission into North Korea. It was a four-plane division, and I had the second section [of two aircraft]. My division leader lost his radio. As a section leader, I automatically took the lead. Checking in with the forward air controller, I received necessary attack information, then led the attack, pummeling the enemy positions with bombs and 20mm strafing passes.

On pulling up, I took ground fire, delivered the stuff on target, kept the guys together, and returned safely. A couple took a few hits, as I recall. My commanding officer thought that was quite a feat for a brand, spanking new second lieutenant to have led a division on target and brought it back. He wrote me up for a Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC).

I don't know if initially there had been a reluctance to award me the DFC because of who I was. I do know that once the word got out, the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing commander, Major General Vernon E. Megee, personally flew down to Pyeongtaek from his headquarters to make the presentation of the DFC to me on 20 September 1953. . . . It was probably one of the most memorable days of my life.⁵

[After his service in the Korean War, Petersen was assigned first to the Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) at El Toro, California.]

As black officers, we weren't usually included in many of the social events taking place at the officers' club, so we banded together, socialized together. . . . In addition to the newly arrived black officers, we did have a group of close white officer friends who were our [on-base] neighbors. True, we all did lots of "hanging out" at the bars in Laguna and Los Angeles, but once we were married, some things began to change. It was more family-oriented stuff. Dinners and Sunday brunches. We were all so close that this kind of thing was almost spontaneous.⁶

Shaw: At this time, the late 1950s, early 1960s, what was the racial climate among rank-and-file Marines?

Petersen: At this point in time, there was growing unrest on the enlisted side of the house. I was approached by several of the black enlisted who wanted me to petition their cause in the operation of the enlisted club where there appeared to be a great deal of friction and the blacks were beginning to band together to solve it their way. When I was approached, I presented it to a group of commanding officers in one of the staff meetings and even went so far as to volunteer to stand the station officer of the day duty so that I would be in a position to look into the trouble that particular night, etc. However, once the scare had passed and things sort of went back to the way they were before, I also found that some of the blacks who had asked for assistance were afraid to come forward to give testimony to commanding officers.

In other words, there were problems, very similar to what we see today [1972], with the name calling in the E [enlisted] club, fist-fights breaking out, etc., but with one difference—the blacks were not banded together as tightly as they are today. These were more or less individual efforts. Guys who were pretty good with their dukes would go in, and if something happened, they would slug it out right there.

[Petersen transferred to MCAS Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, in January 1960.]

We lived in temporary housing on station for more than a month while I tried to locate appropriate housing. . . . The fact that

we were in Hawaii, and considering the makeup of the population, I didn't anticipate a problem finding a place for my family and me to live. Hawaii, after all was generally regarded as one of the melting pots of the world. . . . A problem finding housing? You've got to be kidding, I told myself. . . . I was wrong as the proverbial two left shoes. . . .

Ellie [his wife] answered an ad for an available house rental by telephone. The owner was more than responsive, even volunteering to place the utilities in our names. . . . I drove out to the owner's house, introduced myself, and attempted to close the rental deal. After she looked me up and down, the air seemed strangely charged with an extended, embarrassing silence. I heard a whiny female voice coming, it seemed, from some faraway place.

"I'm sorry," the now-faceless woman said, "but the house has already been rented. Thanks for coming by."

"Thank you very much," I said, almost choking with anger. I spun on my heels, turned away, and left. . . .

For the next several days, the incident tumbled over and over end in my mind. . . . Anger assailed me. . . . I'd dedicated my life to my country because I loved her, and now this new anger jerked me around, made me rue the day I'd come into America's military, if this was the way I was going to be treated by other Americans. . . .

I sat down and wrote a letter. I did it just to get the anger off my chest. I mailed it—tongue in cheek, actually—because I had no high hopes that the newspaper would ever print it.

Boy, was I wrong.

[Notes that the letter ran in the *Honolulu Advertiser* under the headline "Jim Crow in Kailua?"] Much to my continuing surprise, the letter caused quite a stir on base. [Lieutenant Colonel Louis H.] Lou Steman, my commanding officer, called me into his office.

"Frank," Lou wanted to know, "is there anything I can do help?"

"I don't know, colonel. That's the way things are around this part of the world, I guess." . . .

[At Steman's request,] a white officer went with me on my house-hunting missions. The experience rekindled my faith in my fellow Marines. I found that I had lots of good, close friends among the company-grade officers—the pilots. . . .

Hawaii in the 1960s was quietly discriminatory. And the hell of it was that it wasn't just the whites who were doing the discriminating. Hawaiians didn't really mingle with anyone else. The Japanese had their own community. It all was a definite eye-opener.

[Notes that probably due to Steman's intervention, he and his wife were soon able to get base housing.]⁷

[After transferring to an air control unit at Kaneohe Bay], I ran into another sensitive situation. In fact, this was one of the few times that I openly stated that prejudice was a factor in my commanding officer's assessment of my work as a Marine. After spending about six months with the unit, I received the lowest fitness report I have ever picked up as an officer. . . . I was determined to fight back, and I sat down to write a long rebuttal to the report, only to be talked out of submitting it along with my fitness report by the executive officer, a Marine major. . . . I acquiesced and didn't submit the rebuttal, which was filled with rhetoric that wouldn't have done the CO's [commanding officer's] career (and probably mine, either) any good at all.⁸

Shaw: Following your tour of duty in Hawaii, you went to the Western Pacific and served at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni [Japan] in 1963–64. What was the situation there regarding race issues?

Petersen: I was called in by the station commander and asked what could be done to settle some of the problems, because they were really beginning to bubble at Iwakuni. The basic problems were all off base, where blacks were confined to about two bars, not for reasons of national Japanese laws, . . . but they just weren't welcomed in these other bars. I made a point to take various white officers and show them where blacks went on liberty in the town of Iwakuni and why they were going there, etc. One station commander asked what he could do to solve the problem, and I told him, quite simply, "Get the Japanese whores to sleep with the blacks."

He said, "Well, I can't do that."

And I said, "Well, you can't solve the problem." But strangely enough, that is being done now [1972]. They have maneuvered to reach full equality, in some instances, off base. At any rate, on base they were beginning to have problems, many fistfights. The big three I call them—promotions, job assignment, and commanding officer's punishment—were the big taboos for blacks then as they are today.

Time and again, I would talk with the young black troopers out on liberty. I used to stop by the black bars and would always be engaged in conversation, or even stopped on the base, there at Iwakuni. I could see the rise commencing, so to speak. Of course at this point, where the Vietnam War was just really beginning to open up and the whole scene, at that point in time, race relations had, in my opinion, gone through a change. Whereas you had one or two blacks before in the '50s who were having a one-on-one type of problem, you now found that blacks in general were voicing the same complaints about the commanding officers, and what their problems were, and what they felt was needed, etc. In other words, they were becoming astute in terms of analyzing the problems and were recognizing that the patterns were such that all of them were involved.

Here again, you found a great split between your black staff NCO [noncommissioned officer] and your black junior. Your junior was having the problems. Your black staff NCOs were having the problems, but they were fighting it their way, and they were disassociating themselves, to a great degree, from your young black enlisted trooper. In the mid-1960s, your black staff NCO was aloft and felt that “I made it, and you should be able to make it the same way,” but the kids weren’t really looking for the same objectives. Many of them were very pro-Marine Corps, but they weren’t willing to go along the same lines that their predecessors had gone or do the things they had done to make it. They felt you can’t preach equality and implement inequality and expect me to play the game, because I won’t play the game.

Chief Warrant Officer-2 Annie L. Grimes

Major Beth M. Wolny: How did you become interested in the Marine Corps?

Grimes: [Tells of leaving the family farm in Tennessee after high school and, through a cousin, getting a job in Chicago working in a sewing factory.]

In the meantime, I had seen an ad in one of the magazines about women being allowed to join the Marine Corps, for travel and adventure and to learn administration. That sounded interesting to me because I wanted to get into administration. I wanted to be an office worker.



Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A416512

WO-1 Annie L. Grimes (right) with Col Barbara J. Bishop, director of Women Marines, at Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, in 1968, two years after Grimes was commissioned. She had enlisted in the Marines in 1950.

Wolny: So you looked into going in the Marine Corps. How did that process work?

Grimes: Little did I know that [not long before] they weren't even accepting blacks, because we didn't hear too much. In my growing-up years, our father didn't ever talk about slavery and things that you can't do. He allowed us to learn on our own, and as we meet prejudice, to face it our own way. He didn't allow us to hate people. I didn't have to grow up with a lot of resentment because we had our own social life, and it had been easy, and I hadn't met any prejudice, or was not aware of it. I didn't even know that they didn't want blacks in the Marine Corps.

I went down to join, and I guess it was just my lucky day because they took me. I told them I was ready to go then, but they told me no, I had to notify my parents and let them think about it. That was January, and the 2d of February [1950] they called me. . . . Then we left for boot camp, and there were four other girls leaving from Chicago. They were much younger. I was 24 years old already. . . . The other girls were about 20.

Wolny: Did anything memorable happen on the train trip down to Parris Island [from Chicago]?

Grimes: . . . [In] Atlanta, Georgia, we got off the train. We were going to have breakfast. All our names were on one set of orders, and although I was the oldest, one of the younger girls carried the orders and the meal tickets. In Atlanta, they wouldn't serve me at the station. They told me I couldn't be served. I was just going to stay there and wait for the others, but she didn't even want me to stay there and wait for the others. So she called the police to get me out. . . . The other girls got sandwiches, . . . and we went and sat next to the railroad tracks, waiting for the next train to take us on to Augusta, Georgia, the next morning.

Wolny: So the girls left the restaurant with you to go eat sandwiches?

Grimes: Yes, they left with me, and we all went out and sat outside. They thought it was strange that they wouldn't serve me. I even explained to the restaurant people and police that we were on one set of orders, when you pay for one, you pay for the whole thing. But they wouldn't listen.

When we got to Augusta, Georgia, at first I was not going to go in the station, but then I did. I went in, they looked at me strangely, but they served me, so I was surprised. I got breakfast in the station at Augusta. Then we left Augusta and got to Beaufort, South Carolina.

I didn't have the slightest idea about boot camp. I had never even heard anyone talk about what boot camp or anything, what it was like, or even what the Marine Corps was like. We got there, and some sergeant was yelling at us and made us line up. We couldn't talk, and I was wondering, "What have I got into?" We had to all line up and march from where we got off the transportation to get on the Marine Corps bus. . . .

Wolny: Did you face any particular problems in boot camp because of your race?

Grimes: I had one problem. My hair [would be] messed up from the day before. I carried my curlers with me, and my rollers and everything. I knew how to do my hair, but we had to swim every day. It would mess up my hair. So I had to do something to take care of it. I went and talked with my lieutenant, and I told her I had a problem in doing my hair. I had to do my hair with the hot plate for my curlers.

They were really nice. They went to town and bought me a hot plate and let me use a little office room or something that had [been] a storage room, but there wasn't too much in there, and they would let me go in there and do my hair. . . . I didn't have a problem after that. I made it through. That was my biggest problem, and that was what all the black girls would always ask me about: "How did you manage with your hair?" See, the beauty shops at the base only fixed the white girls' hair. They didn't do the black girls' hair.

Wolny: Was your lieutenant a male lieutenant or a female lieutenant?

Grimes: They were all women at the time I was in.

Wolny: Were your drill instructors male or female?

Grimes: All females. The only time we would see males is when we went to the dentist, or sick call, we'd get to see males, but we weren't supposed to talk with them. . . . But some of the girls, by the time those six weeks were up, some of them had made contact, throwing notes out the window at the guards. . . .

Wolny: Once you completed administration school, where did you go?

Grimes: I went to Washington, DC [Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps], and then I started getting promotions up the ladder. I made PFC [private first class] out of admin school and more promotions later. Every time it was a promotion time, we would have to take a test, and I would make it, and I was happy about that. That was adventure. And there was discrimination in Washington, DC, big time. I would find that all the time. But I just learned to cope with it.

Wolny: Did you find it was toward you as a black person in the Marine Corps, or as a woman in the Marine Corps, or both?

Grimes: No, as a black person. . . . Some of the girls thought I should hate the ones who discriminated, but I didn't. Whenever someone would say something to me thinking I would hate them, I would tell them, "Oh no, just consider the source." I would just go on. I was determined nothing was going to stop me. I didn't care what they did.

I stayed in Washington, DC, until 1953, and by that time I had made staff NCO. . . .

Wolny: How did the white female Marines treat you?

Grimes: Oh, they were nice all the time. There was a few that was there, some of the old timers, we had a few little incidents. When they first came there, especially girls from the South, they would all the time talk about me, and they'd compare me with their maid. They thought that I was supposed to be the maid in the barracks. I wouldn't even say [anything] about it. I'd just go along and smile with them, and then when they found out I was the one that assigned the duties, they were scared. They thought I was going to be mean back to them. But I didn't feel that way. I was just as nice to the ones that had been nasty to me as the ones that had not been nasty. I had a Christian training. My father was a Christian man, and he was the leader in the church, and my uncles and aunts were leaders in the church. . . . I knew how to be kind to people and respect others. And then if you continue to respect others, they would respect you. I didn't have no trouble.

Wolny: Where did you go from there? When did you put in for warrant officer?

Grimes: I went to San Francisco and stayed there until 1958. Then I went to Camp Pendleton and stayed there until 1962. Then I went to Philadelphia. I stayed there only two years. Then I went to Camp Lejeune, and that's when I put in for the warrant officer program.

There was a little incident about that because the lady that commanded the office at Camp Lejeune had been to Washington, DC. She knew there were still prejudiced men on the board at Washington. So when they sent my letter in to apply, they put on there "Caucasian." That way I would be judged by my record. I got ready to sign it, and they weren't going to tell me that. They were just going to slip it through. I had to read it first, and I told them to put "black," and then they told me why they did it. So then I just let it go through. When they were making the selection, . . . I was selected for my record because I had a good record. . . . Then when they found out that I was black, they tried to find ways to disqualify me. They went and got my medical records because, see, I had had surgery when I was in Philadelphia. I had surgery for ulcers. They had removed part of my stomach. They sent a letter and were going to turn me down for my record. But they hadn't had any concern about my stomach

that would hold me back from duties all that time. . . .

That made me real sad, to be selected then to take it back. My commanding officer at Camp Lejeune and the battalion CO, they were both nice. They wrote letters back to Washington, DC, and the Department of the Navy. I told them also that they were not treating me for my stomach trouble. If I was turned down for that, then I should have a medical record showing I was disabled. So anyway, they gave me warrant officer, but like I said, it made me have to shed many tears about it.

Major General Jerome G. Cooper

Mr. John J. Lyles: How did it come about that you joined the Marine Corps?

Cooper: While at [the University of] Notre Dame, I saw someone wearing a Navy ROTC uniform. I didn't know 50-some years ago that the ROTC existed, and when I saw this young man with this navy blue uniform on and Marine Corps emblems, that led me to inquire. So that's how I became a Marine officer. I was a contract volunteer Navy ROTC, graduated, was commissioned as second lieutenant I think on the 8th of June in 1958. . . .

An African American had never gotten commissioned from the University of Notre Dame, certainly not in the Navy ROTC. But I remember the summer before that I went to Quantico [Virginia] . . . and the train from Washington, DC, to Quantico was segregated. I can remember pulling up at the train station, and I was the only one who got off the back car. There was a bunch of young white kids in the front that said, "Hey, boy, you're coming with us." And I ran.

That's probably the best line I ever got in, in my life, because guess what they were giving away? They were teaching you how to be a leader, and I always remember that. And I can remember—these are vivid memories—I can remember at Quantico, we were at the brick barracks by the river, and there was a sergeant there. . . . I can remember at night he would come. Everybody would be sleeping. This sergeant would come and get me and take me in the basement and say, "Get down, n****, give me some push-ups" and would get on top of me. I'd do all I could, I'd flop around, and he'd go, "Hit me, I dare you to godd*** hit me." And I don't know how I had this fig-

ured, but I knew if I swung at that son of a b****, I'd be out of that program so fast. And I just think, how did I put up with that? I can remember going to the field and this sergeant pulling me up to a tree and telling me to hold this tree until he told me to stop. This must have been 1500–1600. I can remember holding that tree, and it gets dark, and the company leaves the field and goes back to the barracks by the river. And then about 2200, out comes some vehicles, people shouting, “Cooper, Cooper, where are you?” And the captain coming over saying, “What are you doing?”

I said, “Sir, I'm holding this tree.”

“Why?”

“The staff sergeant told me to.”

Those were some interesting times. But I guess maybe having grown up in Alabama helped me because I was somewhat used to similar treatment. . . . But then, let me tell you, too. I can say this: boy did I meet some fair, good Marines who helped me through this stuff.

After I went through The Basic School and time came to get your assignments, nobody would tell me what mine was. . . . But where did I go? Hawaii. God, I couldn't believe it. I wasn't smart enough to know then they weren't sending you to Camp Lejeune as an officer, and some of those other places. But I went to Hawaii and became a member of the famous 2/4 [2d Battalion, 4th Marines].

That's where I met Lieutenant General Petersen. He was a captain and I was a first lieutenant. . . . I remember the first time we went in the officers' club at Kaneohe Bay and they came up and asked for our ID card. So we gave them the ID card. We were mad as hell, and we left. This was like on Friday, and he said, “Cooper, let me tell you what we're going to do tomorrow night. Let's go wait until that son of a b**** is really crowded.” When the staff sergeant came, we said, “You ask everybody in here for their ID card, then you come back and ask us. If you don't want to do it, call the MPs [military police].” That was the end of that.

[One of Cooper's early tours of duty was commanding the Marine detachment on board the guided missile cruiser USS *Chicago* (CG 11).] The *Chicago* was a brand new ship, one of the first ships that had televisions on it and elevators. . . . When I reported into Marine barracks in San Francisco [in 1965], there were orders for me to

delay en route for like 14 days. I didn't know what the hell that was. But it was OK. I was in San Francisco, and it was pretty wonderful. I found out many years later from a colonel at Headquarters Marine Corps the reason I was told to delay en route was that they had never assigned a black officer aboard a Navy ship before, and that it took that amount of time to clear it.

That was a great experience. Working with the Navy was great. . . . I've got this new detachment, youngsters out of boot camp, a few lance corporals. . . . We didn't have a first sergeant yet. One of my Marines called me down on deck one day. Down the pier was walking this first sergeant with this swagger stick. He was so sharp; he was a Montford Point Marine, [James S.] Jim McCargo. He came, and you know your first sergeant is key on a ship's detachment because they're the admin experts and they keep you out of a lot of trouble. Jim was just great in that respect.

Colonel Fred L. Jones

Jones: The local draft board was still sending me correspondence, talking about "you need to go register." But I was getting exemptions because I'm in college. While at Oregon State, the Marine officer instructor my freshman year tried to get me to go PLC [Platoon Leaders Class]. I couldn't go PLC because I needed to work in the summertime. My family's economic situation was desperate, so I needed to work and send some money to my mom and help out. That was the only reason I didn't go, because I had to go to the military and what he had said made sense.

I didn't know at the time that my [football] position coach, [Robert O.] Bobb McKittrick, was a Marine Reserve captain. He started putting the pressure on me around my junior year because he knows there's a draft going on, and I have to go to the military, because I'm certainly not 4F [physically ineligible]. He said, "You ought to go to OCS [Officer Candidates School], go to the Marine Corps."

So in any case, when the Marine recruiter came around during my senior year, I took the test and all that. He was a little bit on the arrogant side. And I'd never seen a black Marine. So that was kind of interesting, and challenging, too. The only Marines I had ever seen were all white; even in Hawthorne, Nevada, all the sentries were

white. In any case, I decided I was going to go to the Marine Corps. My classmates, people that I was hanging out with, they said, “You have got to be kidding me! You’re going to be a *what?* A Marine? You don’t have a clue as to what you are getting into!” I had no idea what they were talking about, but I wasn’t going to go in as a private.

When I showed up here at Quantico in the fall of ’64, there was one other black face that I saw at OCS—one. And they med’d [medically discharged] him out in two days. So I was the only one in two OC [officer candidate] classes, close to 400 OC students. Due to my childhood, [I was] used to being around white people and being in a minority. I was used to it by now, I’d kind of gotten used to it. I kind of knew what to expect. I knew the subtleties and all that stuff. I never forgot looking in the mirror that at the time, [thinking that] most people saw me black first and then whatever else I was came in secondary. I understood that. I wasn’t bitter about it. That’s the way life was. But I had been successful in spite of that.

All I wanted to do was serve three years, go back to grad school, coach, and be a high school counselor or a history teacher. That was my interest, my vision of what I could do in America. That was the setting when I joined the Marine Corps.

I had gone a fifth year of college, so when I got to OCS, I was at least a year older than most of my OC class. I was much more mature. OCS is mostly physical. That was not a challenge for me at all, the physical stuff. And the head games they played, I had been through that a thousand times, that was no problem. So they didn’t bother me any more after the first week or two. I mean, after the first couple weeks in OCS, they just—they put me in leadership roles and they just let me alone, because it was pretty obvious I was extremely qualified. Unless I did something really stupid, I was going to be commissioned. . . . Of course at the time, the Marine Corps really didn’t care about how many blacks they had in 1964. I didn’t know it, but they didn’t care.

When I was commissioned in December of ’64, Major [Hurdle L.] Maxwell lived on base. He was having a party that weekend, a gathering, so he invited me. When I got there, he informed me that I was number 43, or number 45, black officer in the Marine Corps. . . . I don’t know how he knew that, but all I know is he told me, he

shocked me with that information. I said to myself, “Dear God, what in the world have I done? What kind of organization have I joined?” He didn’t think anything of it. He was happy that I was a lieutenant, and we were having a good time. General Petersen was there, he was a major [at that time]. [Anthony E.] Tony Manning was there, and there were several others. There were at least 12, 13, 14 black officers at his house. They represented almost a third of all the black officers in the Marine Corps, in one setting, the first day I was commissioned. It was quite a revelation to me that I was amongst these guys—no females, no female officers—and I just thought to myself, “You have got to be kidding me.”

It reinforced that feeling I had that the sooner you get this done and get back to Oregon State, the better off you are. You go do what you want to do. So that was my attitude. But Major Maxwell at the time, he was a tanker, he told me, you’re the kind of guy—I don’t know what he saw in me in that short period of time—[he said], “I’ll bet you a steak dinner that you stay in the Marine Corps.”

I was just shocked by that statement. I said, “Major, there is absolutely no way in the world that I could stay in an organization like this, when I look around and there is nobody that looks like me. And besides that, there’s no one—almost no one—that’s got an open hand and welcoming. They don’t want you.”

He said, “All right, just mark my words.”

Brigadier General George H. Walls Jr.

Walls: One day I got the infamous brown paper envelope that said, “Come on down, it’s time for your pre-induction physical.” I went through that process to the point that I realized that if I continued, I would end up getting drafted and be a private in the Army and go to Vietnam. I didn’t have any objection to going to Vietnam, but I felt that if I was going to go, I think I might as well take advantage of my college degree and go to OCS and be an officer.

I was standing in the room with about 300 other guys, and we were in our skivvies waiting for the doctor to come up to us and say, “Turn your head and cough.” And the light sort of came on and brought that scenario to my mind. Literally after we finished with

that and I got dressed, I put my clothes on, got in my car, drove down to the other end of Broad Street in Philadelphia where the Navy Yard was, which was where the Marine Corps officer selection office was. I walked in the door and met a Marine captain, the officer selection officer at the time. I told him what my situation was and gave him all the paperwork that I had from the pre-induction process. He said, “Well, if you have about an hour, why don’t you sit down and take the Reserve Officer Aptitude Test?” I took the test, I passed it, and 60 days later, I was at OCS.

After I finished with that process at the recruiter’s office, I went home. We were sitting around the dinner table, and my father, who had been an enlisted man in the Navy during World War II, was there. At that time, African Americans could only be stewards and cooks and that sort of thing. So we’re sitting there eating, and I said, “I joined the Marine Corps today. I’m going to go to OCS, and I’m going to be an officer.” My mother kind of went into shock, and my dad looked up said, “Boy, don’t you realize that you’re black and they’re never going to let you be an officer in the Marine Corps?”

Well, he got to commission me. He pinned my “butter bars” [second lieutenant rank insignia] on in the theater at Quantico and was there for as many of the promotions that I got. The final one he was there for was when he pinned one of my stars when I became a general officer, which kind of brought things full circle.

Chief Warrant Officer-3 William E. Hutson: Were there situations in OCS from a race point of view—this was the mid-’60s—that come to mind?

Walls: I experienced probably the same thing that every officer candidate in my platoon and company did, which was unrelenting harassment from the instructor. But I cannot think of a time in OCS where I felt that I was discriminated against or that I didn’t belong. There were never any that I remember or that I heard. There were no racial epithets, there were no, “Black people don’t need to be officers in the Marine Corps, you shouldn’t be here.” None of that.

Colonel Henry L. Reed

Colonel Kurtis P. Wheeler: Do you have any specific recollections of your training at OCS?

Reed: Oh yes, it was great. I took the train from Beaufort [South Carolina] on a Sunday night, and I arrived at Quantico [Virginia] at the train station. I'll never forget it, as I got off the train [there] were the drill instructors, they were all there yelling and screaming at you, as usual. To me that was not a big thing, because of coming from Parris Island. [Reed had grown up in close proximity the Marine Corps Recruit Depot at Parris Island, South Carolina.] I had some idea of the ropes. And I'll never forget, one of them, a staff sergeant, says to me, "Frogmore, get over here." And if you know anything about Beaufort, Saint Helena Island has a little small town called Frogmore. I was not from Frogmore, but he just nicknamed me Frogmore. So I got off the train and got assigned to the platoon.

You have to go in and get your hair cut, [and] at that time, all the barbers here at Quantico were all black guys. Mr. Purcell and his son, I think his son still cuts hair to this day at Quantico. I was the last one to go through the line in my platoon, and Mr. Purcell calls this staff sergeant over and says, "Hey Sarge,"—and the staff sergeant grabbed me—and he said, "you make this be the last time that you come in last in this platoon." And that set me on my way.

Wheeler: In what context do you think he meant that? As encouragement, or a threat?

Reed: There's no doubt it was encouragement. He was always an encouragement to me in OCS.

I was the "house mouse," myself and an individual by the name of John [H.] Admire, who later became [Major General] Admire, we were bunkmates. So I had to do all the things that the drill instructors didn't want to do after dark.

Wheeler: And that's what you mean by "house mouse"? What kinds of duties did that incorporate?

Reed: That included, first of all, shining their shoes, their boots and shoes. We didn't have the PX [post exchange] high shine [corfam shoes that had a sparkling gleam that required no polishing] in those days. Also, keeping all the records for the platoon and everything else, making sure that the platoon got up on time and was ready for formation in the morning.

Wheeler: Was the staff sergeant that you mentioned black or white?

Reed: He was white. But he was a former drill instructor down there at Parris Island, so he knew about Frogmore. Frogmore is just a small little town across the water on Saint Helena Island there. And I guess he must have lived there. So I automatically became known as Frogmore.

Wheeler: Do you think that's why he took a special interest in you, just his familiarity with where you were from?

Reed: Well at that point, yes, I'm pretty sure it was. But as I went on through OCS, my performance kind of let them know that I was really serious about becoming a Marine officer.

Wheeler: Regarding that, early on in your career, did you feel that you were judged primarily on your performance and not on any racial factor, or were there times when you felt like there was prejudice?

Reed: Well, yeah, I think it was always on performance. I knew a lot about the Marine Corps prior to coming in. And I always knew there weren't that many blacks in the Marine Corps in general, and I always knew there were not that many black officers in the Marine Corps. When I was in college, I remember standing in front of the student union building, and my classmates, when they found out I was going to come in the Marine Corps, because at that time everybody went to the Army, . . . they used to laugh at me. They'd say, "Hey, you're going into the Marine Corps? All you're gonna do, man, is shine shoes." And I just laughed at it because I think that I had a little bit more to offer than that.

Wheeler: You would have been going through TBS [The Basic School] at the time, really at the height of the civil rights movement. And I'm presuming most of the men in your platoon were white Marines. You had a lot of leadership roles. Was there friction because of that?

Reed: I was really surprised. If there were frictions, it was never known to me. Because after I graduated, most everybody, I got married right after Basic School, and all those guys, there were only two blacks in my wedding party. [The rest] were all white.

Wheeler: How did you decide on infantry as an MOS [military occupational specialty], or was that the predominant MOS, given the needs of the Marine Corps at that time?

Reed: I didn't have a choice. I remember one day that [Raymond F.] Ray Findlay [Jr.] and [John] J. D. Carr called me in. They were the two staff platoon commanders that I was familiar with. During that time, they called me in, and they said, "Hey, most blacks are signing up for supply and everything else, but we've noticed how you've handled yourself with your assignments as a student and how you've led them through the various situations that we've provided." They said, "You should become an infantry officer."

And I said, "Well, OK."

Major General Charles F. Bolden Jr.

Dr. Fred H. Allison: How did you get interested in the U.S. Naval Academy, and how did you obtain your nomination?

Bolden: Back then there were a lot of programs about the military on television. I had seen *Men of Annapolis* and *West Point Story*. There was another one, called *The Silent Service*, about submarines and the Navy. And there was another one I can't remember, but my ambition became—although my father was the only person in my family who had ever served in the military—I decided I wanted to go to the Naval Academy, and it was just from watching *Men of Annapolis* and *Silent Service*. I wanted to be a SEAL [sea, air, land team]. Back then, they were just called UDT, underwater demolitions team—"frogmen" was the main name for them. So that became my ambition in seventh grade, and everything I did from then until I graduated from high school was with the sole purpose of trying to get to the Naval Academy and trying to become a frogman.

I applied to the Naval Academy, for an appointment, starting in ninth grade. Every year, my congressman and senator and the vice president would send a letter back saying, hey, we got your application, but it's a little early. Just relax and enjoy school and come to us when you're a senior. But when my senior year rolled around, I didn't have any hope of getting an appointment from South Carolina because the schools were still segregated then, and I thought the chances of my getting an appointment from either a congressman or one of the state's two senators was slim to none. I kept applying. . . .

I really got serious about the Naval Academy because the end of football season [my senior year] also kind of coincided with the

deadline for getting applications in for appointments to the Naval Academy. I got a letter from Olin D. Johnston, who was the other senator, and he said politically, he just could not appoint me to the service academy. I got a letter from Albert [W.] Watson, who was my congressional representative, who said it wasn't going to happen. And I got a letter from [James] Strom Thurmond, who said he would be willing to consider me for an appointment to the Merchant Marine Academy. I told him no, I wasn't interested in that. I had been accepted to the University of Pennsylvania, and I had been accepted for a Naval ROTC scholarship. I wanted to go to the Naval Academy, but I also thought I wanted a commission in the Navy, so I told him I would just go ahead and take my commission, the appointment to the NROTC program at the University of Pennsylvania.

Now with President [John F.] Kennedy's assassination [in November 1963], I wasn't eligible for a presidential appointment, but I was eligible for a vice presidential appointment. That was then-President [Lyndon B.] Johnson. I wrote him, and I said, "Dear Mr. President, I know I'm not eligible, but I've been writing you for a number of years now, and you kept telling me, write when I'm a senior. Well, I'm a senior, . . . and I'm looking for help, because I really want to go to the Naval Academy." Never got anything back from him, but a couple of days later, a Navy chief came to the house and said, "Hey, I understand you're interested in an appointment to the Naval Academy." He was from the local recruiting office, and we talked for a while, and he said, "OK, let's see what we can do about it."

About the same time, President Johnson sent a retired federal judge from Pensacola who traveled around the country at the behest of the president, looking for qualified minorities, young men, for appointments to the three principal service academies. He came to my high school, and there were two of us, a classmate of mine whose father was a career Army man [and myself]. I was interested in the Naval Academy, and my classmate was interested in West Point. So we worked with him. It was a combination of working with him and the recruiter.

I got an appointment for the class of 1969, which would have meant I would have had to delay a year. So I told him thanks very much, but I'm already going to University of Pennsylvania. I'd made

up my mind. I wasn't going to delay a year and everything. . . . Then several weeks later, I got a call, and they said, "OK, we found an appointment for the class of 1968 if you're still interested in going." And I said sure. The appointment had come from Congressman William [L.] Dawson in Chicago, Illinois. That was the way that the Department of the Navy arranged it. I later found out that that happens all the time.

Allison: You graduated in 1964 from high school and started the Naval Academy. Did you face any racial discrimination at the Academy?

Bolden: I did, but didn't pay any attention to it. There was still segregation, but mostly it was out in town. When I went there in '64, there were places you could not go, or places you were expected not to go, and a couple of times we went with our classmates and got asked to leave, or they wouldn't let us come in. That went all the way through the whole time I was there. My mom and dad had always taught me don't worry about things you can't do anything about. Find a way around it, and hence I did.

Out in town, a lady named Lil was kind of my mother away from home—she and her mom—for the black midshipmen. We lost her mom my senior year, and all the black midshipmen went to her funeral. They had a black and a white cemetery, but we went out and she was buried in the black cemetery there in Annapolis. We were all there.

On the Yard itself, there was little discrimination. There were individuals who didn't want you there. There were two guys in the class of '66 in my company who told me they were going to run me out. And really, to be quite honest, they made me stay. I was determined to prove them wrong. But the discrimination, in many cases, I just used it to my advantage. I ran for class president my sophomore year and won. I also was class president my junior year.

Allison: How many other blacks were there?

Bolden: Not many. It was interesting, in regards to other black midshipman, there's this tradition, something they called "spooning." When an upperclassman wants to recognize a plebe [first year midshipman], they go up and shake their hand and say, "OK, call me John," call me by my first name instead of Midshipman First Class

Whatever. Everybody knew. . . . It wasn't a secret, and they spooned you, and then you became friends. You still had to do all the plebe stuff. You had to brace up and all that kind of stuff. But you could go to their room and sit and relax and stuff. There was a guy in my company out of the class of '66 named Alf Nielson who was from Moscow, Idaho. Alf was known for doing crazy things. Alf said, "OK, I'll tell you what, Bolden. I want you to go spoon the whole football team." This was the first half of my plebe year, and generally nobody got spooned until second semester anyway. You just got beat up the first semester.

I said, "Sir, that's not the way it's done."

He said, "What did I say?"

I said, "OK." And I went over the next few weeks. I'd go to boxing practice, and after practice, I'd hustle down to the football locker room, and I'd go introduce myself. I'd say, "My second classman, Mr. Nielsen, told me to spoon you, sir." And they would say, "Oh, my name's so-and-so." Everybody on the varsity football team spooned me except for one. It was a guy named Calvin [W.] Huey, who was the only black on the football team. He was the first black to play varsity football for the Naval Academy. He was incredible. He was a wide receiver, really, really good, from Pascagoula, Mississippi, and he refused to spoon me because he didn't want me to do anything special. He wanted me to earn my weight as a plebe, just like everybody else.

Allison: Were you aware at this time when you were at the Naval Academy that there were deliberate efforts to recruit minority officers to the Marine Corps?

Bolden: When I was there, no. No, there were no efforts on the part of the Marine Corps when I was there. However, it didn't take very long. . . . In a few years there was a real push. I think it was actually a congressional mandate. I don't think it was something the Marine Corps voluntarily did. I think somebody—either the secretary of defense or Congress or something—got interested in minority and women numbers in the services and said, "You all have to do better."

The first class that was aggressively recruited was the class of 1972 at the Naval Academy. That was the class that had 12 blacks in the class. The Naval Academy had just mounted a charge to recruit more, and they wanted many more, but they ended up with 12 who

graduated. I forget how many they started with. But they were affectionately called the “Dirty Dozen.” . . . And what almost set the Marine Corps and the Navy at war was that the Marine Corps recruited 10 of the 12. The CNO [chief of naval operations] was livid. And so for a while, this war went on between the Navy and the Marine Corps.

Major General Leo V. Williams III

Lieutenant Colonel Mark D. Andrasi: How did you get selected to attend the Naval Academy?

L. Williams: My homeroom teacher my senior year [in 1966] was a black woman educator whose husband was one of the first black aviators in the Navy. When she went home and told him that there were a number of us who were perhaps interested in the Naval Academy, he made some phone calls to contacts that he had who were just beginning to work the minority acquisition program for the Navy. Those phone calls really got the wheels rolling. . . . His name is Captain Richard Williams. . . .

At the same time his wife, Mrs. Ruth Williams, was a native of Detroit, and her father was the editor in chief of the Afro-American newspaper in Detroit. Her father was very, very good friends with the congressman from Detroit, Charles [C.] Diggs, who, much to our advantage, took an interest in the fact that we were interested in going to the Naval Academy. Now the history that you need to understand is during this time, for as long as any of us can remember, and up through about 1973 or 1974, all of the congressmen and senators who were southern congressmen and senators, . . . they had an unwritten pact that they would not admit any African Americans to any of the academies. So historically, any African American who was from the South, who lived in the South and attended or entered any of the academies prior to 1973, had to have gotten his nomination from someone other than his congressman or senator; they had to get it from a northern state congressman or senator.

Andrasi: There had to be some sort of networking involved with that.

L. Williams: Absolutely. Someone had to know you and then be able to use this network, and Dick Williams knew about the network because it was one of the ways that the folks in the Navy and

the Marine Corps—and I’m assuming the Army and the Air Force—got around this obstacle that southern legislators had put in place. They reached out and found young men who were interested in the academies, and then they made the connections and were able to connect young high school graduates with legislators who were willing to provide nominations. When I began the Naval Academy, I was one of the fortunate few and became one of the first two blacks from the state of Virginia ever to attend the Naval Academy.

Surprisingly enough, Charles Diggs didn’t have any blacks who were applying from his Detroit district to go to the Naval Academy, so he said, “Hey, I’ve got open nominations, guys. I’ll be happy to do this.” So he nominated both of us, and we ultimately were both accepted, both appointed, and began the Naval Academy at the same time in June of 1966.

Andrasi: What did your dad think of this?

L. Williams: He thought it was phenomenal. This was a breakthrough time from a civil rights standpoint. We were breaking down barriers at a remarkable rate. While I was in high school, it was a time when the movie theaters and the restaurants in Virginia—and I very much personalize it, but in Norfolk, Virginia—when those were integrated. So I was, in a number of cases, among the first blacks to ever go into some of the historically white theaters in Norfolk, and some of the historically white restaurants in Norfolk. Having grown up all my life, having seen these places that were off limits to me, we as teenagers really had a pretty joyful time going through that process. . . .

We had about 1,250 students in my class, the class of 1970, which entered in 1966. There were 12 African Americans in that class. By the end of the summer—and we were later to find out when the brigade returned at the end of August—that there were a total of eight other black midshipmen in the other three classes: two in the class of 1967, four in the class of 1968, and two in the class of 1969.

Andrasi: So your class was heavy with African Americans compared to the others. Why do you think that was at that time? Why that year?

L. Williams: There is a book that has been written by a naval historian that actually takes a very, very close look at the dynamics of what was happening, both in the Navy and in the nation at that

time.⁹ There was a conscious effort both by the Navy and the Naval Academy to bring in a higher number, a large number of black midshipmen at that particular time in the Navy's history. So 1965, '66, '67, '68, there was a concerted effort to recruit more and more fully qualified minority midshipmen. And even though the number sounds small, 12 out of 1,200—one percent—it was substantially higher than the numbers before us. So there clearly was a recruiting effort that was stronger than any before it, but it still it was only marginally successful. Of the 12 of us who started, seven graduated, six in the class of 1970 and one who did a five-year program and graduated in the class of '71. So the rate of attrition was about the same as those who were the majority of midshipmen, who were Caucasian. I don't know whether that was something that the administration was measuring all along, but I would not be surprised if they were paying special attention to the attrition.

We're all still very good friends, all of the blacks who were at the Naval Academy all at that same time. One of those who has been a big brother to me since 1966 was Major General Charles Bolden [USNA Class of 1968] who is now head of NASA [National Aeronautics and Space Administration]. Interestingly enough, the only black Marine Corps general officers in history to graduate from the Naval Academy are General Bolden and myself. . . .

While I was at the Naval Academy, I was introduced to some of the most outstanding role models I could ever have been introduced to. Most of them were Marines, but I think I already had this inclination to be a Marine.

Andrasi: Where did you develop that inclination?

L. Williams: The reason for that goes back to the fact that one of my best friends in high school had a brother who was many years older than he was, but his brother was a black Marine pilot who was killed in a training accident when he was a young pilot back around '59 or '60. But I knew of my friend's brother. I did not know him personally, because this friend and I didn't even get to know each other until we were in high school, by which time his brother had passed two or three years earlier. But his brother, even though I didn't know him, served as a role model for me. He was another one of those very bright students who everybody knew could do whatever he wanted

to do. He was a Dartmouth graduate who chose to be in ROTC and then a Marine Corps pilot. So he kind of set the mold. He was in many respects what I wanted to be. His name was Thomas Young, and he died as a young Marine captain in a training flight. So again, when you think back over the influences you had, they surprise you sometimes, because people you never even met sometimes become influential in very, very important ways. . . . I wanted to be like Tom Young, but my eyes went bad my freshman year. I continued to want to be a Marine and, as I said, had outstanding role models while at the Naval Academy.

Andrasi: Can you provide examples?

Williams: [Edward L.] Ed Green was a black major, the most senior black Marine I had ever seen. In fact, he was one of the five or six most senior black Marines in the Marine Corps at the time. This was back in 1969 to 1970 time frame. So when I had the chance, I would actually spend time talking with Major Green about what his experiences had been, and they were all, for him, groundbreaking.

There is an event at the Naval Academy that is known as service selection night. That's when you pick what it is you want to do. And much of it is based on class standing. That service selection for us happened in February of senior year. There were six African Americans who were graduating in my class. That evening, Major Green brought to that service selection event the two senior black Marines in the Marine Corps to meet us and to talk with us. They were both lieutenant colonels at the time. Those two guys were Frank Petersen and [Kenneth H.] Ken Berthoud [Jr.]. Berthoud ultimately became the first black colonel in the Marine Corps, and General Petersen became the second. And as we all know, General Petersen ultimately became the first black brigadier and then the first black major general and then the first black lieutenant general in the Marine Corps. But Ed Green had enough presence of mind, and knew enough about mentorship and the importance of mentorship and role models, that he said, "Hey, we've got an opportunity here, and if we don't take it, it's never going to present itself again, not anytime soon." So we spent a good bit of time that evening, the six of us, talking about their experiences, their Marine Corps experience. Of the six of us in that class, three of us went Marine Corps.

Their mission was to bring in more folks who looked like them, and get us to bring in more folks who looked like us. What they knew was if we had spent four years at the Naval Academy, then first of all, we didn't have to be taught what the military was all about, so I think they probably did kind of a risk assessment. If we bring these guys in, first of all, are they going to make the positive impression that we need to make? And do they come in without any baggage, with this already positive aura, if you will, because they are Naval Academy graduates? So there's no staff platoon commanders [The Basic School training platoon commanders] and whatnot questioning whether they're good enough to be there and whether they can cut the mustard in The Basic School or wherever. So I think that calculation was probably a good one.

Through the junior and senior year, we actually were remarkably cohesive as upperclassmen. We really, really stuck together. Some of the things that we did just to maintain our cultural identity was that, unlike during the week, you don't have assigned dining tables on the weekend. You go in after, let's say, the evening formation on Saturday, you have to find a place to sit, which can be dangerous because you never know who the upperclassman is and what he's going to do. But the guys who were in the class ahead of us, they were there having dinner that evening in the hall. The guys like Charlie Bolden and his classmates, or the two guys who were in the class of '69, just a year behind us, or the class of '67, they would actually go in early and reserve a table, and we would do the best that we could to get to that table as quickly as we could because that would allow us to be human beings for a while around people whose backgrounds were similar to ours. It was a pretty special time. We continued that tradition for the whole time that we were there. As we became upperclassmen, then we would go down early, we'd get a table, and then we'd make sure that the guys as they were coming in could see us and that they were able to get over to that table and get that opportunity just to be around people whose backgrounds were very much the same as yours.

We also began the first black student union, without the administration's approval. We kind of assumed that it would be better to ask forgiveness than to ask permission, so in our junior year, we formed

our own black student union. This is because the numbers now were beginning to grow a bit. . . . We just wanted to provide the opportunity to get together, particularly the underclassmen—the plebes and the youngsters, the sophomores—to know that they had a support group and that they had the opportunity to come and talk about the things that were going on in their lives.

Andrasi: From your freshman year there, from your plebe year, did you see an increase, then, of African American midshipmen every year?

L. Williams: The numbers began to go up the second year after we got there. The first year, there were fewer blacks than there were in my own class. I think in the class of '71, guys who came in in 1967, there were only four, I think, in that class, and only one of them graduated. So the recruiting effort was sporadic. And as I mentioned, we're playing a game of really small numbers here. So you've got to wonder how dedicated the effort was if out of all of America, you can only recruit, nominate, and appoint four black midshipmen. The next year [1968, the class of 1972], though, that class had 16. And of the 16, 12 of them graduated. The year after that there were about 20 to 24, so the numbers were beginning [to increase]. So except for the slight setback in the class of '71, going back to the recruiting effort in '66 and '67 and to the end of the '60s, the recruiting effort really did spike and the numbers really did begin to be noticeably greater.

The best role models that I saw at the Naval Academy reinforced my desire to be a Marine officer. I had initially wanted to be a Marine pilot, as I mentioned. . . . Now I just had to decide what I was going to be in the Marine Corps. Almost every officer there was really intent on my choosing combat arms. They said, "Look, we think you've got potential, and in the Marine Corps, you either need to be an infantry officer, an artillery officer, a tanker, or a pilot if you're going to really move through the course." Some of the most influential guys who really took me under their wing were artillery officers and infantry officers. I began as an infantry officer and then shortly after that transitioned to artillery when I was at The Basic School.



Chapter 3

The Vietnam Era, 1960s–1970s

The decade of the 1960s for the American military was dominated by the Vietnam War. The Marine Corps expanded significantly during that conflict, and the number of African American officers increased from 34 in 1962 to 155 in 1967 out of a total officer strength of 23,000.¹ As the services expanded, opportunities for African Americans increased. As they had during the Korean War, blacks in Vietnam served in integrated units.

African Americans were well represented in the enlisted ranks, as 17 percent of Marine enlisted were black, a higher percentage than the 12 percent in the general civilian population. But less than 1 percent of Marine officers were African American.² This situation was changing, slowly, as black Marine officers earned new levels of authority during the decade, breaking down barriers for others to follow. Jerome G. Cooper commanded a rifle company in Vietnam. Hurdle L. Maxwell commanded an infantry battalion, and Frank E. Petersen Jr. became the first black officer to command a fighter squadron in either the Marine Corps or the Navy.

The pressure on already strained racial relationships, as described in the previous chapter, increased in intensity. Many among the Vietnam generation of African Americans were imbued with a heightened degree of race consciousness. There was racial polarization, with blacks and whites not mixing in off-duty activities and some African Americans adopting ethnically distinctive greetings, handshakes, and afro hairstyles. Many Marine commanders, white and black, considered these provocative and corrosive to good order and discipline. There was also tension in the officer ranks as rising African Americans questioned institutional processes and actions that they believed were discriminatory. Job assignments, promo-

Photo Left: Capt Henry L. Reed during his second Vietnam tour, as an advisor to the South Vietnamese Marines in 1970–71.

Courtesy of Col Henry L. Reed

tions, and military justice were common friction points.

Brigadier General George H. Walls Jr.

Walls: My closest friend growing up had actually been an enlisted Marine. He went to Vietnam early. He was with the air wing, and he was over at Marble Mountain near Da Nang. So I knew going into OCS [Officer Candidates School] what the Marine Corps was like from an enlisted perspective. . . . From a physical and mental perspective, I kind of knew what to expect when I got to Quantico. . . . There was no fat, so I was good from the physical perspective.

At that time, Vietnam was just ramping up, and people weren't real sure what it was about, but they knew it was war, they knew it was fighting. And they knew that a lot of young black men were getting drafted or were for one reason or another joining the military and going to Vietnam. . . .

From engineer school, which I got through in January of 1966, I went to Vietnam, was a platoon leader in the 3d Combat Engineer Battalion, 3d Marine Division, Alpha Company at Da Nang, near the division headquarters. . . . I had that platoon for six months. We did probably three or four combat operations with my platoon being in support of an infantry battalion.

We lost one man on the first operation we went out on. That memory will stick with me for the rest of my life. He was Corporal [William L.] Young [Jr.]. He was from York, Pennsylvania. It was a heli-borne assault on an area that eventually ended up being a special forces camp, out southwest of Da Nang. He was attached to Delta 1/1 [Company D, 1st Battalion, 1st Marines] and stepped on a mine, and that was the end of it for Corporal Young. I wrote letters to his parents. That was probably the hardest thing I have ever had to do in my life. I was 22 years old then, a 22-year-old second lieutenant responsible for the lives and welfare of about 40 to 42 Marines and corpsmen. It was a very sobering experience. . . .

[Notes that he met Kenneth H. Berthoud Jr. in Vietnam.] He was the third active-duty black officer that I met after I got commissioned. The first was colonel—he retired as colonel, he was a captain then—Clarence [L.] Baker, who was an instructor at The Basic

School, Clarence “Cold Blood” Baker. The second was now-retired Major General Jerome Gary Cooper. He and I met on an operation in Vietnam out in the jungle, and we became fast friends. We are like brothers. I’m an only child, and if I had a brother, Gary would have been my brother. So those were the three that I met early on.

Major General Jerome G. Cooper

Cooper: I got orders to Vietnam [in 1966]. I knew going to Vietnam that one of us [African American] had never led a company in combat. When I went, they assigned me to the 3d Anti-Tank Battalion. Those were the [M50] Ontos, small tanks with 106mm rifles on each side. I told the captain, I said, “Look, I volunteered to come over here. I’m an infantry officer.” And he gets his major, and I said, “I can’t even fit in the damn Ontos. I’m six feet, six inches.”

Capt Jerome G. Cooper in Da Nang in 1966 during his Vietnam tour. He commanded a rifle company with the 9th Marines.

Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A191521



The major said, “Don’t worry, you’re going to be our supply officer.” Now during those days, those of us who were infantrymen, we didn’t want anything to do with supply, because we had never seen a general who was a supply officer. Never. I knew I shouldn’t do it, but I had no choice—I requested mast. I’d heard that ends your career, but I said, “What the hell?” So they take me out to 1st [Marine] Division headquarters, I sit outside the general’s office, they go to lunch. I got up there about 1100. They go to lunch, people are going to dinner, and the chief of staff comes out and says, “Captain, what the hell are you doing here?”

I said, “Sir, I requested mast to see the general.”

He said, “Why do you want to see the general?”

I said, “I’m an infantry officer, and I want to go to the 9th Marines, not as a supply officer.”

He said, “Is that all you want? [We’ll make sure I get a company.] Get the hell out of here.”

And that’s how I ended up in an infantry unit. . . .

Mr. John J. Lyles: Did you face any challenges as a leader, during these days of racial turmoil, of leading black and white Marines?

Cooper: You know, in my case as a combat leader, I very seldom thought about black and white. Did I think that that really affects much? I really don’t think so. I tell people, some of us during those days, we were so engrained with being a Marine that they could have sent us to attack Disneyland and we would have done it. That’s just how stern we were about what our mission was. . . .

That was probably one of the greatest jobs, being a platoon commander. In fact, I spoke at Marion [Alabama] Military Institute . . . and one of the youngsters asked me of all the things I’ve done in my career—being an ambassador and assistant secretary [of the Air Force for Manpower, Reserve Affairs, Installations, and Logistics]—which one was most enjoyable. I think being a platoon commander and leading Marines in combat had to be the very highlight of my career. . . .

Lyles: How important is it that African American officers have other African Americans around? I’m sure it could have been quite intimidating to be the only black face in a sea of white ones.

Cooper: Coming from the South, it is clear to me it had draw-

backs, let there be no doubt. I think what really helped me in the Marine Corps, though, was going to Notre Dame, because before I went to Notre Dame, I don't think I'd sat down in a room with more than three white folks in my life. Maybe not even two. Going to Notre Dame allowed me to acclimate some and to move a little more smoothly into the Marine Corps' officer's corps. I say that because I had buddies who came in a little after me who had gone to historically black schools, and they had real difficulties in how they reacted to prejudice and such as that. They would say, "I don't like what they're doing. I've got to tell them. Major, don't you think I need to tell them?" I used to tell some of them who came in later, and not just the ones from historically black schools, I said, "Look, why don't you make first lieutenant first and let some of us tell them, because you're not going to accomplish anything."

So yes, I think it can be difficult. But also I think there were a number of people who stepped forward and were helpful because of that.

Colonel John W. Moffett

Moffett: I got [to Vietnam] in like December [1967] and went to 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, at Chu Lai. I was a platoon commander, and that was actually the first time I had been in a foreign country. Part of me was thinking this is like going to visit my grandma in Alabama, kind of nice, sort of a paradise, trees, jungle canopy—until the first rifle shot goes off, and it's coming in your direction, and you go, "Oh s***! No vacation here." But you got used to it. . . . I think initially I was concerned about just getting blown up. . . . But my greatest fear became, I kept thinking about getting all the folks around me in my platoon taken care of. I'm thinking, "I am responsible for all these guys." I am hardly old enough to be responsible for all these guys. I was like, "Wow, this is quite a responsibility for you to entrust me with the lives of people."

Dr. Thomas M. Baughn: Did you have any southern troops who gave you a hard time?

Moffett: No, because I had a couple of guys who took care of anything like that. One was my platoon sergeant, Staff Sergeant

Green. He was from the South. He had the respect of the platoon, and when Green said, "Didn't you hear the lieutenant?" that was all that had to be said. . . . Green was a tough cookie.

Colonel Henry L. Reed

Colonel Kurtis P. Wheeler: In 1967, you deployed to Vietnam. . . . What was the composition of your platoon?

Reed: It was 50 enlisted Marines. I had two staff noncommissioned officers, and the whole platoon was white, and they were all southerners. . . . I must have done something good, or the Marine Corps did something good in training me, because I never had any problems with that platoon.

Wheeler: Following Vietnam, you were assigned to TBS [The Basic School in Quantico, Virginia]. One of the perspectives that other successful black officers have offered is that the Marine Corps, at times, has really made an effort to handpick successful officers, to go to TBS in general, but in particular successful minority officers, both to serve as role models and as mentors. Did you have any sense that that was a component for you, or was it just your tactical competence?

Reed: Well, in a way, I did have a sense that maybe that's what the Marine Corps was doing. Nobody ever explained it to me, but in myself, I had a feeling that that's what they were doing.

My first job at TBS was as a tactics instructor in the platoon section. At that time, you had company tactics and you had platoon tactics. I was assigned to platoon tactics as a platoon tactics instructor. Later on, then I became a staff platoon commander. . . . [Charles F.] Charlie Bolden [Jr.] was not in my platoon, but he was in that company. . . .

I really didn't know a lot of the black officers at that time. I knew Colonel Clarence L. Baker because he was an instructor in platoon tactics at The Basic School. And I knew of Colonel Berthoud and Frank Petersen during that period.

Lieutenant General Frank E. Petersen Jr.

Henry I. Shaw Jr.: By 1967, you were promoted to lieutenant colonel and ordered to Marine Corps Air Station [MCAS] Cherry

Point, North Carolina. What transpired there, and how did you get command of a fighter squadron?

Petersen: Checking into MCAS Cherry Point, which is where they were doing all the training, I was surprised to find that the big push was on to get transport pilots. As a fresh-caught lieutenant colonel, there is absolutely no chance of command [flying transports]. So I petitioned the commanding general and said that I much prefer [being] a fighter pilot. Here again, [there was] a disconnect between Headquarters [U.S. Marine Corps] and the field, this general looking at his own requirements, training requirements. I didn't come out and say, "Hey, you know, as a black getting a squadron, that would really be a leg up for the Marine Corps." I didn't include any of that. But he turned me down cold and said, "You're going into transports."

So I said, "Fine." I left the base and drove up to Washington,

LtCol Frank E. Petersen Jr. climbing into the cockpit on 28 July 1968 to lead Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 314 on a combat mission in Vietnam.

Department of Defense (USMC) Photo A422355



went in and talked with a friend in the division of aviation and virtually cried on his desk, saying you know, this is really bad and so on. And he said, "We'll look into it." I then went back and finished the ground school syllabus for transports, and I got a call from Headquarters saying, "Would you like to go into fighters?"

I said, "Very definitely."

[Petersen told in his autobiography how he came to command a squadron after having arrived in Vietnam in May 1968.]

I got my assignment to a squadron, all right, but I didn't really know in what capacity until I was called in by Colonel [James H.] Hal Berge, the air group commander. It was an interesting conversation.

"Frank," he said, "I'm going to give you a squadron."

The words electrified. I have to admit now to a kind of ethereal, floating sensation, as if somehow I'd been lifted off the ground about 10 feet. It was what I'd been shooting for, hoping for. I knew then that my trip to Washington had borne fruit. The word had been passed.

Underneath the elation, though, another feeling lurked that wasn't particularly great. It was a weird situation I was in, to be elated at the achievement of a cherished goal on the one hand, and on the other to know I was being assigned to that place by color rather than qualification. I could only hope that my qualifications met what I envisioned as my personal goals—regardless of the color of my skin.³

[Petersen related his perspectives on leading Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 314, the Black Knights.]

I knew that I would be running a tight ship. One reason was obvious. The first black commander of a Marine fighter squadron had better run a tight ship. I shouldn't have had to think this way, but I did. I felt that I always had to look over my shoulder, to be certain that something or someone wasn't creeping up to snatch what I'd attained. In the final analysis, though, the color of my skin and my concern about what was about to happen "over my shoulder" had to be shelved. I was the commander of a Marine fighter squadron flying 20 fighter airplanes that were technologically light years away from those in which I first began flying. I was the kind of skipper who would never ask subordinates to do something I wouldn't, so early on, I re-

solved to set the example by flying missions, leading my men in combat, on regular strikes and pulling my time on hot pad as well.

“Bloods” was my call sign. I settled on that because of all the rhetoric in the wind about race and racism inherent in the ongoing civil rights revolution. In those days, American black men almost universally referred to themselves as “Bloods.” It was a symbol. A connection of unspoken togetherness among us. Solidarity. We greeted one another that way in the most casual of settings.

“Wha’s happening, Blood?” was the tie. A special singularity that replaced all of the rhetoric and made the eyes flash with recognition. It applied regardless of our individual stations in life.⁴

[His reputation spread quickly. After his plane was shot down during a harrowing mission into North Vietnam, Petersen described the reception he received upon reaching the rescue helicopter.]

I guess I was somewhat infamous in-country—the only black lieutenant colonel commander of a Marine fighter squadron—with a reputation for running a tight ship. So they knew who I was. My squadron emblem, they knew, was Black Knight, my call sign, Bloods. Maybe because of those connections, and especially the Bloods civil rights inference, the black copilot turned to me.

“Right on,” he enthused, smiling broadly. “Right on, Black Knight.” He gave me the old black power salute. The inappropriateness of the gesture in the moment set me off.

“Captain,” I scowled, “will you get this f***** thing off the ground? Later for the black power s***.”⁵

[Petersen discussed racial tensions at this time.]

The year 1968 was tough all over, including Vietnam. Being a squadron commander who flew missions daily, responsible for the whole shooting match, was tough enough, but those were cut and dried things. They could be defined, seen, touched. Within a certain context, they were things you could usually control. But the race issue within the Corps and all across the military began to be a large issue indeed and sometimes defied control. A Marine killed at Pendleton. Fraggings. Later, an aircraft carrier taken off line because of racial friction and outbreaks aboard ship.

The race issue at Chu Lai could wear you down if you weren’t careful. It was quickly becoming a war within a war.

My plane captain was a black Marine sergeant. Although not many people around knew it, he was the leader of a new organization among the black troopers who called themselves the “Mau Mau.” In addition to the sergeant, there were about six or seven other black Marines, and on Chu Lai proper, a significant number of lower-ranking black Marines.

The Mau Mau leader and a few of his cohorts decided to test me.

“Colonel,” my plane captain grunted . . . “I’m the leader of the Mau Mau in these parts. I’ve come to request that we be allowed to paint our hootches black, red, and green—to show our African heritage and our significance. Those are our colors.” . . .

“Look, sergeant,” I began, “this is one squadron. I understand what your personal thoughts are about this. But if you feel that you want to paint your hootches those colors, I must alert you to the fact that when the rockets come in, they have to have something to aim at. Those huts just might make one helluva good aiming point.”

“Now,” I went on, “you’ve got to realize the situation that puts me in. As the first black commander of a tactical organization of squadron size in the history of the United States Marine Corps, you’re telling me to support you in something that’s going to alienate the rest of the troops from you. What is the bigger issue here? For you to live in a red, black, and green hut, or for this squadron, under a black man, to operate successfully?” . . .

We went back and forth a few more times. In the end, they gave me their total support. But they had to know where I was coming from. Combat effectiveness was the name of the game. A fragmented force, regardless of the reason, just wouldn’t cut it, especially not in my squadron.⁶

[Petersen addressed the broader issues for the Marine Corps.]

The Corps needed to police itself, and quickly. There was, among the rank and file, no real understanding between black and white. The typical frontline unit [had a high percentage] of blacks, high school dropouts caught in the “street sweeps,” as they called them . . . caught in the draft. Their commanding officers, normally first or second lieutenants, also fresh-caught in the Marine Corps, all had college degrees. No meeting of the minds there at all. Putting

the . . . suburbs with the streets. That, in my view, is where loads of the trouble and friction came from.⁷

Major General Arnold Fields

Fields: I started thinking about the Marine Corps really once I was drafted and started thinking about the Army. Actually, I enjoyed my ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps] experience at South Carolina State, which was obligatory then. The land-grant institution freshman and sophomores are required to do the two years of ROTC. I enjoyed wearing the uniform and every Thursday afternoon carrying around that M1 rifle doing our weekly parade. I also enjoyed the various military sciences classes and what it means to be a military person. So that did have its influence, but I really had not planned to pursue the full major of military studies from that vantage point.

I graduated college, and I started teaching agriculture. During my first semester of teaching, I received a draft notice. Just through a series of coincidences, and maybe in retrospect a single element of divine intervention, my district education supervisor somehow came in contact with a Marine recruiter, by which time I had been drafted. . . . Because of that dialogue my district supervisor had with the Marine recruiter, the Marine recruiter contacted me, and rather than enlisting in the Army, on the 8th of April 1969, I enlisted in the Marine Corps on the 7th of April 1969. Reason being the Army wanted me right then. The Marine Corps would allow me to finish teaching that school year. And so those matters combined directed me towards the Marine Corps. Again, one of the best decisions I think I ever made, or somebody else ever made for me.

I did not actually go to boot camp because the Marine recruiter did what he was supposed to do. Because I was a college graduate, he ensured that while I was in the delayed enlisted entry program, he directed me to the officer selector. And so I took that test. I drove from Early Branch [South Carolina] to Charlotte, North Carolina, which is a pretty good drive, and took that test. Passed it according to the officer selector. And so that meant that I did not go to Parris Island. I went later that summer of 1969 to Quantico, Virginia, to Officer Candidates School.

Lieutenant Colonel Mark E. Wood: Could you discuss your experiences at Quantico, going through Officer Candidates School and The Basic School?

Fields: Yes. I will preface my experience at Quantico with the following. It really had relationship to the eventual experience I had at Quantico. But because I had been raised up in a segregated environment, I did not know white people from the standpoint of a personal relationship whatsoever. I was acquainted with them through work, and certainly I had a closer relationship to some of them than I did to others, but I did not really have a white experience where I was in competition with the white folks or matters like that. I was always working for them, and the closest I came, I guess, to a potential personal relationship was when I was a national officer with the New Farmers of America, because I did on occasion relate to the Future Farmers of America, their officers and so forth.

But I realized that the experience at Quantico would be a completely different paradigm. I would be training with the white community, something I had not done because South Carolina State University is a historically black university. It also meant that I would probably be making friends of sorts with my fellow candidates. So it was definitely a new experience, and I was concerned whether or not I would be able to compete in this environment successfully, inasmuch as the perception from a black person from which I came was that the white folks were smarter and perhaps even harder, from a standpoint of physical endurance and things like that. So I was concerned about that.

Every aspect of what I was concerned about largely came to pass. One, I was the only black candidate in my platoon at Officer Candidates School. We started out with 96, and it was whittled down to about 43 or something like that at the time we graduated. Along the way, I thought that I might not make it. But thanks to the good Lord, and I would say to the good leadership as well—my leaders in that platoon—I was able to make it. I had another motivator, too. Unlike some of the candidates who had volunteered, they could flunk out or drop on request and move back to where they came from with no further obligation. But in my case, having been drafted, if I failed OCS, I would wind up at Parris Island. My sergeant in-

structor at OCS always reminded the few of us who were draftees that, “You fail here, you’re going to be sent down to Parris Island. And those drill instructors just love candidates who flunk out of OCS.” So that was a motivator as well.

I guess the main point here in reference to your question is the fact that I was the only black in that platoon. My platoon sergeant was a black staff sergeant, Staff Sergeant Mayfield, for whom we all had incredible respect and admiration despite the fact that he was, I think, the toughest man that we had met in our lives at that point in time. There were lieutenants who cried the night we returned our first salute to him, even though this was the day before we were actually commissioned. Some of them actually wept because of the admiration we had for Staff Sergeant Mayfield. Hard man, and he didn’t cut me any slack because I was black. I appreciated that. I wanted to earn my way through OCS just like anybody else. In fact, I think he was probably harder on me than he was on some of my colleagues. I mean, that’s only a perception. I think he treated all of us really equally.

Wood: How did you relate to your fellow candidates? You said that going into it, you were a little concerned about that.

Fields: Well, I liked the way that the Marine Corps then and now does boot camp where the process forces all of us to leave our guns at the door, so to speak. We felt, I think, largely as one, each one of us [was only] trying to make our way through OCS. I did not feel at any point during OCS that I was treated any differently by my fellow candidates because I was black, than those candidates treated anyone else, all of whom I mentioned were white, in that platoon. After OCS, I went directly to TBS in November of 1969.

Wood: What was your experience like in TBS?

Fields: TBS really for me—certainly OCS you have to separate the men from the boys, so to speak—but I thought that TBS was the real area in which the separation began, because in OCS there were no peer evaluations, as best I can recall. At The Basic School, there were the peer evaluations. And I was a little bit concerned by that because any skepticism I had about folks who probably didn’t want me to be there could manifest itself in the secrecy of the peer evaluations. And I never really knew exactly where I fit after those evalu-

ations, but I don't think I fit rather highly in that regard. But again, let me say that I wasn't the strongest student at The Basic School, either, so they may have had some good reason for doing that beyond anything that might be racially oriented or whatever. But I was probably more sensitive to the race issue at The Basic School than I was at OCS.

There was one other black gentleman in my platoon at TBS. . . . He was a graduate of Temple University and prior enlisted. He was smart, and he was in outstanding physical condition. I believe he was the fastest rope climber in the platoon, and he was a communicator. His prior enlisted experience certainly was shown at TBS because things by which I was challenged, he was not challenged by, so I really admired him. But we did not have a whole lot of professional Marine Corps mentoring or interaction while we went through TBS.

Wood: What MOS [military occupational specialty] did you select?

Fields: Infantry. Well, actually it's not what I selected. It was one of my three. But I was selected really by the platoon commander in conjunction, I would imagine, with the company commander. But that was fine with me. And it all turned out I think, over time, to my considerable advantage to have been an infantry officer. . . .

Wood: Did you have any racial situations arise off base?

Fields: I had expectations that were above and beyond the reality of the environment. To put this in perspective, I felt that the uniform would be respected and would help rise above some of the other situations brought on by the environment gradually coming out of segregation into a much more integrated society. There were a few setbacks along the way. One took place while I was a second lieutenant still at TBS [in 1970]. I went up to New York to see my best girlfriend at the time. And while I was riding on a bus, I was told by a person with whom I was not acquainted that it was against the law to impersonate an officer. He posed that to me in a question. He said, "Do you know that it is against the law to impersonate an officer?" I was in my alphas [service dress uniform] at the time, Marine alphas. And I told him that I was an officer. But to make a long story short, I just made the point that it was very early in the days of the Marine Corps and black officers, and it was so unusual that it

was hard for some to believe that a black officer actually existed. Might I also add that the person who asked me that question about the legitimacy of wearing the uniform was a black person in New York, where, from my vantage point as a southerner, I thought New York and the North were a bit more advanced in race relations and expectations than the South. So I was taken aback by that comment.

Another incident occurred one evening I was driving home to South Carolina from TBS. I was dressed in my uniform, and I stopped to get some food somewhere I believe in Virginia, deep down in Virginia. It might have been North Carolina, but I want to say it was Virginia. And it just turns out that there were a few other folks in uniform there, not Marines. But mostly civilians at a rest stop kind of a thing as you're driving south on what eventually became Interstate 95. I sat at this counter in uniform expecting the waitress to come over and ask me for my order. This, again, is in 1970. And I sat there for quite a long time, and I noticed that all the other servicemen and other folks at the counter had been served. Those with whom I had come in with, largely together, had already eaten and departed. I was still sitting there and had not been served. I didn't want to believe that what was happening was happening, but eventually, yes, I came to realize that I wasn't being served and there may have been a reason for it. I finally said it was because I was a black person eating at a predominantly white location.

When I reported into Camp Lejeune—this was the third incident—the members of the 6th Marine Regiment—probably more so members of the battalion in which I was becoming a part, this happened in the first 24–48 hours of my reporting in—the young Marines, especially the black ones, did not want to believe that I was an officer. And I recall a lance corporal asked if he could see my ID card to verify that in fact a black lieutenant had reported into the battalion.

Major General Clifford L. Stanley

Stanley: All of my frat brothers went in the Army—all of them. That's where I was like divided. Going in the service wasn't even an issue. I was going in; there was no doubt about it. I knew I wanted to serve. I wasn't thinking about a career, but I definitely wanted to go in the service, and since I was already in college, I really wanted to

be an officer. But like I said, my frat brothers were in the Army, Army ROTC. I didn't think they were serious enough. I just didn't think they were as committed as I thought they should be.

Although I didn't know a whole lot about the Marine Corps, the mystique and the image of the Corps jumped out at me, as opposed to the Army and all that. I didn't even consider the others. So when the recruiter came on campus, and frankly I'd never even seen a black officer, but the issue of black officers and how many there were and all that wasn't a big deal to me. But they had a black OSO [officer selection officer]. I didn't know it was an OSO. I just knew it was a recruiter. Came on campus and took the test, did OK on it, and said OK. Rest is history. I went to Officer Candidates School; I think it was the 60th Special OCC [Officer Candidate Course]. It was August of 1969.

Lieutenant Colonel Mark D. Andradi: What do you recall of OCS?

Stanley: There were, I think, three other black candidates in my platoon. I think we started out with a total of 60 to 70 or so. But even then I wasn't thinking about that very much. My focus was that drill instructor, and being a Marine, and all that, and actually bonding with our shipmates, our teammates, our other platoon members. And actually, the only real time the issue of race came up that much was peer evals [evaluations]. I'll never forget it. Our platoon sergeant, a black gunnery sergeant, as I was about to graduate, he pulled me aside and he said, "Candidate Stanley, you need to watch this one person." He said, "You make sure you watch him as you get to Basic School because you were ranked at the top of your peer evals by virtually everyone, within the top one, two, three, or whatever. This one guy ranked you rock bottom and had some pretty biased things to say." And so he said, "Watch your back."

Major General Charles F. Bolden Jr.

Dr. Fred H. Allison: Did you face any racial situations as you completed flight school in the late 1960s?

Bolden: I tell people we spent a lifetime in Meridian [Mississippi] for six months or whatever it was. We got there, the [Ku Klux] Klan had just bombed a Jewish synagogue.

Allison: So the Klan was pretty active?

Bolden: Oh, very active, all over Mississippi, but particularly in Meridian. We had an instructor, an interracial couple, a white instructor married to a black woman, and they had to move him on the base, into the BOQ [bachelor officer quarters], because they were threatened. The three civil rights workers had just been murdered and buried under the dam in Philadelphia, Mississippi, so that's when we went to Meridian. And I remember my very first flight, my instructor—I'm not sure why—but part of my area orientation, we flew over the dam in Philadelphia, and he pointed out to me that that's where they had found the three civil rights workers and all that kind of stuff.

I had to send my wife back to South Carolina because we couldn't find housing. I wanted her to be there, but she was expecting, and we couldn't find housing. Every time we would call, you'd go out, and either somebody had just rented it when they saw you or, no, you didn't talk to us. You must be mistaken. Just couldn't find any place to stay there.

Allison: And they didn't have base housing available?

Bolden: No, not for students. So I took her back to South Carolina, and I ended up renting an apartment in downtown Meridian through a guy that everybody said just stay away from, who was very prominent among the city council in Meridian. Some people said he was a member of the Klan. He was a prominent businessman in Meridian, and I had called him. They said, whatever you do, don't deal with him. So I called him, I was at my wit's end. I called and I asked him if he had an apartment somewhere. He said, "Yeah, I've got a couple." And so we kept making appointments to meet each other, and I'd get there and he wasn't there, or he'd get there and I didn't show up because something had happened. We had these conflicts two or three times, and I finally called. I said, "This is hard. If you leave the key for an apartment on the desk in your office, I'll go get it. I'll look at the apartment. If I like it, I'll leave you a check for the first and last months' rent." He said that would be fine. And so I went and got the key and looked. It was a great set of apartments, right in the middle of downtown Meridian, had a nice little courtyard. They had two rows of two stories. There were apartments up-

stairs and downstairs and then a courtyard, like a New Orleans courtyard. And I went out and looked at it and went back and wrote him a check for the first and last months' rent. I went home and got my wife and brought her back.

Allison: You brought her back from South Carolina?

Bolden: Yes. My wife was kind of, I guess some people confuse her for being Indian, like East Indian, not American Indian. It was funny because as we were cleaning up to move in, and sweeping the apartment and everything, several months later we learned [this from], we'd made friends with a couple across the courtyard. I forgot what his last name was, but he was on the city council, and he would give us all the dirt and stuff like that. . . . And there was a little old couple right next to us, and they actually thought that I was the housekeeper. So when they saw me sweeping out, they thought that my wife, this Indian woman, had this black guy that was doing all the house cleaning, so it didn't bother them.

Allison: Were you the only black couple in that complex?

Bolden: We were the only black couple in the whole of downtown Meridian. Once she found out we were black, then she and her husband called the police on us—every day. So every night, the Meridian police would come and knock on the door and check, see how things were going. After a while, they got tired, and they said, "Look, we really apologize, but we've got to respond to the call." So we became relatively acquainted with them. I won't say that we became friends. But we were very good friends with this man and his wife, and he came home just chuckling one time from the city council meeting. And he came over and knocked on the door, and he was beside himself. He said, "You guys were the hit of the city council meeting tonight."

We said, "What do you mean?"

He said, "Well, in the middle of the city council meeting, somebody yelled at [our landlord], said, 'Hey, Jack, what are you doing with those 'N's' in your apartment?' He said, 'What?' He said, 'What are you doing with those [derogatory terms] in your apartments?' He said, 'I don't have any in my apartments.' He said, 'Oh yes you do, apartment number 7B,'" or whatever we were in. "And he said, 'Oh no, you must be mistaken.'" And so he came over and found out we

were there and said, “Hey, you didn’t pay. You’re behind on the rent.”

And I said, “No, that’s not true.” I said, “I have paid you every month. In fact, I’ve paid you first and last months’ rent. I’ve got the canceled check to prove it, and we’re not going anywhere.” And the guy had a heart attack and died, not right there, but he had a heart attack that week. So I didn’t have to worry about it. We dealt with his wife. She wasn’t happy that we were there, but we managed to stay there until I finished and we came back down to Pensacola.

Colonel John W. Moffett

Baughn: After your Vietnam tour, where did you go?

Moffett: Had a tour at Officer Candidates School, . . . then I got notified in December 1968 that I was going to 8th & I. I did not want to do that. I told them, “Nope, I am not going to 8th & I.”

But they said, “You’re going to 8th & I.” . . . Then I had to go up to Headquarters, and I had an interview with a couple of generals. They said, “You’re going to 8th & I.”

I said “Sir, I want to go, but I am too short.”

He said “Don’t worry about that. We will double-sole or double-heel your shoes. You will be fine.” . . .

Now it’s like, “So why did I have to go?”

They replied, “Because we have to introduce some color at 8th & I.” So in 1969, I went. I got to where I really just loved the whole thing about the spit and polish and the marching. . . . I was put on the short staff, because the tall staff was like six feet and [I was] 5’10” or 5’11” in double heels. We had our Tuesday night parades, and the tall staff had the Friday night parades. I was OK with that. It was still a parade. At one time, the adjutant gave too many commands when planes were taking off, and so he got put on the sidelines, and I got the chance to be the adjutant.

When you’re not doing parade duty or working at Marine Corps Institute, I was always escorting. There were a lot of Vietnam casualties coming back, and I was escorting various VIPs [very important persons]. Every Tuesday night, we would invite girls over for dinner, and Friday night. Friday night was given up at the end of the parades for all of the after-parade refreshments. And that was OK. I

remember getting in a heat one day with the commanding officer about my interracial dating, and I said jokingly, because I was escorting I think it was the mayor of Macon, Georgia, his family, which included a daughter, etc.—I made some wiseass comment about, “Sir, the first time we got a black politician, I will make sure that I volunteer to be on the top of the list to escort his daughters.” That probably wasn’t the right thing to say. I went to see the XO [executive officer], a really super guy. Any time you got the heat, you went to see the XO, and it just got at that point it was like focused on what I really wanted to do. So I said to the XO, “I need to get out of here before I lose my career as a Marine Corps officer.” He asked me what I wanted to do, and I said, “I want to go back to Vietnam.”

He said, “You want to do what?”

I said, “I am going to go back to Vietnam.”

Baughn: So you did go back. You returned then to the States as an inspector/instructor with a Reserve unit in San Francisco. Anything interesting occur there?

Moffett: I had a situation with my company gunnery sergeant and my administrative chief, who was a staff sergeant. . . . The gunny was white, and he always had a high and tight haircut. The admin chief was black. The two of them always butted heads because the admin guy was determined to have this humongous afro. The gunny came to me because I didn’t wear an afro, my hair was a little bit longer than now. He says, “So what are we going to do with the staff sergeant?”

I said, “The sergeant has a name.” . . .

The gunny said, “His name is ‘Boy.’ What are we going to do with Staff Sergeant ‘Boy’?”

I said, “Let me handle it.” I told the staff sergeant, . . . “Get a haircut. We have an inspection coming up.”

And he’s like, “What’s the rules?” The Marine Corps wasn’t very strict on what the rules were and how do you measure the hair of an African American, how long should it be? So I set the standards. “This is how long it should be.” And he said OK; he got his hair cut. And then of course the gunny was always like, “It’s time get it cut again. It’s time to get it cut again.”

But I believe I became somewhat of a role model for the staff

sergeant. He was a great guy. He became a gunnery sergeant and retired as a master sergeant. It paid off for him because he had his blinders on about how it should be.



Chapter 4

The Big Push—A Turning Point

Beginning in the early 1960s, the administrations of Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson placed pressure on the services to increase black officer representation. In regard to the disproportionately small number of African American officers in the services, Gerhard A. Gesell, who chaired Kennedy's 1962 committee investigating racial inequalities, declared it a "shocking condition."¹ The heightened racial turmoil associated with the Vietnam War and the peaking civil rights movement in the United States escalated the pressure on the services to make racial reforms. One means was to increase the number of African American officers, who could defuse the "us versus them" paradigm created by the reality of enlisted ranks heavily manned with black troops but led by white officers.

A key element of General Robert E. Cushman Jr.'s strategy as Commandant to increase the number of black officers was the creation in the late 1960s of an advisory billet, the special advisor to the deputy chief of staff (Manpower) for minority officer procurement. The position was held by a series of prominent African American officers, the first of whom was Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth H. Berthoud Jr. Following Berthoud were Lieutenant Colonel Frank E. Petersen Jr., Major Edward L. Green, and Major Solomon P. Hill.

In addition, the Marine Corps endeavored to place black officers in visible assignments to promote African American officer recruitment and success at installations such as the Naval Academy, the Marine Barracks at 8th & I, Officer Candidates School, The Basic School, and Headquarters Marine Corps. One of the most far-reaching and ultimately successful strategies was the creation or enhancement of Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps [NROTC] units at historically black colleges and universities, including Savannah State,

Photo Left: One of the early products of the Marines Corps' push to recruit African American officers, Arnold Fields was commissioned in 1969 and was a series commander as a first lieutenant at the Drill Instructor School, Parris Island, SC, at the time of this photograph, circa 1972.

Courtesy of MajGen Arnold Fields

Southern, North Carolina Central, Prairie View A&M, and Florida A&M. These programs served as an important gateway for a new generation of African American Marine officers to enter the service during the 1970s.

Overall, the decade saw what Colonel Alphonse G. Davis characterized as “the beginning of monumental change in the racial composition of the Marine Corps’ officer corps.”² In 1970, there were about 300 black officers in the Marine Corps out of a total officer population of 23,000—1.3 percent. By the end of the decade, the number of black officers had doubled, to 633, which was 3.7 percent of a total Marine Corps officer count of nearly 17,000.³

Brigadier General George H. Walls Jr.

Chief Warrant Officer-3 William E. Hutson: After your combat tour [in Vietnam in 1967], you could have gotten out of the Marine Corps, but you decided to stay. What was your thinking on that? Why didn’t you jump out and go into corporate America?

Walls: At that time, corporate America was looking for a lot of young officers who were getting out to come work for them, particularly African Americans, because there were not many of us who were out in corporate America at the time. I thought about it, and I said, “If I go out and take a job with IBM [International Business Machines] or Continental Can Company or whoever, I am never going to have the level of responsibility and authority at this age that I’ve got now as a Marine.”

Very frankly, I loved what I was doing. I loved the people, I loved my job. I just fell in love with the Marine Corps, which may sound kind of corny, but I did. So I weighed those things and said, “I’d rather stay in the Marine Corps and see what I could do here,” not only just for me personally, but for the Marine Corps. So that’s what tipped the scale for me, and I ended up staying.

Hutson: In late 1967, you went on recruiting duty, specifically to recruit black officers. What is the background on that assignment?

Walls: The Marine Corps called and said, “We are about to send several black officers out to the Marine Corps districts to be officer selection officers. Your name has come up, and we want you to go do this.” As it would happen, Lieutenant Colonel Ken Berthoud

was heading the program for the Marine Corps. Ken and I had met each other in Vietnam. . . . He had me come up to Headquarters Marine Corps. We sat and talked about what the program was going to be about. In basic terms, we needed to recruit more black officers to the Marine Corps. In order to do that, they sent—we were captains at the time—sent us out to each of the Marine Corps districts. I guess because I was from the Philadelphia area, they sent me to 4th Marine Corps District.

My mission initially was to go with the white officer selection officers when they visited a historically black college or university in their area of operations. The district at that time was Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, District of Columbia, Virginia, Ohio, parts of Indiana, and parts of Kentucky. Generally, I would spend four days a week on the road with the white officer selection officers. As far as my schedule and where I went and what I did, Colonel [Eugene J.] Paradis, the officer selection officer, left that up to me. . . .

They couldn't figure out what to call us. First we started out as BOSOs—black officer selection officers. That didn't play well with people when you went out and introduced yourself. So then we became minority officer selection officers, which was still kind of prescriptive and restrictive. Then finally they said, "Well, what the heck. You're just an OSO, an officer selection officer."

Hutson: How long did that take?

Walls: It took us about 18 months or maybe two years to get there because it was one of those things that had to kind of percolate up from all of us to Headquarters Marine Corps saying, "You might as well send us out with one hand tied behind our back if you're going to label us. We just need to be officer selection officers." So that got changed, and it made things a little bit easier.

Hutson: Was that a difficult assignment, recruiting as the Vietnam War was ongoing?

Walls: Vietnam had ramped up, and everybody realized what was going on there. People were coming back, Students for a Democratic Society [SDS] were on college campuses, Black Panthers, all of these different groups who were opposed to the war.

My first visit to a college campus was what we used to call a "blitz." We would have teams from four or five officer selection of-

fices converge on a major university. I remember standing in the lobby of the library at Ohio State University surrounded by 200 screaming SDSers and all these people who were opposed to the war. I'm there in my dress blues along with the officer selection officer from Columbus. He said, "Marines never put their hands in their pockets. Put your hands in your pockets so that if anything happens, it won't appear that you were the one who struck the first blow." We were out there for two days, and it was about as harrowing as being in combat because you had no idea what these kids were going to do. That was at the time that they would throw balloons full of blood and all kinds of crazy stuff.

So that was my first exposure to officer recruiting on a campus that wasn't really very friendly. I remember saying to myself, "What the heck am I doing here?" But it was quite an experience. For the three years that I was on officer selection duty, just about every place we went, you were met with some group that was resistant or anti-military. I think probably the worst, even beyond Ohio State, the worst experience that I had was at Central State University out in Xenia, Ohio. The place that they had us set up was in the student union, and we were on the lower level in a corner. Probably 150 angry young black men confronted a white captain, a white gunnery sergeant, and me. We got on campus at about 10:00 in the morning, and it went until about 4:30 or 5:00 in the afternoon when we left. And it was tense, it was really tense. There was no dialogue; there was no talking to these folks, because they did not want us there. And of course the Marine Corps' policy is that once you go on campus, you don't leave until the time you're scheduled to go.

During this same period of time is when the Navy recruiters got run off of campus at Kent State [and] the shootings at Kent State happened. It was really a difficult time to be out on campus trying to sell people on why they ought to be in the Marine Corps, and even more difficult was to talk to a young black man or woman and say, "This is why you ought to be a Marine officer." It was a hard sell. I don't think the program overall did as well as the Marine Corps had hoped it would, certainly not because of the lack of effort on the part of anybody that was involved in the program. The environment was just not conducive to getting people interested in being Marine officers.

The interesting thing was how quickly things that happened in Vietnam, or things that happened all over the country, hit the media. They just had an instant impact on everything that you tried to do. Kids coming home in body bags, the coffins, and [we heard], “My cousin went to Vietnam and he got his arm blown off, why should I go to Vietnam?” That kind of thing made it a very, very difficult assignment. . . .

It was really difficult. And I think it might have been harder on the white officer selection officers who went because we all received verbal abuse. I don’t ever remember anybody becoming physical. But it was just a constant torrent of verbal abuse. A lot of it was racist. A lot of it was just pure vulgarity. These kids would just say anything to you. So it was a tough assignment for us. . . . Some of these places were really hotbeds of antiwar sentiment. Howard University in Washington, Morgan State in Baltimore. . . .

But it was an interesting three years. I went on recruiting duty toward the end of 1967 and finished up that tour in 1970, toward the end of ’70. But it was interesting, and it tested your metal and made you think about whether you really wanted to be a Marine or if you wanted to be in service, period.

Lieutenant General Frank E. Petersen Jr.

Petersen: General Jonas [M.] Platt approached me one day in 1971 regarding a possible assignment shift to that of special advisor to the Commandant in matters concerning procurement of Negro officers. This was being considered, General Platt noted, because the only other black Marine lieutenant colonel, Ken Berthoud—junior to me in rank, and a supply type—had initially been assigned as an assistant for recruiting but would be leaving shortly for another assignment. . . . I told General Platt that I didn’t want to leave aviation. In fact, I was more than happy dealing with airplanes. It was what I was supposed to be doing, I thought.

But in the United States Marine Corps, when you’re given an assignment, you might wiggle a bit in your mind, but the name of the game is to jump on the bandwagon and become effective where you’ve been directed. . . .

Well, almost as soon as I hit the beach, I could see that a few

things about the assignment had to be at least adjusted. For example, the phrase “Negro officer procurement” had to go. In my view, it connoted some sort of body purchase. . . . No single Negro goes into the black community (even if he represents the Marine Corps) and attempts to recruit by calling himself a “Negro procurer.” My God, that’s reminiscent of slavery days. . . .

To ensure placement of the correct emphasis on recruitment of minority officers, I pointed out to my superiors that, within the colleges, there was a population extant that could be approached; however, the need was to have minority officers as part of the recruiting team. As a result of that recommendation, the Commandant of Marines, General Robert E. Cushman Jr., directed that minority officers be placed in all of the recruiting centers—especially in the large urban centers like Los Angeles, New York, and Chicago.⁴

[After describing efforts to address broader minority affairs issues, Petersen turned to the subject of engaging potential officers at universities.]

Our experiences on college campuses were tolerable, with a few difficult spots here and there. First, of course, we found that the proper groundwork had to be laid before approaching a college or university. We couldn’t just walk onto a campus and begin our spiel. We had to seed the territory with a group of black officers. . . .

I would make a sweep by way of the state of Washington, then down to California and San Diego on one 10-day tour. When I appeared on campus, interviews on radio and television had been pre-arranged. I just talked and rapped about the Marine Corps and its opportunities. We found that if we went to the leaders of the various student organizations (black student unions, Chicano student unions) and made our case, things would invariably be smoother. . . .

I guess the students were always pretty respectful of me because of my rank and the fact that I had been in two wars. Tension was there, but it wasn’t so unwieldy that a dialogue between them and us couldn’t be established, especially if they could see that we weren’t the pompous, overbearing military type. If we didn’t try to support the war in Vietnam, they were always willing to hear what we had to say as long as we made sense. They would also go along with us in terms of our outlining methodologies in becoming a Marine officer.⁵

Colonel Fred L. Jones

Jones: Remember what happened in '68. Dr. [Martin Luther] King [Jr.] was assassinated, and that caused some huge racial issues in the country. [Robert F.] Bobby Kennedy was assassinated. So the civil rights thing is still a very big deal in society. There are a few people in Congress and President Johnson recognizing that the military can be a mirror by which the rest of the country can look.

The Army had done a great job of integrating its force's officer corps because blacks had always been in the Army. There had never been an Army without blacks. It might have been segregated, but the Army had always had blacks. The Navy also, to a lesser degree, but the Navy kind of squirreled theirs over into the steward branch. Then when the Air Force was born in [19]47, they said, "We're not going to be like the rest of you all." They basically integrated from day one. . . . The Army Air Corps became the Air Force. They had the Tuskegee Airmen. So they already had a bunch of black officers, where the Marine Corps just did not. . . .

[Lieutenant General Victor H.] "Brute" Krulak had Pac [Fleet Marine Force Pacific] at the time, for a big part of the Vietnam War. He was one of the early pioneers in recognizing that the Marine Corps was dumb not to utilize black Americans in the Marine Corps. And he was just a forward thinker. He passed that on to his son [General Charles C. Krulak], who became Commandant later on. But all I'm saying is that there were thinkers in the Marine Corps who could see a future. The strategic thinkers in the Marine Corps saw the Marine Corps as no longer being an all-white officer corps. They were trying to figure out the best way to make the transition, and how the Marine Corps would do it, once they decided they're going to do something.

Berthoud was advising General [Leonard F.] Chapman [Jr.], they're looking around, and they're seeing, wow, there's political pressure, because the other services were doing a whole lot better than the Marine Corps. And they're saying, "What can we do immediately to increase our black officers in the Marine Corps?"

And you know how the Marine Corps is, they don't just want you because you're black— "How can we get the very best talent we

can get?" So obviously, they looked into the enlisted ranks to successful NCOs [noncommissioned officers], but that has a limit. There's a limit to how many officers you can get from there because education and exposure is important. So by 1969, when the Marine Corps is deciding to make a push, they make the decision to have a special advisor to the Commandant, that was the first thing. And then of course they reached out to the districts' OSOs. But let's face it, they also had quotas to bring in officers. Then there are basically no black OSOs. Where are you going to get them from? When you look at the black officers who were already in the Marine Corps at the time, a lot of them had either decided they were on their way out, for lots of different reasons, or may not have the kind of records where they would be successful in the future, like the attitude I had for the first couple of years. I mean, I'm sure I wasn't the only one who had an attitude like that. And a lot of them were Reserves

So the Marine Corps had a real problem. All of the guys who had come in at the time that I did, there were only a handful, so now we're reaching [on the issue] how are we going to do this? Berthoud obviously was saying you better try to hold on to what you've got if they've got any kind of decent record. That was the first thing. And you're not going to have an easy time holding on to them because, like [William A.] Bill Henderson, the guy who went infantry and then became a fighter pilot. It was very difficult. Mobil Oil and all the other big companies had the same problem that the Marine Corps had. They were saying to themselves, "Guys, we need to diversify our management, senior management." That's the argument that Berthoud used with me. He said, "Do you think it's going to be any easier for you in the private sector than in the Marine Corps? How many black faces do you think you're going to see in the board room at Mobil today?"

I said, "Damn, you're right."

He said, "Why do you think Mobil is putting the heat on you? The same reason I'm putting the heat on you, because they think you have the potential to at least move on up and be successful. You've got the potential to at least be a colonel."

I just laughed. I said, "Right. Sure thing."

He said after that, all bets are off. No one can count on anything

past that, but reaching the level of colonel is an extremely successful career. That's what he said to me in arguing for me to stay. I said that would be nice, but we'll just see how it works out.

And so yes, it coincided. About the same time the Marine Corps was trying to increase its numbers, it just so happened that I decided that being a professional Marine fit the things that I wanted to do with my life, because I had run into some people that I really respected and enjoyed being around. And I enjoyed wearing the uniform. I enjoyed—frankly, on a personal, ego basis—I probably enjoyed being one of “the few.” I'll admit that. I probably enjoyed it more than I wanted to admit, being one of the very few blacks in society that could claim to be a Marine officer. I don't doubt that at all. That struck me as being really special. I got lots of kudos from my classmates when I went home. They thought, “Wow, you're a Marine officer.” My ego liked that, no question about it. My ego enjoyed that. . . .

Berthoud said, “The only thing you wanted was to be a regular officer, but I'm going to throw in, you can select your next duty station—anywhere you want to go.” Wow. And again, there was a decision. I could choose something for the glamour, or I could choose something to improve my bona fides as a logistics officer, supply officer, something that would give me real credibility amongst the people in my specialty.

I chose Barstow [California], Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow. . . . This was a great place to learn a level of logistics that I had never been exposed to before. . . . I may have been the only black officer there. My wife was used to it now, and I was more used to it than she was. She's very aggressive, well educated, so she's used to it now. We used to laugh, we would just make jokes, and we'd say, “Well, we're going to be the only black faces there, but what the hell, we'll go have a good time.” Doesn't matter whether they're playing country and western or not. Doesn't make any difference. We're just going to have a good time. So we just kind of looked past all that stuff. One of the things that helped me early in my career was my white counterparts thought that I made a good effort to assimilate into the club. I was not unconscious of that fact, but I said, “Hey, we're part of this organization. We're going to do our thing.” So we participated in everything.

But four or five months after Shirley had come out there, now

General Petersen is the advisor to the new Commandant, Cushman. He has the job of being the minority advisor. So the big effort in recruiting is paying some dividends. They decided they're going to open up NROTC units at Savannah State and Southern University, followed up by North Carolina Central and Florida A&M, historically black colleges and universities. They had already opened up one at Prairie View [A&M]. Clarence [L.] Baker had left Vietnam early in '68 to go to Prairie View. But they weren't producing any Marines, just Navy officers. Strangely enough, that's what they were getting out of Prairie View. They were getting a lot of Navy officers and no Marines.

So in any case, in 1971, they opened up two new ones, Savannah State, Southern University, and, of course, Baker was coming out of Prairie View. So [Henry L.] Hank Reed, first and only black advisor to the Vietnamese Marines, the only black officer to ever be an advisor, he's leaving advisor duty, thinks he's going to Parris Island for duty, where his family is from. . . . He's told, "Nope, you're not going to Parris Island, you're going to Prairie View for NROTC duty." Hank didn't find out, I don't think, until he got off the airplane. You are going to Prairie View, you aren't going to Parris Island. He was not a happy camper.

So in 1971, Fred Jones, Hank Reed, [Samuel J.] Sam Pitts—we're the three black MOIs [Marine officer instructors] at those universities. Prairie View is Hank Reed, Southern is Sam Pitts, Savannah State is Fred Jones. Prairie View is already established. They've got students and all that stuff. Southern had no students. Savannah State had no students. We had to start from scratch. Sam Pitts and I started from scratch. . . . At Savannah State, we had two contract students when I got there, both from Atlanta, both not serious about being in the military, both just there for the scholarship money, which was obvious to me.

I went to Savannah State on NROTC duty very reluctantly. I only went because I didn't have a choice. If I'd had a choice, I wouldn't have gone, because I was very happy learning my trade at Barstow. I'd been there less than a year.

Colonel Kurtis P. Wheeler: When did they send you to Savannah State?

Jones: In 1971. Things are not good at Savannah State's NROTC unit. We've got an XO [executive officer] who is from Savannah, white, brilliant guy, Navy guy, who they sent to help establish the unit because he had been at the NROTC unit at the University of North Carolina—a very successful school. So he was there really to help get the unit started. He was only going to be there a year. And he was a Savannah boy, which was a really, really good decision by the Navy to do that. But he couldn't recruit any black students. This is 1971, and this is Savannah, Georgia. This is essentially a segregated school. They had white professors and foreign professors, but this is a black school.

Brigadier General [Edward B.] Meyer, [Manpower], told me on the phone, "Captain Jones, you are there for one reason: to recruit and train the best black students that you can. You're not there to get a master's degree, none of that s***." And he was very blunt. He said, "That's what you are there for, and that's what I expect you to do."

I said, "Aye, aye, sir. Yes sir." I'll never forget that conversation. It was basically one way. So I said, "Whew." OK, I've got a pregnant wife now, she's pregnant again. So that was the scene when I got to Savannah State. So, boy, damn, I've never been a recruiter before. So I say, "What can you do? What are your strengths?" So I went and volunteered to assist the Savannah State football team, to coach. I said I can handle the linebackers and the defensive linemen. That's what I went to do. And in the process, I said, "Would you let me talk to the football players about the opportunities that the NROTC program offers?" Head coach [John H.] Myles said, "Yes, you can do that, no problem." The assistant head coach was John Mason, who was a decorated Army guy, highly decorated Korean War guy, had been with the Rangers, so he was on my side, too.

So I talked to them, and I showed up at the unit with over 20 potential midshipmen, most of them football players. When that happened, at a small school, several of the other black male students, I mean, that's all that was there, essentially. They saw that the football players were doing it, and so [future] General [Walter E.] Gaskin [Sr.] and several others said, this may be a program that's worth looking into. I don't know if that was General Gaskin's motivation or not,

but there were a whole bunch of folks who came. So all of the sudden, we now have the basis for a unit. And I had my finger on most every one of them. I had basically talked to all of them, essentially. And so that was how Savannah State really got started.

The difference between an NROTC student from these traditional black colleges and universities is that if the MOI is the right kind of person, they will prepare them for a predominantly white officer world, whether it's Navy or Marine Corps, in such a way that they're not intimidated by what they see. And they'll have the self-confidence to know that when they get there, they can compete with anybody from any school. It doesn't matter. That was the real challenge. And of course at the NROTC units, you make judgments on the kinds of student that you think can handle the Marine Corps as opposed to the Navy. Those were the kind of judgments that I was making. . . .

Savannah State really became a Marine unit. Everybody wanted to become a Marine. That was because of [assistant Marine officer instructor Gunnery Sergeant] Morris and me. They wanted to be Marines. We had recruited them. That's what they saw. They saw us in our uniforms. You know, I put my Charlies [summer service uniform] on. That's what they wanted to be. They didn't want to be in the Navy. But that's not the way it works politically. Gotta get some Navy guys too. So I lost a couple of guys that I really wanted in the Marine Corps because the [Navy] captain wouldn't let me have them. They wanted to be Marines, and I wanted them, but he just wouldn't let me have them, so I accepted that and moved on.

But we did all the little things. Even though they didn't have to show up—it was all volunteer—we'd meet them two or three times in the mornings, starting in the spring, getting them ready for their summer training. These are civilians, they are only obligated to go to class and show up for drill once a week; as I said, it's all volunteer. But they'd show up, so we'd run 'em in the mornings, three times a week. And we got them ready, we put them through the drills. I said, "When you show up, you aren't going to embarrass me." That was the approach that we took with these kids. So I wasn't surprised at all that we didn't lose anybody. The years I was there, we never lost a candidate going to summer training. They all made it through, because they were well prepared.

I can't speak for the other MOIs, but I do know that these kids coming from these traditional black colleges had to be told what they were going to see, and they had to be pumped up to what kind of environment they were going to be in. They'd basically been in an all-black environment from day one. . . . Savannah was just integrating its public school system at that time. There were still racial issues in Savannah as a whole, and there was another two-year college in town that was predominantly white, Armstrong. It's now a four-year school. So while we were there, for political reasons, we reached out, the president of Savannah State and the Navy, together, we reached out to Armstrong. Before I left, we had kids from Armstrong to come over to Savannah State. While I was there, the last year I was there, we had a combined effort. And in fact a female from Armstrong was one of the very first people who came from Armstrong to participate in the NROTC program. She wasn't one of mine, but she came as a result of that liaison.

Wheeler: And that functioned sort of like the consortiums do today, the cross-town enrollment?

Jones: Exactly. Savannah State has a roll of all the Navy officers that have been commissioned out of there since, well, Gaskin was the first in 1974. He was the very first Marine officer to be commissioned [from Savannah State]. From then on, there were a bunch of them that came after that. . . .

[Gaskin] was, by far, my best student. Everybody wanted a piece of him. He was charismatic, even as a student. He was quick on his feet mentally. I was hard on him. I wasn't going to make life easy for him because he had just too much potential. Other people would give him [a break]. . . . No, not me, no, no, no. I demanded that he give me 100 percent, and he did. He was the first student commander of the company. He was the student leader. . . .

I went a step further. It's not required, but I got to know my students' mothers and fathers. A lot of them came from single-parent homes, so I could identify with them. I got to know them. I got to know their girlfriends, because we started an auxiliary there with the females so they could participate. They weren't a part of the unit, but they were a part of the auxiliary. We got the Navy to buy [television] sets and have a nice lounge for them because I wanted them to hang

out together. That was just my approach. We're talking early '70s. What they were about to go into was nothing like they'd ever seen or experienced in their lives. So I wanted them to develop a strong sense of togetherness and networking so they could call on one another to support each other once they got away from Savannah State.

It was amazing to me to see these students. I saw diamonds in the rough. I don't know what anybody else saw, but I saw diamonds in the rough. I saw a lot of these kids, who could barely put a sentence together when they started in that unit as freshman, and what they turned out to be as seniors, just some really fine officers came out of that unit. Of course in the summertime, we'd go off to summer training, and we'd confer with the other MOIs. It was obvious to me that my kids were well prepared. I would just sit back and sort of smile to see students coming from the other universities, much bigger, much more famous, and watch our kids. Our kids were prepared. It's just the way it was.

Wheeler: You pointed out along the way those people who demanded great things from you and those who didn't. Those early experiences seem to come out now in your approach to leadership. Could you talk a little bit about that, and how that has shaped your approach, specifically with the African American officers that you've mentored?

Jones: Yes. It can go all the way back to [my elementary teachers] Mrs. Upton, Mrs. McBride, especially Mrs. Upton, that little lady. She would not let me get away with scratching the surface, just because I was an athlete or had some other thing. She demanded that I give more. And it was the same way when I went on the staff at The Basic School. The standard there was, when you stepped out in front of those students, you looked like a professional, you acted like a professional, and that's the way it was, the expectations. Heretofore, so many times, black students—and I certainly experienced it—the expectation was, you know, you're black. Average is good enough. That was my first experience in an integrated school in Nevada. The teacher was shocked that I was better than average, that I was one of her better students. And I could see this. I'm only 11 years old, but I'm not blind. You could see the vibes of how people are reacting to you.

Unconsciously or consciously, I reflected back on what had

helped me develop to that point in my life, and so I demanded that out of my students at the time. And of course I hadn't had any experience as a commander yet. At this point, I hadn't commanded yet. I didn't command until after leaving Savannah State. So I hadn't really commanded any troops yet. I'd been around them and had a few in my section, but I'd never really commanded yet. But what was happening, of course, was the basis of my leadership style was developing at this particular time. . . . What I saw was that the leaders who were extremely demanding but fair and would do anything to help you get better as long as you showed that you wanted to get better.

That was what I saw, and that was what I was trying to pass on to these civilians. They weren't in the military. These midshipmen are civilians. That's clear as could be. The only thing they were obligated to do—they were on scholarship—was to go to class and go to drill. That's it. You didn't have any control over them, period, . . . unless it was the power of your personality.

In a small setting like that, at Savannah State at that time, they were glad to get that program. The president . . . was a big supporter of that program, so it was really set up to succeed. To have General Gaskin being the first student to be commissioned, who was an over-achiever, and everybody wanted a piece of him, that really elevated the status of that unit. Of course General [Carl E.] Mundy [Jr.] sent Gaskin back to Savannah State . . . when he had completed a tour at Parris Island later on, so he played a significant role in keeping that tradition at Savannah State rolling. I'd be willing to bet, for its size, that there is probably not another school in the NROTC program that has put out as many officers per capita—Navy and Marine officers—as Savannah State. It is an extremely popular thing at Savannah State to be in the NROTC unit there. Donnie [L.] Cochran, the first black to ever command the Blue Angels, was one of my students.

Colonel Henry L. Reed

Wheeler: You returned back to the states [from Vietnam] in 1971 and became a Marine officer instructor. Can you describe that?

Reed: Yes, I returned in 1971. My wife was, at that point, teaching school in a place called Newport News, Virginia. And she said, "Well, where are we going?" At that point, I had orders to go to Parris

Island, and I was really elated I was going to be able to go back to my hometown. That never came to fruition because that day I was looking at the mail, . . . [and the Marine Corps] had changed my orders. I read the thing, and it says you're going to go to Prairie View [A&M] University to be a Marine officer instructor. At that point, I didn't know what a Marine officer instructor was. . . .

Wheeler: Was there any kind of preparation for that duty? You just showed up and figured it out?

Reed: Fred Jones was assigned to go to Savannah State and I was assigned to go to Prairie View, and they sent us to about a two-week school at Purdue University with the ROTC unit there. We became familiar with the kind of classes we had to teach and everything else. But that was basically the only training that you received.

Wheeler: In that era, when you and Colonel Jones went to these NROTC units at these predominantly black colleges, that was one of the big pushes the Marine Corps made to increase the representation of minorities. What sort of strategies do you recall the Marine Corps pursuing, and what was your role in trying to accomplish that goal?

Reed: At that time, I'll be honest with you, I didn't know what the Marine Corps' strategy was. I know that the Marine Corps had a big push on for minority officers. . . . At that point, the older black, particularly a guy by the name of Ed Green, he was a major at that time. Prior to Ed Green there was Frank Petersen. The Marine Corps had a billet, it was entitled special assistant to the Commandant for minority affairs. So then my eyes started to open as to what the Marine Corps was doing by talking to them. I replaced Ed Green.

Wheeler: So there was already an established unit there?

Reed: It was already an established billet at Headquarters Marine Corps at that point. So talking to him and General Petersen, who was a colonel at that point, they enlightened me as to what the Marine Corps was doing. And then that's when they told me to pack my bags and come to Headquarters Marine Corps to become the special assistant for minority affairs. That was 1975. I was still a captain, and as a matter of fact, they frocked me as a major to take the job as special assistant.

Wheeler: Colonel Berthoud, was that the billet that he held at one time?

Reed: I think Colonel Berthoud may have been the first one to have the billet, but I think it might have had a different name to it at that time when Colonel Berthoud had it. I think it became special assistant to the Commandant for minority affairs when Frank Petersen took it over.

Wheeler: As you stepped into that billet, what were your marching orders, what were you tasked to achieve in that billet?

Reed: Well, it was very unique, because at that point, [General Louis H.] Lou Wilson [Jr.] was the Commandant, . . . and I had to go in and see him just about every Friday. The whole thing was to look at minority officers' records, try to determine some of the pitfalls, why minority Marines at that point were not getting promoted and were not getting selected to go to schools and all that. Prior to that, it was more like a PR [public relations] job to travel with the Commandant to show your face. Lou Wilson said, "Look, I don't need you to go with me on every trip. I want you to look and tell me what you think about why minority officers [are getting out]". . . . At that time, I used to always tell him, the Marine Corps, and black officers in particular, it seems like it was a bucket with a hole in the bottom. We were just putting guys in, but three years later, they were out. A lot of them just didn't have a desire to stay in.

During that time, you had all the racial problems in the Marine Corps. A lot of the black kids, they were more or less looking at it from a racial point of view, other than being a Marine officer. As I had the opportunity to go through and look at their records, there was a trend that I noticed. I noticed that the black Marine officers were being more or less evaluated on their appearance, [whether] they looked great in uniform and everything else. But when you looked at those key elements on a fitness report like regular duties, attention to duties, they were more or less getting marked above average to excellent. One of the real things that bothered me was that I noticed that black officers were getting marked low in loyalty. . . . Their thinking was more along the racial lines and what was happening to blacks more or less throughout the country. They weren't focusing on the fact that, hey, I am different. I signed up to become a Marine officer. I signed up to lead people in combat.

This became my focus, and I was able, along with some of the

other senior black officers at that point, to convince General Wilson and then later on General [Robert H.] Barrow, who became the Commandant, to go out to commanders in the field with green letters and white letters and say look at how your minority officers are being evaluated on fitness reports. I didn't make the change, but I think society itself helped to make the change.

Wheeler: Was it a matter of changing the black officers' perception of themselves and their role, or the perceptions of the reporting seniors of the black officers? Which perceptions had to change?

Reed: I think it was the perception of what the black officer at that time—not the older black officers, the younger black officers; during that time, I dealt mainly with lieutenants and captains—the perception that they were bringing to the Marine Corps was the perception that they gained from society itself. And at that point, society really didn't look at blacks as being leaders and everything else. You had the term “Oreos”—black on the outside and white on the inside—and I came to feel that black officers at that point didn't really want to have that tab of being an “Oreo.” They more or less felt better at that point going along with the thinking of what blacks in the general society felt rather than believing in what they were taught at OCS [Officer Candidates School] and The Basic School of what it took to be a Marine officer, and forget about the color of your skin.

I think that as we went along in the late '70s and the early '80s, I could see that when you had the [Clifford L.] Cliff Stanleys and all those, you could see the attitude changing among black officers. They finally began to accept the fact that hey, I'm not Joe Blow walking around the streets—I'm somebody special. I'm responsible for other peoples' lives. And mothers and fathers trusted you to take care of them in combat. I always refer to it as “combat” because mothers and fathers, they want their sons to be in good hands and to make sure that their leaders—black or white, or whatever ethnic or color they were—it's that you're responsible enough and you cared enough to take care of them and do your best to get them back home safely.

Wheeler: So just like people bring in a civilian mentality, they were putting aside their civilian mentality for most things, but not that racial identification, and you had to kind of help to overcome that, to put that aside?

Reed: The best way of putting it is that you had to somehow convince them that, sure, we all come from mixed society and everything else, but as a Marine officer, you have to put some of that away and understand that whether you're black or white or red or purple, you had a responsibility as Marine officers to lead these kids, to teach them, so they could become, first of all, better citizens, and knock on wood, that if you had to take them into combat, that you would do the best that you could do to get them back home to their families in one piece and alive.

Wheeler: As time went on and you began to address that issue, did you begin, quantitatively, to see a difference in what you termed before as holes in the bucket? Did you begin to see an increase in retention after you began to address that problem?

Reed: Yes I did. I would say that began with Cliff Stanley and that group and beyond, the Cliff Stanleys and the Walt Gaskins, they began to understand that there's more to being a Marine officer than being black and perpetuating what other blacks in society think. You have to deal with those kinds of things, but the thing is, you are special, and your specialty was being a leader—black, white or whatever you are.

Wheeler: So some of those young officers that you and your cohort helped to recruit and train became the next generation of leaders to really shape the Marine Corps?

Reed: Yes, that's what I said. I was in between Colonel Berthoud, Frank Petersen, and those guys, and the Cliff Stanleys. I was the generation transition I guess you would call it.

Brigadier General George H. Walls Jr.

Hutson: Can you discuss the experience of being a Marine officer instructor at the Naval ROTC unit at North Carolina Central University?

Walls: The three years at North Carolina Central University [1972–75] were really interesting for me. I had never attended or been on for any length of time on the campus of a HBCU [historically black college or university], so it was a totally new experience. This was a brand new Naval ROTC unit. At that time, the Navy decided to set up five, I think it was—Prairie View A&M, Southern University, Florida A&M, North Carolina Central University, and

Savannah State were the five ROTC units that were set up on HBCU campuses. So it was a totally new experience for the university. It was a totally new experience for me and the rest of the people who were stationed in that unit, because none of us had been in this kind of an environment before. None of us were ROTC graduates, I don't think. So we started the unit from scratch.

The commander of the unit at the time was a naval aviator, [Raymond A.] Ray Lambert. He had been at the Naval Academy, and there were a number of African American midshipmen who just for various reasons weren't making it at the Naval Academy, who had resigned or for whatever reason weren't there anymore. He brought half a dozen of them to populate the unit. Then the rest of the midshipmen we recruited from campus. At one point in time, I guess at the high-water mark when we were there, we probably had 100 midshipmen, which was a pretty sizeable unit for a relatively small university. But there was an awful lot of interest in ROTC.

Commander Lambert left after about the first year, year and a half, and the executive officer, Commander [Clifford W.] Cliff Gibson, flected up to be the CO [commanding officer]. I flected up to be the XO, which, again, was interesting because prior to that, all I had to deal with was teaching the two courses that we taught Marines, and to be in charge of drills and ceremony along with my assistant Marine officer instructor. It was a matter of learning all the administrative procedures and all the things that went along with basically running the unit. At the time I left, I don't think we had commissioned anybody because they hadn't been through the full ROTC program.

Hutson: You were starting from scratch, so you brought everybody in at the first level there?

Walls: Right. They all came in as midshipmen fourth class, and we started from there. By the time I left, we had sent most of the midshipmen off on either their midshipmen cruise or for the Marine options, which I had a half a dozen; they had gone through Little Creek for their Marine indoctrination. Out of the group that I am aware of, I would say we probably commissioned eight or ten. Some stayed until retirement. Major Julius Knight, who ended up being a combat engineer, stayed until retirement. And then the other ones

kind of just stayed for their three or four or however many years and then got out and went to do other things.

I was fortunate in a couple ways. It was a great assignment in Durham [North Carolina]. I met my wife, Portia, there, and I got my master's degree, which was really an opportunity that I might not have had if I had just stayed out in the Fleet Marine Force. . . .

Hutson: Describe the recruiting environment for officer candidates. What was it like trying to find candidates for this, and to get them enrolled in the program and get them up to speed?

Walls: Actually, compared to my previous experience in officer recruiting, this was a breeze. You were on campus, you were a part of the faculty. I was an assistant professor of naval science. When we taught our classes, we had some non-ROTC students in the classes. We were in the student union, we went to sporting events, we brought the Navy band to play, and it was a much friendlier environment. At this time—again, we're talking toward the wind-down of the Vietnam War—people were very interested in the program. It wasn't really difficult at all. You would meet a young man or woman and have them come over to your office, sit down and talk, take a look at what their curriculum was, what they needed to do to marry up the Navy curriculum with their academic curriculum. Like I said, at one point in time, we had close to 100 midshipmen. We had two battalions out on the parade field whenever we'd have honors and ceremonies. We did a review twice a year. For homecoming and home football games, the drill team would perform. We'd do colors. We'd do all the kinds of things that sort of integrated the unit into the university life.

The other thing that was helpful was that at that time, a number of the people who were in leadership positions at the university were former military. The dean of the business school had been a Tuskegee airman [Dr. Stewart B. Fulbright]. There was a Reserve Army colonel who was the director of admissions. . . . Colonel [Elwood L.] Robinson was the dean of academic affairs. So we had friends on campus who understood what the ROTC was about, and they were very, very supportive of us. The university gave us our own building. It was a bungalow that had enough space in it for a classroom in the basement and then our administrative offices were upstairs. . . .

Hutson: Both from the number of Marine options slots you had as well as from the Navy, was it pretty much open and let's see how successful you can be? Or was it let's go in steps? Was it sort of the top down?

Walls: We started with this nucleus of people that Commander Lambert brought along with him. They were just as effective recruiters as any of us because they were students, and they would go out, and they would talk to their friends. We wore uniforms. They wore their uniforms every Thursday, and that would just bring people to them—"What are you doing? What's that about?" So the idea was to grow the unit as quickly as you could but not sacrifice quality for numbers. We had some really, really good young people who came to the unit. Some of them didn't make it all the way through the program. They got in, they decided that they didn't want to do it, and they left. But the ones who stuck around, the ones that I'm in contact with, have all done very well.

Major General Charles F. Bolden Jr.

Dr. Fred H. Allison: After your Vietnam tour [ended in 1973], you served as an officer selection officer, to include being a minority officer selection officer, in Los Angeles [LA]. What were your perspectives on that job? Seems that it would be pretty tough at that time.

Bolden: I did two years of recruiting duty in LA. Minority recruiting had become a big deal, because the Marine Corps was really getting pressed on the fact that while a significant percentage of the enlisted ranks were people of color, we had very, very few officers and a very small percentage of women. . . .

My first year, I was just an officer selection officer, and I had responsibility for every college and community college in Los Angeles County, so I had 100 and some odd campuses to visit over the course of a year. What you usually did was you would visit two days, and you'd set up your little table and your blanket and everything and just stay there on campus all day and try to talk people into coming into the Marine Corps. East LA was all Hispanic, and South Central LA was all black. I could go into those communities, and I got all of the support I wanted. We got lots of platoon leaders class can-



Photo by SSgt Garry Mattson. Defense Imagery, VIRIN: DM-SN-85-10497
Charles F. Bolden Jr. served as a recruiter in the Los Angeles area in the mid-1970s during the Marine Corps' push to recruit more African American officers. Bolden continued to be in demand for recruiting events after he was selected for the astronaut program in 1980 (shown here as a major speaking in Indianapolis in 1982).

didates out of there, officer candidate class guys, because everybody, a lot of kids' fathers, grandfathers, uncles, what have you, had been in the Marine Corps, and they wanted to live up to the family tradition. The good thing about being in Los Angeles was, if there was any organization that was incredibly well respected, it was the Marine Corps. So recruiting for us was great. And women, we got a lot of women who wanted to be Marines, and a lot of them came from these military families. In Los Angeles, during the two years I was there, we pretty much became the supply chain for the whole of the United States Marine Corps.

Allison: This sort of runs counter to a common idea that black communities, or African American culture, are averse to the Marine Corps.

Bolden: I don't think there is, to be quite honest. I've heard that for officers, but they never had trouble meeting expectations for enlisted.

The problem is not in the black community. The problem is in

the Marine Corps. The acceptance of African American officers is biased in the Marine Corps. It always has been. The toughest thing when I was an OSO was to trying to help the Marine Corps understand that we kept looking for excuses not to be able to make our African American quotas, making excuses: "We can't go to these schools because they won't want to come into the Marine Corps." So you didn't go to places like Stanford or USC [University of Southern California] or other places to look for black officers. You kind of hoped that they would come to you. Then we started going to black campuses and their black ROTCs and got some great officers like Walt Gaskin from Savannah State, and Arnold "Arnie" Fields and Cliff Stanley both came out of Army ROTC at South Carolina State University.

Allison: Any other comments on your recruiting tour as an OSO in Los Angeles?

Bolden: I found out about Montford Point Marines when I came back from Vietnam while on OSO duty. I came back in 1973 and stayed on recruiting duty for two years. In 1975, the Montford Point Marine Association, which I had never heard of, had their tenth national convention in Los Angeles. Headquarters Marine Corps kind of said, "Hey, why don't you work with them and provide whatever support you can?" So I did a lot of stuff to help them set the conference up; got to meet people like Brooks Ray and Sergeant Major [Edgar R.] Huff, whom actually I had known before going through training at Cherry Point. . . .

Active-duty Marines can belong to the Montford Point Marine Association, and as such, you can hold office. So as a newly minted young captain, I became the national public affairs officer. So I got infinitely knowledgeable about the Montford Point Marine Association, trying to help them tell their story. Later when I transferred to El Toro [California], I belonged to the San Diego chapter, and they were very active and everything. They had a lot of the original Montford Pointers.

Lieutenant General Walter E. Gaskin Sr.

Gaskin: I am the part of the Marine Corps' concerted effort on the officer side to attract young African Americans who were going

places in their own right and bringing them into the fold of the Marine Corps. They did that by placing front-runners, bright stars, so to speak, young Marine captains at historically black colleges and universities. . . .

The dynamic of my interest in Savannah State University was we felt that we received the ROTC unit that was kicked out of Harvard. Harvard threw it out. The president of my college was a Navy guy, a Harvard graduate. He appealed to the Department of the Navy, [saying,] “We understand that you’re putting [programs at] colleges and universities out there. Why not Savannah State College?” So he was able to win that. . . .

I was in the first-year group to graduate; it was three sailors and a Marine that graduated in 1974. Vice Admiral Samuel L. Gravely Jr. was the speaker at the commencement at the first commissioning. [He was] the first African American admiral in the Navy and first African American to command a ship.

Allison: How well did the ROTC unit there at Savannah State prepare you for life in the Marine Corps, OCS, and TBS?

Gaskin: Unlike Hank Reed or Sam Pitts, my MOI was supply, Colonel Fred L. Jones. But my AMOI [assistant Marine officer instructor] was infantry. So I first learned the concept about the Marine Corps: every Marine is a platoon commander. I don’t care what MOS [military occupational specialty] you give them. When you went to The Basic School, there was no IOC (infantry officer course). There was just The Basic School. So everybody was trained that way prior to going out to their particular MOS. The thing was, we’ve got to get you ready for OCS, and we’ve got to get you ready for when you go to The Basic School. And the hard thing we’ve got to do is make sure that, physically, you are not distracted. That should not be an issue for you. It may be challenging mentally . . . but it won’t be [because] you aren’t physically ready. They hit us with that from the very beginning.

I’m a math major, so as I worked through that, my only focus was I want to be a Marine. The point being point me in that direction. So when I get ready to go to “Bulldog” [Officer Candidates School], I’m going to take them by storm. I was probably as ready as anybody could be when I got to there. And I think some of the things

that African Americans miss is, when you're at a historical black college and university, is understanding or having some of the legacy that the other kids have—grandfather, uncle, cousins, who were in the Marine Corps—there's a particular love, desire for the Corps that you won't have. What you have is a desire to be a Marine, but you don't have anything to hang on that.

The first thing that hits you when you get to OCS or TBS is they, your peers, are measuring you immediately by your desire to be a Marine. . . . Subsequently, on peer evaluations, they would then evaluate us on our motivation to be a Marine, followed by the fact that we were different. We were different because not only in ethnicity, but we didn't understand that you have been given the greatest opportunity in the world to be a Marine, and you are just treating it like it's going to class. So the learning to us was of a different learning as we went through it. And we also watched how that image sort of changed as performance events happened. It changed the day we ran the O [obstacle] course. We just had a limited initial PFT [physical fitness test] where it was one mile. But I set the record on the O course. I remember we had an O course that was over at Parris Island, and we would come over from Savannah State and run the O course. Nothing new to me, but part of the preparation that they did for us in getting us ready was the O course. Skedaddle up the rope. Then your peers started saying, "You really are one." The physical attribute of being a Marine to them spelled leadership.

I remember sitting back down, talking to the guys, and saying, "You know, physically, we're going to pass these tests, but you damn sure better be able to demonstrate that you are at the front of the pack in being able to lead." And you've got to break a couple of stereotypes—blacks can only run a sprint, but they can't run cross country; and blacks can't swim. These are stereotypes that you'd have to break because there was no understanding in the institution. There was no understanding that in high school, I was a lifeguard, and I had run cross country track, so for me, running three miles was not a biggie. So maxing the PFT, boom, suddenly you got an instant acceptance; running the O course. But it then created an environment where you kind of settled together.

That's why I think the Marine Corps OCS is still the best in the

world because you became a team based on shared misery. [You have] total respect for the guy who's inflicting it, and so you begin to look at more about this person who is now in the same fighting hole with you, and hiking the hill trails or climbing up a rope, because you know how tough it is for you, and you're watching this guy not quit, and he's showing you something, because you think someone had changed the rules so he could get there. Now he's a part of your team, and now the drill instructor is treating both of you like s***, and so you are suddenly a team. That's why the military became the best place to mesh and to truly understand that we all are Americans, we all have something to do.

Allison: Then you went to TBS. What stands out in your mind about that experience?

Gaskin: God knows I was blessed with the best SPC [staff platoon commander] on the planet, [Edward F.] "Fast Eddie" McCann. But when I arrived at TBS, Major General Richard C. Schulze was the CO [as a colonel at that time]. He showed tremendous personal leadership and all the good attributes of a Marine, the kind that awes everybody. I remember him saying to us that this is the largest class of African Americans that we have ever had in the course at TBS. Of course, they were a result of this concerted effort that the Marine Corps had done in the recruitment of African Americans. . . .

This is significant, as you see as we sort of grew the Marine Corps. As we neared that point in our career when my group approached that real cutoff between major and lieutenant colonel, the year before it was onesies and twosies. Our experience was vividly different. In my class, there were 17—from two to 17 the next year. But this was based on the big recruiting effort that set the base that went through the, you know, the 95 percent promotion to captain, the 80 percent promotion to major, and you get your first tough cut, 70 percent promotion to lieutenant colonel. And so now you're really talking about that level where you actually command battalions, squadrons, whatever. Out of our 17, 10 got promoted to colonel, and out of that 10, four got promoted to brigadier. Three of those got promoted to three star: Willie J. Williams, Ronald S. Coleman, and myself.

Allison: Interesting. What made McCann such an outstanding SPC?

Gaskin: Captain Eddie McCann understood the dynamics of the thing that most impacted the black lieutenants, based on his experience in Vietnam and his time as a captain. . . . It was like walking into a foreign country where people are speaking several different languages, and you are trying to align yourself with those who speak English, which caused those of color to kind of migrate together, just like the kids from the [Naval] Academy came together or the Aggies from [Texas] A&M came together. You kind of did that. However, the institution at the time saw that that was failure. If you've got a little group of blacks in a group right here, sitting in the chow hall in O'Bannon Hall, and you've got another group over here, then we have failed. They tried to artificially break that up, and so the first days were very, very tough. Like I said, it was 12 of us in the company, but I think it was five in my platoon.

He [McCann] understood the dynamics of what it was like, and he used peer evaluations for what they were intended, to inform the SPC on what the peers thought about each other. It was not supposed to be a grade or ranking in order to become a part of your leadership rating, but to inform him who had to make critical training decisions. Subsequently, all of the minorities called them "spear-evals" because they damn sure weren't peer evals. Unless you did something spectacular or you were the squad leader yourself, you're always going to be on the bottom, because we have a tendency to place people that are different at the bottom. You'll see the women down there, you'll see your minorities there.

We were all sitting together at a table, and one of the SPCs of another company came over and said, "Look here, you want to be here, break it up. Get up. Go sit with other people." So I, having never been short on words, said, "Excuse me sir, why don't you pick on them Aggies over there? Why don't you break up the Academy guys? Why did you break up these guys over here? The only reason that you know that we are here is because we all look alike."

His words were, "Lock your heels," and he chewed me out. So I went to see my SPC, and my SPC said, "Perhaps you need to tell the CO of The Basic School that he should [address the issue] because I can engage my peer, but this is a problem that is going to impact the entire battalion, because all those lieutenants that were

sitting with you didn't only come from Alpha Company, they came all the way through Echo Company." And I did. I went to see Major General [then-colonel] Richard C. Schulze. That's what I said. And he said to me, "Don't worry, I'll fix that." The captain came back and apologized to us, and there was a discussion about that.

The thing that came out of that discussion that I remember even to today is integration, intermingling, is a two-way street. He [Schulze] told all the white guys, "If you want to know what that feels like, go to a women's event, and you walk in there and just stand in the middle of the floor and watch how those women look at you. The first thing they will say is, 'Why the hell are you here?' And you just try to interject yourself into their conversation and see won't they stop talking and will look at you. Then there will be someone in that group who will be very nice and come over and say, 'Hey, what are you doing? How you doing? How you been?' to help you." And he said, "Now look around at your African Americans. That's exactly how they feel. You can say that you personally don't care whether they are here or not, but they are Marines, and that's not how we treat our Marines, and this is how I expect you to treat them." [He said this] to the entire battalion, which was unbelievable because there were people like, "S***, I can't believe the colonel would say that." But it was eye-opening. And that's why the lesson learned there was that the attitude, the command climate, is set at the top. There was no doubt how the old man felt about integration at his Basic School.

The reason why I will always love Fast Eddie McCann was because McCann told you the main thing. "Gaskin, you had the most f***** up weapon I have ever seen. What the hell were you thinking?" We had just had a rifle inspection and he had told me that aside. He said if I had said that to you in front of the group, you would be at the bottom of the peer bell [curve], not because of anything you did or did not do, but it's because I, as the SPC, said that you were f***** up and for those guys you would have been f***** up for life. You would never, ever recover.

Allison: Because they had identified that racially?

Gaskin: That's right. They had identified that racially, and they would not see it as just a Marine who needed to do more or spend

more time on it because the weapon was too oily. That was the first time that I understood that he understood what we were going through. The second time [occurred] at MOS selection, which we still have a problem with, because we give a choice. I have been preaching for years that I don't think we should be giving them a choice at TBS. I think it should be based on the Marine Corps' needs. You know, we have a number of MOSs. I've been on the manpower end that sent the MOSs to The Basic School. I've always believed that they should be based on Marine Corps' needs. The guy who can best determine whether or not you fit in one of those slots is your SPC. This takes the burden off the fact that we hear that the minorities never go into combat arms. Most minorities, they come in looking for an MOS for an exit employment. They aren't looking for everyone to say, "Oh, I want to be a grunt or aviator for the rest of my life. I'm going to be in the Marine Corps until they kick me out." To them, this is a finite time, myself included. I was going to do my four-year obligation, and I had a couple scholarships, and I was going to go be going to law school. That was all that I was thinking. To combat that, I'll tell you what he [McCann] did. At the time we had choices. I had artillery, engineering, and supply, because my MOI was supply. So those were my three. I walked into his office, he took a look at it, he drew a line through it, and he wrote "infantry, infantry, infantry," and he said "thank you very much" and "get out."

So I walked outside, and I thought about it, and I said, "You know, I enjoy infantry," but I asked him could I come back in. I said, "Sir, you scratched out mine and gave me three infantries. Can I ask you why?"

He said, "Two reasons. Do you desire to be the Commandant?"

I said, "Everybody wants to be the Commandant."

He said, "The Commandant is an infantry officer. Always will be." And I tell that to the generals now. But he said, "You just took yourself off the Commandant list." And then he said, "Secondly, I was a company commander in Vietnam, and half of my company was African American. I wished I'd had an African American platoon commander out there to show them leadership and everything." He said, "I remember saying to myself if I ever could do

anything about that, I would. And now I can.” He wrote that on there and he said, “Get out.” And that was the end of the story.



Chapter 5

Dealing with Race—The 1970s

The Vietnam War had a range of effects on race relations in the Marine Corps. On one hand, African American Marines served with great distinction, valor, and heroism in combat, and more black officers served in leadership positions than before. On the other, racial tensions escalated to unprecedented levels. Black troops defied authority figures whom they believed were racist and struggled to project their racial identity through afro hairstyles and special greetings like the “dap.” Racial tension that originated during the 1960s continued and, in some ways, intensified during the early 1970s.

As noted in the previous chapter, the Marine Corps in the 1970s undertook measures that significantly increased the number of African American officers in its ranks. Because there was a larger group of them than there had been of their predecessors, these officers, on a broader level, cleared the way to make the presence of black officers a norm in the Corps. The wave of black officers that entered the Marines as a result of the big push during the decade served across the Marine Corps landscape in different specialties, rising through the ranks into positions of increasing importance.

As young officers in the 1970s, they faced different challenges. There were many black enlisted men, and as noted, racial tension at the time was prevalent. As African Americans, they naturally could identify and sympathize, but the challenge was determining how far they could carry the empathy while also trying to remain unbiased and maintain good order and discipline. They also faced issues off base as well.

Frank E. Petersen Jr.

Petersen: We weren’t dealing with an organized prejudicial system within the Corps. We were dealing with individuals in command

Photo Left: Maj Edward L. Green became special assistant to the Commandant for minority affairs in 1972, a billet held by a series of distinguished African American officers as the Marine Corps sought to better address racial issues in the service.

Courtesy of LtCol Edward L. Green

and authoritarian positions who were prejudiced. Only 30 years before, blacks were just entering the Corps. . . . We were looking at officers trained some 20 years before, and others with significant rank trained no less than 10 years before. There were no officers who could exude even a modicum of understanding when managing black troopers. Beyond that, even when some black officers came on board, some of these refused to become involved. It was a put-down to speak out, they thought. Some acquiesced, caught between pride and the demands of some commanders that problems with blacks be solved in the old, traditional ways.

These officers, both white and black, represented the focal points, I felt, at which to begin corrective action. Not many jumped on my bandwagon, some preferring to pinpoint the “problem” as a reflection of what was going on in civilian arenas, where black social consciousness and civil rights activity were on the rise. . . . I prefer[red] saying, unlike the civilian community, that we have a strong but small, highly disciplined microcosm of the civilian community, and because of that, we can solve the problems if they are present. It’s a little tricky when you get into this stuff to say that we have the same problems or that our problems are a “reflection” of the civilian community, because they are really two different communities.

We’d blown it badly when it came to our decrees about the approved length of a trooper’s haircut—failing to account for what Caucasian hair versus black hair looked like at two or three inches in length. . . . We went a little ballistic in the way we regarded the “dap”—the special way that black troopers greeted one another during Vietnam—probably one of the biggest mistakes we ever made. We couldn’t understand, or did not know, when we demanded the closely shaved head that some black men suffered from a condition in which, if they shaved too closely, the hairs curled on themselves, grew back into the skin, and caused painful pimples, pustules, cysts, scars, keloids, and infection if not addressed properly. . . . In lieu of medical attention and researched methodology for a solution, we simply discharged black Marines with this condition, saying they were unfit to serve—not the greatest of morale boosters.

To some, these were small things indeed. However, add to them

all those other things involving prejudicial attitudes, misinformation, or just plain ignorance on the part of many in authority, and little human engineering time bombs were set to go off all around the Corps.

The point was to disarm them by conducting as many open discussions about cultural differences as we could. To try to make whites understand that there were blacks who hated whites; it wasn't just whites who hated blacks. It was to make them understand that the officers who were leading at the unit levels were not equipped to understand the culture and mores of blacks and the Hispanics, and their cultural differences. To help them understand the fact that country and western music at the enlisted club may not be the choice of some of the minority troops, that the regulation that decreed length of hair needed to be amended to allow for cultural input, that the inability to swim like a fish hinged on the absence of facility, not because minorities simply couldn't swim.¹

[Petersen later turned to the impact of racial issues on recruitment, training, and retention.]

A major cause of the Marine Corps' problems was the need to satisfy manpower requirements during the Vietnam conflict, which brought into the Corps floods of black youth who had been exposed to the rising hue and cry of militancy and nationalism in the ghettos. . . . Our self-congratulation on our handling of racial problems within the Corps had begun to wane. A major riot had erupted at Camp Lejeune in July 1969. Marine enlisted men fought one another in San Diego, Hawaii, and Camp Pendleton, not to mention tension between the forces still remaining in Vietnam.

By now the Marine Corps had firmly implanted a human relations program, which went a long way toward convincing officers and NCOs [noncommissioned officers] that they would have to take positive action to stop interracial tension and allay the fears of black Marines that they would be victimized by "The Man." White Marines had to be convinced that not all black Marines were potential thieves and muggers and that violence among Marines would not be tolerated. . . .

There needed to be, in my view, selection of blacks for more accelerated promotions. A policy was needed that required the Corps

to look at the career patterns of selected black officers to ensure that they were on track and getting the right assignments. Something needed to be done regarding interpretation of fitness reports, not only for minorities, but for all officers. At that time, it was still a problem.

Another look at The Basic School needed to be taken. Why, for example, were so many black officers coming out of Basic School with supply, transport, and service military occupational specialty (MOS) designations? I still remember an old survey we ran in which we wanted to discover how many blacks were in command billets. The answer was that of the 300 or so black officers, only seven were in command billets. That was a pretty grim statistic. The black Marines knew the score, and they were becoming more and more verbal about it. . . .

I didn't want to become a general officer because I thought I was going to solve the problems all alone. I knew I couldn't do that. But perhaps I could make a positive impact on the problem. So the decision was to stick around and make a try for general officer rank if only because there was a grave need for a show of faith on the part of the Marine Corps.²

Brigadier General George H. Walls Jr.

Chief Warrant Officer-3 William E. Hutson: Can you discuss your experiences as Marine detachment commander in 1970–71 on the USS *Franklin D. Roosevelt* (CVA 42)?

Walls: That was quite an interesting experience for me because it was the first time I had served with the Navy. I remember reporting to the ship and walking up to the quarter deck. The officer of the day is there, and there is another officer kind of in my peripheral view who looks like he slept in his uniform and had maybe five or six days' worth of beard. It was the captain of Marines I was relieving. . . .

The Marines aboard that ship had the worst reputation for discipline and personal appearance, and it was a bad situation I went to, but it was a good situation for me because there was nowhere to go but up. I met the captain of the ship. . . . We sat and talked, and he was very candid about what had happened with the Marine detachment and what he expected me to do with the Marine detachment. That was my welcome to the *Roosevelt*. . . .

Hutson: Were any of the problems with the detachment racially oriented, or was it just bad Marines?

Walls: It was a combination. There were some young Marines there who would go on liberty and get drunk out of their minds. . . . The other situation that we had on that ship, and I'm sure it was true on other Navy ships, went on after the "Z-grams" came out. Admiral [Elmo R.] Zumwalt [Jr.] liberalized dress codes. Sailors could grow beards, they could do all sorts of things that they weren't allowed to do before. And there were a significant number of black sailors on the ship. I probably had half a dozen black Marines or more in the detachment. And again, the civil rights thing was still going on. There was a group of black sailors led by a petty officer first class whose name I don't remember. They were constantly demanding to change things, to do things, to the point that a couple of times it got where the captain was concerned about unrest on the ship. I'm talking about physical kinds of things happening where he called out the Marine detachment to be on standby in case these kinds of things happened. Fortunately, it never got to the point where it boiled over to where the Marines had to engage with the sailors. But it came close on a couple of times. And really, the only way that it got quelled was that the chaplain on the ship was black. His name was Carroll [R.] Chambliss. He retired as a captain. His son, Chris Chambliss, played baseball for the New York Yankees and some other teams. But between Carroll Chambliss and I, we were able to, in most cases, calm these young sailors down to the point where it didn't become a confrontation other than a lot of talk.

So there were those kinds of situations, and then there were just young people going ashore doing stupid stuff that got them in trouble. But after we kind of weeded out the problem children in the detachment, at least from my standpoint, things got [better]. . . .

Major General Charles F. Bolden Jr.

Dr. Fred H. Allison: In 1970, you received your wings as a Naval aviator and were assigned to Marine Attack Squadron 121 [VMA-121]. What were your experiences as a new aviator joining a gun squadron? There could not have been many other black aviators in the squadron.

Bolden: When I got to VMA-121, I was fortunate because I was

not the first black. [Richard] Dick Harris was a former enlisted BN [bombardier-navigator]. Dick had flown C-117s as an air crewman. He and another aviator, Brewster, were running buddies. Brewster was about as close to being a redneck you could be, but they loved each other. They were like brothers. I think Brewster was from Tennessee or somewhere. He and Dick Harris had enlisted in the Marine Corps at the same time, they'd come through the ranks together, had both gone through ECP [Enlisted Commissioning Program] or something and had gone to flight school. They had been in [Douglas] EF-10s [Skyknights], then gone into flying [McDonnell-Douglas] RF-4s [Phantoms], and then they had transitioned to [Grumman] A-6s [Intruder]. So Harris was in 121 when I checked in.

Allison: What did that mean to you to have a fellow black officer as an aviator?

Bolden: It was phenomenal because we actually lived near each other at Cherry Point [North Carolina]. We all lived in what was called MOQ [married officer's quarters], and we did a lot of stuff together. I want to say there were three or four black aviators on the base—total—a couple of C-130 guys, Dick, me, and an A-4 guy named [Clarence L.] Clancy Davis. Before he retired, he was the second black commander of a squadron in the Marine Corps. Clancy took VMA-214; incidentally, the call sign of that squadron was the Black Sheep. Clancy was interesting. For his change of command, when he came out, they played the theme song from the movie *Shaft* as an introduction before he came out. That's the kind of guy Clancy was. Clancy was very controversial.

But Dick Harris and all those guys, they were tough in that day. Dick had been through a lot, so he didn't take a lot of crap. He wore his feelings on his shoulder, and you better have your act together if you said something to him. Segregation wasn't very long ended down there in Cherry Point, and it didn't make any difference to him. He'd just as soon fight as anything. So he was sort of a revolutionary black officer, but that's who I came in the squadron behind, so I didn't have to do anything.

Because Dick was a senior BN, we flew together quite a bit because I'm the new guy. He got the new guy. I got a chance just to see how he handled himself and stuff like that. We did a lot of cross-

countries together, which brought a lot of stares when we rolled into an air base, particularly because most places we flew into were below the Mason-Dixon Line. I can remember how it worked: you'd land at an air base, and a guy would come over from the transient line and look at me and then go around to the other side to see who was in charge of the airplane. He looked at Dick, who was darker than I was, and the guy would be just baffled: "This airplane must be stolen because there is no way in the world that that there are going to be two black guys in this Marine Corps airplane!" We enjoyed it whenever we went on cross-countries. So I didn't have any trouble when I got into the squadron.

Allison: Then you were assigned to VMA-533 [Marine Attack Squadron 533] and went to the Western Pacific. This was in 1972; these were dark times for the Marine Corps. What was the situation in the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing at that time?

Bolden: That was a real bottoming out time, whether it was drugs, race riots, and stuff. It was probably the worst time in the history of the Marine Corps. But General Petersen, I think he was a lieutenant colonel at that time, he was the first African American to command a fighter squadron. He came to Iwakuni [Japan] and down to where we were flying from, Nam Phong, Thailand, with several of what they call human relations teams. So I had a chance to meet him, and talk to him, and get to know him a little bit. From then on I stayed in touch with him, and he sort of became a mentor and a role model.

Major General Clifford L. Stanley

Lieutenant Colonel Mark D. Andrasi: Tell us about your experiences once you got out of Officer Candidates School in 1969. Then it was to The Basic School [TBS]. What did you experience there?

Stanley: When I got to TBS, we actually started at Camp Upshur, which is pretty spartan. We were all tight. I mean, my classmates, when we would go home from OCS [Officer Candidates School], even Camp Upshur initially, I had white classmates going home with me. I still get letters from some of them. So these weren't issues for me, personally, right then. But then folks started making it an issue, particularly in The Basic School. I remember the first time

it came up. The photographer came to take a picture of, you guessed it, how many black students are there. I didn't ask the photographer to come. I'm sitting in class like everybody else, trying to stay awake, and the guy zooms in on me, and he zooms in on somebody else. There were folks upset about that; they were mad. But they weren't mad at the photographer, they were mad at me. Not that I was new to race issues, but it was just that I'm experiencing, now, classmates mad at me for having my picture taken and an article was done on folks. I said, "This is messed up," because I didn't ask for this. I'm sitting here, minding my business, doing the same thing they're doing, and that kind of stuff happens.

Before I joined the Marine Corps, though . . . [I was] the only one in my class [at South Carolina State] that joined the Corps. Then after I joined the Corps, at Officer Candidates School, as I'm graduating, I ran across another guy who later became a general, Arnie Fields. He and I went to the same school, and he finished like a semester before me. I had no idea. . . .

But again, my experience in OCS and The Basic School, it didn't seem overly traumatic.

I guess the other thing was MOS selection. I didn't know that much about the Corps, just being a Marine, that's it. I chose it, but I think it might have been my first choice. I was a supply officer initially, but I wanted to be a Marine. . . . I saw something I wasn't too comfortable with. There were a couple other black officers over there [when assigned to Okinawa], and they were in supply and things like that. I made a decision that if I was going to stay in, if I even thought about staying in, I was going to be infantry. And so fast forward as I finished with the tour at Okinawa, I came back to the States, was at Quantico, applied for augmentation, and I also applied for an MOS change. Unheard of. I had no idea. I just said, "I want to be a Marine officer, I want to stay in. I'd like to be an infantry battalion commander one day. I don't see how I can get there with a 3002 MOS." And believe it or not, I was augmented, and a small group of people were augmented, and they changed my MOS to 0302, and I was transferred to Camp Lejeune [North Carolina]. I was still young enough in this to be a platoon commander. Actually, in that case, because I'd already been a platoon commander up at Quantico, . . . I

went to Lejeune, had a company—Mike Company 3/8 [Company M, 3d Battalion, 8th Marines].

The issue of race, though, was never that far away. But for me, it was less of an issue than a lot of folks because I was very comfortable with my skin, who I was and who I am.

Andrasi: As that infantry platoon commander, what was the relationship between you and your Marines? Was there any type of racial tension there from any of your subordinates?

Stanley: I wasn't naïve, but not that I know of. I mean, the tensions came from maybe officers, and not necessarily senior officers. . . . I found there were times in the Corps where there were people with hang-ups, and I saw it, but I was actually focused on being a Marine. . . .

When I went to the Naval Academy, I was a captain. This was after my MOS was changed, I'm an 03, I'm at Camp Lejeune in Mike Company 3/8. They moved me to the four [S-4] shop, and then I had orders to the Naval Academy. Then shortly after that, my wife was shot, and it was a racially motivated shooting. She's paralyzed. And today she's living it, and that's what happened.

All products of the Marine Corps' push to grow the African American officer pool, Clifford L. Stanley, Charles F. Bolden Jr., Leo V. Williams III, and Arnold Fields (left to right) had all risen to the general officer ranks by the time of this image at the end of the 1990s.

Official Marine Corps Photo



Andrasi: Where did that happen?

Stanley: That happened in Wheaton, Maryland, and I was a captain stationed at the Academy. I'd been at the Academy for a few months. You've got to keep in mind we're still, even though you're serving in the Marine Corps, you're still living in a world that's still a little mixed up. This guy was shooting black targets of opportunity. . . . He killed two people and wounded five, all black in a white area. He was walking around, and we just happened to be driving down the street. We weren't even walking. He killed my uncle, who was in the car in front of us, maybe a block separated, because we were separated by a light. . . . My wife was shot, and she was the most seriously wounded of those who survived. There were, like I said, four other people shot and wounded. Two killed and five wounded.

I was stationed at the Naval Academy then, and I was with a lot of folks who were real pros. Even the Commandant at that time just took good care of us and reached out. The Marine Corps, that's when my relationship with the Marine Corps took a different bend because I saw how the Marine Corps took care of its own.

Major General Arnold Fields

Fields: I reported into 1st Battalion, 6th Marines [at Camp Lejeune in 1970] I was the only black lieutenant in the battalion. I may have been the only black lieutenant in the regiment back then. But I was welcomed as a fellow officer and Marine by my fellow platoon commanders and my company commander. In fact, one such gentleman and I are the closest of friends and have maintained that friendship over all of the years subsequent to the experience at Camp Lejeune [and] 1/6. So I had a good relationship with my fellow platoon commanders.

I had a good relationship with the staff NCOs. My first staff NCO was a black staff NCO, Staff Sergeant Harris. And all of these folks, all of the staff NCOs and almost all the NCOs, had already had at least a tour, if not two tours, in Vietnam under their belts. So I thought they responded to me well, given the fact that I had not been to Vietnam, I was a brand new second lieutenant, and I was black, which probably was an experience that they did not have in any of their previous contributions to the Marine Corps.

But again, I don't feel that there were any issues race-wise that were significantly outstanding above and beyond what one might expect from a group of Marines who are now under the leadership of this brand new, inexperienced second lieutenant. I was treated well by the battalion commander. I don't think I was not given any opportunities that I was not due as a lieutenant. So it was a good experience.

Lieutenant Colonel Mark E. Wood: Following that assignment, where did you go?

Fields: After I left 1/6, I reported directly into 2d Battalion, 4th Marines, where I was assigned duties as the 81mm platoon commander. I was very proud of that because back then, the mortar platoon consisted of 96 Marines, the largest platoon in the infantry regiment. Because we had the big tubes, I felt a little macho about that. I was really proud to be commander of that platoon, and I had great Marines working for me. No racial issues per se in that platoon to the best I can recall.

But there was a race issue all around. This, again, is the early '70s. We're now talking 1971, where strife, racially, was almost omnipresent within the Marine Corps and certainly in the organizations of which I was a part. Okinawa was particularly an area in which race was very much a polarizing aspect of the Marine Corps society. It was a considerable challenge. I wound up in the midst of an expectation on behalf of my black colleagues, expecting that I would be doing and acting like some of the black community would act, not all badly, but there were certain things that were done, such as we called it "passing the key." . . . It has to do with a greeting. There was a thing that was done with the fist, which was a means of communicating friendship and brotherhood with a fellow black person. Those kinds of things were frowned upon if not against the expectation of the Marine Corps. I did see some of my black colleagues doing it, officer and enlisted, but it was not something that I did because it was not an expectation, I believe, being an officer, and being a part of the whole of the Marine Corps.

But race was very much an issue, and it was not uncommon for there to be fights and so forth breaking out with a race connotation to them. The mess hall was one such environment or venue

within which there was a very high probability that something was going to happen in that regard.

Wood: How did you, how did the battalion deal with these issues? How did the Marine Corps deal with it in a bigger sense?

Fields: Well, the Marine Corps once again was still at that time trying to align its present and future with the mood of the nation and the mood of the Department of Defense when it came to race relations. Some formal race relation programs had already gotten underway, and some of those programs were having a general impact on the Marine Corps. I felt really that the Marine Corps was trying to be serious about being as much of a leader in race relations as it was on the battlefield. . . .

I felt the Marine Corps dealt pretty well with it, but probably not at as fast a pace that the environment, I felt, demanded at the time. To put what I just said into perspective, when I reported into 2d Marine Division, I recall the density, if you will, of black lieutenants or officers in that division to be seven black officers in the division that consisted of about 20,000 Marines in general. So I think the [African American] officer population back then was something like one point something percent in the Marine Corps, if that high. . . . No black officer immediately comes to mind with whom I associated in 2d Marine Division, and similarly, when I arrived at 2d Battalion, 4th Marines. However, one of the company commanders in 2/4 was a black captain, and a very good one, . . . so I was pleased by that. But I do feel that the Marine Corps was trying to make a concerted effort to turn things around. . . .

I only spent one year and maybe a couple months or two as deputy director of the DI [drill instructor] school because [I was picked] to go to Quantico because the Marine Corps had put together what it referred to back then as a leadership training branch. . . . The essence of this leadership branch was to be the Marine Corps' way of focusing on race relations. The Marine Corps was reluctant to refer to cleaning up our act as anything but cleaning up our leadership. The Marine Corps felt that race relations had more to do with the quality of leadership than it did with any other characterization one might wish to apply to race relations. So we didn't really call it race relations training; we called it leadership training. I was picked to go to

Quantico to be on that leadership team. I did that for a full three years as an instructor. I instructed in all the schools—Command and Staff College, Amphibious Warfare School, The Basic School, the MP [military police] school—all of them, on leadership, with a reasonably heavy emphasis on a human relations component. It was, in fact, the principal leadership package that the Marine Corps was offering to the schools, but especially The Basic School.

Wood: Was that program stood up around the time that you joined the unit? Or was this already in motion when you came to the leadership branch?

Fields: Yes, It was brand new. I was on the ground floor, and we kind of put the thing together and developed the curriculum and the whole package. It was under the leadership of a Marine colonel. [We had] a couple of them during my tenure of the three years, one of whom had previously been a regimental commander, and the other had been the CO [commanding officer] of The Basic School. So the Marine Corps was putting a high value on the quality of leadership training that this branch would otherwise provide. . . .

Wood: What kind of impact do you think the leadership branch had?

Fields: Well, the appearance at the time was not a very positive appearance. Why? I feel that there was still a considerable rejection, for one reason or another, of the approach that the Marine Corps and the defense establishment had in dealing with race relations. So it was a challenge, actually, to instruct in that branch.

Major General Leo V. Williams III

Andrasi: Can you relate your experiences early in your Marine Corps career? You were commissioned in 1970, I believe.

L. Williams: Being in the Marine Corps was very much like being at the Naval Academy. The numbers of black officers in the Marine Corps, we thought we could count them on one hand. There were very, very seldom more than two or three or four of us in any major command. In my Basic School company, there were four of us—three from the Naval Academy and one other guy. So the Marine Corps, especially the officer corps, has always been challenged in terms of the numbers of black officers they were able to both bring

into the Marine Corps, and retain in the Marine Corps. It's always been a substantial challenge.

I could see that right from the beginning of my Marine Corps career, just looking at my Basic School class. But I did have a number of mentors right from the beginning. My company commander somehow took a special interest in me. He was an artillery officer, and we maintained a really close relationship for the next 20 years. I don't remember any racial incidents when I was in The Basic School. It was just the numbers were small, and we all thought that we were headed to Vietnam, and it was a time to pull together, not pull apart. My Basic School experience was really a pretty pleasant memory.

I was in an artillery firing battery initially at [Camp] Pendleton [California] when there was a very, very tense racial time because we had lots of guys who were draftees, black and white, who did not want to be in the Marine Corps. A lot of these guys were Vietnam vets. A lot of them were disgruntled. A lot of them were really racially sensitive on both sides. And the tension level was sky high. I mean, it was a powder keg most of the time. What I found, though, was that because I was one of the few that the black enlisted Marines could relate to, I was able to calm a lot of situations that otherwise might have been explosive. What it speaks to is the importance of diversity in maintaining good order and discipline. . . . In a lot of cases in the Marine Corps, troops did not have access to someone who looked like them, who shared a common experience, and who could talk them down from some explosive situation. . . . I was the only black officer in the regiment at that time, in the entire 11th Marines.

Andrasi: Were you called upon by that regimental CO to act in the capacity that you just described? Or that was something that just kind of happened?

L. Williams: No, it just happened. I was never called on by, [I was] occasionally by the company commander. He would say, "Hey, we've got a situation building here. Let's go in." Often we would go in together, and once again, you can't account for stupidity. You get a young lieutenant who thinks that because he's got a sidearm that he's got all the power. And there were a couple of times when one of these young second lieutenants in particular nearly got himself killed because he got into a situation that quickly got over his head. He was

confrontational when confrontation was not the right position to take. He should have been in an advisory or a negotiating position, and he decided that he's the baddest mother in the valley. So a couple of times, the captain and I had to go in and defuse a situation . . . that never really needed to get out of hand in the first place.

But it really does speak to how important it is to have sufficient diversity that people, no matter who they are in the unit, feel both culturally comfortable and environmentally comfortable, if that makes sense. When you are in a situation, when you look around and you're the only guy who looks like you do, it can sometimes be intimidating. As I think back, that's been my experience through most of my professional career, both in the Marine Corps and in the 25 years that I spent with Ford Motor Company. Most of the time, for whatever the department was that I was in, I was the only [black] guy there. A couple of times there were one or two others, but I think I was always the senior.

I had the great opportunity to be a headquarters battery commander at Camp Pendleton. I really appreciated the battalion commander for having confidence in me, as a first lieutenant, to take that job. . . . Then I got selected to go back to Headquarters Marine Corps as the first black in officer assignments in the history of the Marine Corps. That was in June 1974. Interestingly enough, the mentor who was able to put me in that assignment was now-Lieutenant Colonel [Edward L.] Ed Green, the same Ed Green who was the major at the Naval Academy who brought in Colonel Petersen and Colonel [Kenneth H.] Berthoud [Jr.] to influence half of my black midshipmen Naval Academy class to go into the Marine Corps. So Ed Green has been looking over my shoulder for all of my adult life. Still does. But I came back to officer assignments, and it took me a little while to understand and appreciate, first of all, how significant an assignment that is, but also it took me a little bit of time to appreciate the caliber of the officers who were there.

Lieutenant General Ronald S. Coleman

Colonel Kurtis P. Wheeler: Can you describe how you came to join the Marine Corps?

Coleman: I was in Vietnam [in the U.S. Navy] '69 to '70. When I came out of Vietnam in '70, if you were coming out of Vietnam and

you had nine months or less to do, you were released from active duty. So I got home in July and immediately got out of the [U.S. Navy]. I came out, by this time I'm married, . . . [and I] wasn't sure what I was going to do. I had a mentor that said—I was going to go to school at night—and he said, you'll never finish, just go to school during the day. So I used the GI Bill and went to then Cheyney State College, a historically black college in Cheyney, Pennsylvania, to be a teacher. . . . I went all summer every summer, took 15 hours every summer, so in three years, I graduated in '73. I taught school for a year and then it just, I wanted more. . . .

I went down to the Philadelphia Navy Yard and met my OSO [officer selection officer], Pierce [R.] King, who I still know today. His assistant was just a picture-poster Marine—that was him. I mean he had on his “mod blues” [modified dress uniform] and was just as sharp as he could be. They knew I was a college grad, and I told them I was interested. . . . I lived in Darby, and about two towns over was Drexel Hill, and that's where Pierce King lived. He was a white officer. He pointed toward my name and said, “Are you one of the Colemans from Darby?”

And I said, “I am.”

He said, “Are you the football player?”

I said, well, I played football. He sat me down to take the test . . . and he did the background check, and everything was good. And I remember going home, a couple days later, going home, and my wife was in the kitchen fixing dinner, and . . . she said, “How did your day go?”

And I said, “Well, I joined the Marine Corps.”

And she said, “What?”

I said, “I joined the Marine Corps, . . . and in September, I'll go to Quantico for three months, and if that all works out, then we'll come home and we'll go back to Quantico, we'll all go to Quantico for six months, and then we'll go somewhere else.” She didn't take it all that well.

Wheeler: So you head down to Camp Lejeune. What did you experience in that first duty station?

Coleman: Camp Lejeune was different. I'd never been down there, and just before, we were at TBS, and I remember one of the instructors talking about the Marine Corps, and the ethos, and how

we take care of each other, and all those sorts of things. And there are things you can do and things you can't do, but the Marine Corps takes care of you. Whoever the instructor was talked about Camp Lejeune. He said there was an apartment complex down there, I'll never forget, Beacham's Apartments. And Mr. Beacham would not allow black people to rent from him. So the Marine Corps said, OK, no Marine can rent from you. So immediately, the rule got changed. And I thought, OK, that's pretty good, I mean, the Marine Corps is progressive, so you thought. . . .

I ended up being a regimental supply officer, so the regimental commander knew me. . . . This is where the mentorship came in. My regimental commander was a person by the name of Colonel [Harold L.] Cy Blanton [Jr.]. And you would've thought I was Cy Blanton's son. He was from Plains, Georgia, or somewhere down there where [James Earl] Jimmy Carter [Jr.] was from. But he was just as honest and clear as you possibly could be, treated me like a son, he really did. Then the next one was [Gerald H.] Jerry Turley, from the Easter Offensive [in Vietnam in 1972]. Jerry Turley, whenever he would go anywhere, he would say, "Come here, son." And he called me "son," he always called me "son," knew me by name, whereas Colonel Blanton the regimental commander—and Turley was the XO [executive officer]—but Colonel Blanton would say, "Ron, I want you to do this." But the other lieutenants were "Lieutenant Smith" and "Lieutenant Jones," or whatever. I moved to be the regimental Four Alpha [S4A, assistant logistics officer], and the regimental Four [S4] was [James L.] Jim McClung, then-Captain McClung. And those three gentlemen—all three white—they mentored me as well as you could be mentored.

The amazing [thing] was that I didn't know very many black officers in the 2d Marine Regiment . . . senior officers; I don't know that I saw a captain, major, or anything like that—a higher ranking officer—in the 2d Marine Regiment. But the mentorship was there. We lived in "TT" [Tarawa Terrace housing area], and there was a captain by the name [Willie J.] Will Oler. He had been prior enlisted, a really good Marine. I was a second lieutenant, and Captain Oler (I always called him "Captain") invited me to his house, set me down, and he said, "I'm going to mentor you, and we're going to map out

your career, and this is what you need to do.” So as a second lieutenant, Will Oler mentored me. It was a great upbringing, and the Turleys, and the Blantons, and the McClungs, and [John B.] “Black Jack” Matthews, and folks like that just took great care. You say, “Ah, that’s hogwash when you say there’s no color.” If there was color in those folks, they didn’t show it. They just treated me like Ron Coleman. It was one of those things where you say, OK, these gentlemen have such respect for you, you can’t let ‘em down. My tour as a second and first lieutenant was a great tour.

Wheeler: What happened next? You were planning on a short career. Obviously at some point that changed.

Coleman: I remember I got augmented, which was good. . . . Once you got augmented, you knew you were going to Okinawa. So I go to Okinawa, started off as the supply officer for 3d Med [medical] Battalion, and then we got to deploy as a battalion supply officer [with] LSU [logistics support unit] Foxtrot. That was my first real deployment. I had fun with that.

At this point I’m still thinking, “I’ve augmented now, so now I can get out when I want to get out. I want to make captain and then I’ll get out when I make captain.” Well, while I was over there, I got selected for captain, so that was good. I’m about to come home, and Captain Oler was in Okinawa, and so was Captain Cliff Stanley. We bumped into each other in the airport in San Diego. I was at Camp Hansen, and I was walking up to the officers’ club, and I saw this black, obviously Marine, but not in uniform. . . . He introduced himself and said he was Captain Cliff Stanley. And he’s black, and I said, “Wow.” I said I was going to go by and look for Captain Oler. And he said, “Oh, he’s my best friend.” So Cliff Stanley and Will Oler were best friends. So now Cliff Stanley mentors me, and he takes me around and introduces me to people and tells me what the do’s and don’ts of being a young black officer are. So I’m really impressed now.

I’m in Okinawa, I know I’m coming back to Quantico, and Captain Oler says, “You need to go to The Basic School, and I want you to write a note to [Dennis] D. J. Murphy, Colonel Murphy,” [who] at this point is the CO of The Basic School. He said, “We’re going to try and get you there.”

And I said, “OK.” So I think, “OK, that’s a done deal.” So I come

in, I report to Quantico, and the personnel officer . . . says, “You’re going to go to Officer Candidates School.”

I said, “Captain Oler told me I was going to go to The Basic School.”

He said, “Who’s Captain Oler?”

I said, “He’s in Okinawa.”

And he said, “Yes, he’s in Okinawa, he’s not here, you’re going to Officer Candidates School.” So he gets on the phone, and he says, “Hey, I’ve got this young captain here.” I’m reporting in my Alphas [service uniform], and he said, “You’ve got a couple rows of ribbons, and I think you’d be a good person [to have at Officers Candidate School].”

So I said, “OK.” So I go out to Officer Candidates School, and Lieutenant Colonel Solomon [P.] Hill, black officer, first black lieutenant colonel I’d ever seen, is there. And I report in, and I tell him about Captain Oler, and he knows Captain Oler, and he says, “Well, The Basic School has all they need, and we need you here.” Lieutenant Colonel Hill and Captain [Henry] Napoleon [Jr.] were the only black officers [at Officer Candidates School] at the time, Hank Napoleon. He said, “No, we need you here.”

Colonel Alphonse G. Davis

Allison: You attended Officer Candidates School in 1973. What stands out in your mind as you recall that experience?

Davis: In OCS, there was a big guy, looked like a cross between a cowboy and a football player, a blond-headed guy with a buzz cut. We were eating in the mess hall at OCS, and I’ll never forget, another black candidate, [Theodore] Ted Lambert—he eventually became a helicopter pilot—he’s in the line, and this guy, for whatever reason, he hits Lambert in the head with a cup, and blood’s spewing. All of a sudden, the 11 or 13 of us that were black candidates, we didn’t start a fight or anything, but we kind of banded together to say something’s got to be done about it.

Allison: Because you thought it was a white on black attack?

Davis: That’s right. We took it as a racial incident. The benefit that we had back then was that in the OCS company was a black, First Lieutenant Cliff Stanley, who eventually became a general, and our company first sergeant, named Rogers, and the company gunny

[gunnery sergeant], Crawford, also. They were black. They called us in one weekend, all the black candidates, and just read us the riot act and said, “Remember why you’re here. Remember why you’re here. Focus on why you’re here.” Their words weren’t so kind and choice, but they invoked the Montford Point Marine folks. They talked about that. That was my first time hearing of them, about what they went through. So I said, “OK, great.” Then we focused on graduating. We did that.

I would see Lieutenant Stanley on the weekends out in town, Quantico. He’d see us in the bowling alley, and he’d just come over there, quietly, he and his wife Roz, and they’d be bowling, and he’d say, “You candidates studying this weekend? Getting your laundry done?”

“Yes sir.”

He was good at that. He was the guy who was first in this, first in that, first in what have you. But if you check his academic record, the guy just worked hard. And he was giving us those hints. So I said, “OK, man, this is serious stuff.”

Allison: How did you come to select infantry for a military occupational specialty?

Davis: When it came to picking an MOS, a lot of young black lieutenants were pushed into those we call now combat service support or supply. That’s when I think the institutional racism comes in, similar to the situation with the Montford Point Marines. Those guys were in support companies, transport companies, truck companies, supply companies, and longshoremen. I think it’s an institutional thing because that’s where the Marine Corps was comfortable having people of color. Now whether the folks in The Basic School Class 3-73 really had it in their hearts that these guys are not as good, or is it in their heads because that’s what they’re accustomed to seeing?

When it came time to select the MOSs, I talked to Captain Stanley. He actually was a supply officer but later changed to infantry. He told me to choose infantry. I said, “Why would I want to sleep out with the bugs? Why in the hell would I want to do that instead of just kicking back behind a desk?”

He said, “Well, you’re going to see a lot of young black Marines there that need your leadership.”

And I said, “OK.” So I selected infantry. Most of the other guys

are selecting supply and all that. I think I was the only black guy in our company at TBS [The Basic School] who went infantry.

Allison: It sounds like you benefited from mentoring early on.

Davis: Yes, but it was unofficial mentoring. There's a difference. They had "official" mentoring that I didn't think was so effective. It was like "All black officers report to room . . ." For what?! There was something, a concept I came up with called the "Godfather concept." The Godfather at that time was Frank Petersen; they called him the Godfather. When I first met him, I was a first lieutenant in Puerto Rico, 1975–76, at Roosevelt Roads. I had heard about this guy. He was in a jeep, just sitting behind the wheel licking an ice cream cone. I was like, "Damn, I've seen his picture." So I go up to him, I salute, "Sir, how you doing? My name is First Lieutenant Davis. I saw your pictures and read about you."

I extended my hand, and he said, "Hey, how you doing, brother? Are things going OK?" Again, a very forthcoming guy. He was an aviator, and aviators are laid back and cool. . . .

Going back to the mentoring thing, when I talk about this Godfather concept thing, I was thinking, you've got to have a way that if a young black officer reports in to a new command, then there's a senior black officer, captain or better, hopefully, there. And they contact you, invite you to dinner at their quarters or what have you, talk to you, tell you what you're getting ready to embark on in your career because the transition is a little bit different. For example, I would see young black lieutenants wanting to date enlisted Marines. Not smart, dude. Or young black guys back in the early 1970s wanting to date white women. Not smart, dude. The times are not ready for that yet. Like the indelible impact that Cliff Stanley or General Petersen made—it was because of their personalities. . . .

That shaped me on how I became as a leader, to not be a traditional, textbook type of leader. For example later, when I commanded OCS—the first and the only black officer as far as I know to command OCS—I had several black candidates come to my home for dinner one weekend. One of them is a lieutenant colonel selectee now.

Allison: After The Basic School, you went to Camp Lejeune I believe, and took command of a platoon of Marines. What was that experience like?

Davis: I go in as an infantry platoon leader to 2d Marine Division, 3d Battalion, 6th Marines. My first company commander is a Naval Academy graduate, blond-haired guy, [James L.] Jim Clark [Jr.]. I had my hair cut short. I realized I'd be setting an example to black Marines because they put the stocking caps on and all of that.

Allison: Was that allowed, the stocking caps?

Davis: It wasn't.

Allison: This was a big issue in those days, the three inches for hair length and problems with the afro haircuts.

Davis: That's right, the three inches. But I asked Captain Clark if my hair was short enough. The key was, most of the leaders were white, so they were afraid to address that. You know how troops are—if you give them an inch, they're going to take six inches. So I asked him if my hair was cut short enough. His eyes lit up. He said, "Yes, thanks for asking, because you are going to be an example."

Another pivotal thing happened. I discovered that the regimental commander's driver was a guy that grew up across the street from me by the name of George Stewart, a sergeant. I asked the company commander where I might find Sergeant Stewart. So again, going un-textbook. "What are you looking for this sergeant for?"

I said, "Well, sir, I think I grew up with him."

He said, "Well, you'll eventually find him." Like that. He never told me where he lived. So I kind of do my own thing and find out where he is. At the end of the day, I get in my civvies, I drive over to the barracks where the enlisted are. I ask Marines, and they said, "Hey, Stew, you got some 'butter bar' out here looking for you." When I go in his room he says, "Damn, boy, what are you doing here?"

I said, "Man, how are you doing?" We just started talking. Again, we grew up across the street, and we used to fight together, we played the dozens together and all that stuff, played football together. And he told me, he says, "Two things. Young black Marines are not going to want to salute you because they're going to think you're their 'brother.' The first one that does that, you grab their ass." That's what he said, "You grab them by the damn stacking swivel."

And I said, "But man, you can't do that; they told me in Basic School."

He said, "Forget what they taught in Basic School." Because

we're just coming out of Vietnam and these are bad times. "Forget what they told you. That's what you need to do."

"OK, man."

So one day I'm walking from my company office, India Company, and I passed H&S [headquarters and service company], which was called "hide and slide" back then, or "heat and steam," or what have you, and they had the casual company. There were four black Marines on the steps out there. They had the black power bracelets on and their covers, they didn't starch them, they'd be flat across. The hair was packed down, and you could tell where the stocking cap went around. They were unshaven, they had the no-shaving chit thing. And that's another thing—I would show black Marines how to shave. I said, "You want to be pretty like me? Let me show you how you shave." I would teach them this stuff. But these four guys, I passed them, and they're kneeling down, but they don't salute. And so I walked two steps past the steps of H&S. Then I remembered what George Stewart told me. I turned around, and I said, "Gentlemen, we don't salute officers?"

One of them looked at me and said, "We don't need to salute you. You're our brother."

And I stepped to the tallest one, and I grabbed him by the collar, and I said, "What's your last name?" He told me. I said, "Mine is Davis. I'm not your brother. Salute." I let him go. They all stood up at this time and gave me one of those really slow salutes. My knees were shaking. And then I just went about my business. Then the word became, "Don't screw with that lieutenant, man, he's crazy." So that was really just kind of like proving myself, not whether or not you know me enough to respect me as a person—that will come later—but I'm a Marine officer. Respect that.

Allison: This was a turbulent time for racial issues. What was the situation in your platoon?

Davis: With my Marines, I had Puerto Rican kids out of New York, I had a lot of black kids out of North Carolina. I had white kids out of North Carolina; the drugs, the alcohol, all that. I just remembered that I needed to be everybody's lieutenant, period—the need to be fair, balanced. That doesn't mean that there wasn't racism or that there weren't hostilities, or that you didn't hear "Uncle Tom" or

you didn't hear the "N" word. That was going on. But I would use those instances to say, "OK, we're a team." So I became a beacon, and they would watch whether or not I would be more favored towards this one or that one. So that was important. I remember this kid, Joe Jefferson. I'll never forget this kid. He always wanted to wear an afro, and I used to always tell him, "Go get a flipping haircut." When I did my inspections, I used to keep a comb in my pocket, and I'd tell the black kid to take off his hat and comb it out. That way you could see how long it was. So there were certain things like that that I had to do to send the message that I'm not going to have double standards.

Lieutenant General Walter E. Gaskin Sr.

Allison: What do you recall of your first assignment as a Marine infantry platoon commander at Camp Lejeune at a time when racial tensions were high?

Gaskin: The night before graduation from The Basic School, we were just sitting around talking to the platoon commander, Captain [Edward F.] "Fast Eddie" McCann. I had just gotten assigned to Camp Lejeune. I'm anxious, I'm ready to go. He said, "I want you to remember this. If your white Marines can't come to you and talk to you about what black Marines are doing or not doing, then you have failed as a lieutenant and a Marine, and I want that title back if you can't do that." He said, "The second thing is that you're going to have tremendous pressure from your African American Marines when you get there for special favors, to see things their way, knuckle knocking and all," which was very prevalent at the time.

Allison: Are you talking about the dap?

Gaskin: The dap, exactly. He said, "All of that will happen to you when you get there. But what you should say is that you are here for them to have equal opportunity at proving that they are good Marines; nothing more, nothing less. Are you proud of your heritage? Absolutely. And they should be proud that you are there, but that's all. They're all Marines. If you can't handle that, don't go." And I always remember that, because sure as hell when I got there, the first thing I had was OOD [officer of the day] duty, and I go to the chow hall, and the whole damn line is held up because you've got those Marines going through the dap, you know, it takes them two

or three minutes. The law was no dapping in the chow hall. I engage. And there are a few Marines that went to the brig that day because I was an “Uncle Tom,” or “I didn’t understand,” you know, “you think you’re white,” or “this is bull s***.” They were right. I called the MPs [military police], they’re gone. But also what that said to my white Marines is that I am not a black lieutenant, I am a lieutenant and a Marine, period. If you want to impress me, perform.

Everybody is going to apply to the rules. I am not going to shortchange you because you’re black, but I’m not going to give you special favors because you’re black, either. If you perform, you’ll get just that. And that has been my philosophy in the Marine Corps. What got me there were my experiences, and I am a firm believer that performance trumps everything. I am a part of the performance trumps everything. I remember my first fitness report. I was scared s***less that day. Lieutenant Colonel Richard [C.] Raines was my battalion commander. He had 19 lieutenants in the battalion and did handwritten fitness reports. We had to go in there and sit in front of him like the Spanish Inquisition. He would sit down, and he would give us counseling on our fitness reports. Colonel Raines said to me, “I didn’t think blacks could be officers. I had some damn good black staff NCOs in Vietnam.” He said, “You know, I just didn’t think they had the mental ability to be officers.” I’m sitting there thinking, “This is not going good.” I mean, I haven’t even seen the report, but I’m afraid. So then he hands me my report to read, and I looked down there, and [it said]: “My number-one lieutenant. The best lieutenant I’ve seen in 15, 17 years,” whatever time was he had in the Marine Corps. “I like his leadership style,” you know, “command potential;” “I’m considering him being a company commander as a first lieutenant.” It was unbelievable. And I looked at him, and he said, “You changed my mind. Don’t you change. You just keep doing what you’re doing.” And I walked out of there saying that performance counts.

I tell all the young officers. They always ask you when they come up to you, “What did you do?” I always say, “Performance.” If I have my job down cold, it relieves all the other issues and thoughts and stereotyping and everything else that comes with any prejudice or bias that they may have. But I can tell you this, I can almost guarantee if you don’t perform, if you are average, you can’t break out of

the pack, you are just barely making it, [then] everything else wrong, or every other bias they have will suddenly surface. They don't like the way you dress. They don't like the fact you have that loud-ass car, you got crazy music, you didn't come to country-western night. Everything else that was there would then fall on the fact that you were not ready because you did not perform. So you have got to be good. You have no option in this.

Colonel Gail E. Jennings

Jennings: One day in 1973, I was walking through the student union at University of Dayton, and they had the contact booth set up for the armed forces. They had the Air Force, Marine Corps; I don't remember the Army being there. I went over to the Air Force, and I got their little contact card and filled out everything. I went to the Marine Corps, liked the uniform, filled out my little contact card. Well, Air Force never got in touch with me, but Marine Corps did. And not only did Marine Corps get in touch with me, Marine Corps stayed in touch with me. About 10 days before I graduated from University of Dayton, I had to let them know one way or the other [whether] I was going with the Corps or not. I nodded my head and said, "Yes, I'll go with the Corps." I didn't get to go to OCS right away because there weren't enough women to make up a class. So I worked during the summer at one of the factories, the auto factories, on one of the assembly lines, and I made my money to buy my uniforms. So I started at OCS, well, in fact, . . . I started at TBS after that, but during my junior and senior year of college, I went to OCS . . . and I had an eight-week session that I went to Quantico. OCS was a really positive experience for me.

Major Beth M. Wolny: In what sense?

Jennings: In that you get indoctrinated into all the tradition of the Marine Corps, all the history of the Marine Corps. That's at a time when, for the women, we even had makeup classes. We had an instructor, some high fallutin' someone that had the nice cosmetic bag, out of New York. We had our application. I went home with this big leather kind of suitcase thing with all this makeup in it and whatnot.

It was just how it was ingrained in that short period of time, sort of a teamwork and camaraderie that the Marine Corps was all

about. I definitely took that back with me. I thought I was leaving a small family in that short eight-week period, and I liked the idea of being associated with something greater than me. I had that experience as I played sports in college, but it was a much more significant kind of attachment, I felt, in that eight-week period. So I had that to carry me through that last 10 months of school before I made the decision that I was going to go with the Marine Corps or not.

Wolny: So that was a very positive experience for you?

Jennings: Very positive experience, even though OCS was not physically challenging for me at all. . . . The women's physical program I don't think was nearly as challenging. I was an athlete going in, but I liked the other things that were involved in the training environment for that eight-week period.

Wolny: How about The Basic School. You went through in 1976. Did that go well also?

Jennings: I didn't enjoy The Basic School nearly as much as I did OCS. When I came through, we were the first company that was integrated with women. We were administratively segregated, like we had a women's platoon, but tactically, we were integrated with the men.

Wolny: Can you explain a little bit more what that looked like?

Senior female Marine African American officers past and present gathered at Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, on 7 April 2012: (left to right) Col Sheila Bryant, LtCol Doris A. Daniels, Col Stephanie C. Smith, Col Gail E. Jennings, LtCol Denise T. Williams, Col Adele E. Hodges, LtCol Reina M. Du Val, and LtCol Debra W. Deloney.

Courtesy of LtCol Melissa D. Mihocko, USMCR



Jennings: Administratively, we were segregated. We had a women's platoon, so to speak. All the women were set up in Graves Hall. Our platoon commander was female, [Beverly A.] Bev Short. I'll never forget who she was. So in that sense, we were all women as far as that platoon was concerned. But when we went into a tactical environment, when we did all of our field ops [operations], when we did our land nav [navigation], when we did squad tactics, [for] all of those things we were integrated with the men. You'd have women sprinkled in with the men. So when we're coming in from the field and they do port arms, we knew the next thing we were going to be double timing. If it was one of those really long ones, you might have someone behind you that might lift your pack a little bit for you so it wasn't quite as heavy on your hips when you're running in, that kind of thing. But again, you were given tactical assignments out in the field just like the males were. . . .

Wolny: Had you noticed that at OCS or TBS, were there other African American women, or were there other African Americans?

Jennings: At OCS, there was only one other black female officer.

Wolny: Candidates?

Jennings: At OCS, . . . [Denise T.] Williams was in my class as well. That's when I first met her. So I think it was just the two of us.

Wolny: But it didn't strike you as odd at the time?

Jennings: No. I mean, I didn't think about it one way or the other. I really didn't. That wasn't my focus, that wasn't my concern.

Wolny: Did you experience situations that were unique to you as a black female officer, discrimination or whatnot?

Jennings: When I got to Cherry Point [North Carolina], I don't think me being a minority or being a female, early in my career—and I qualify that, early in my career—worked to my disadvantage at all. I don't think it was a detriment; it probably was a more positive thing than not, to be perfectly honest. I feel that I got opportunity, especially when I was at Cherry Point, that I didn't see other people getting, maybe because there weren't a lot of women, but I definitely was the only black face running around as a female officer. And I happened to be good at what I did. So again, like I said, that worked well.

I think as I got to be more senior, and again, when I was at Camp Lejeune, I was the disbursing officer, and then I ended up

being the comptroller for the FSSG [force service support group]. [This was a] great experience with not only leading within the MOS, but also the credibility I had with the command because I was one of the special officers to the CG [commanding general]. And not only was my expertise for financial management key, but also being a senior female for the command was very key.

We happened to have had a couple of challenges with two different female officers who happened to be minority. Because people sometimes get afraid to misstep, they did ask my opinion in regards to certain things. And I had to call a spade a spade with the CG and the chief of staff one day. Loved them both, thought they were great officers, but I said, “Hey, you put these two officers in the same basket and they’re totally different. One individual does have challenges; one individual probably should not be in the Marine Corps now because of this, this, this, and this and has not done those things that she needs to do.” And I had no qualms about saying, “This is an individual that is deficient and is trying to use race in order to throw that as a distracter for her lack of competency.” This other individual, however, they had two different stories. But they happened to both be female single parents. I said, “But you didn’t ask the question on this individual. You just see that that’s a single female black officer, and you automatically thought that she had not been married before. I’ve got a senior colonel over here, colonel, battalion commander—he’s a single parent, he’s divorced, has a child. But when you look at her, you don’t see a single parent that is divorced and, oh by the way, sir, you didn’t know she was divorced, did you? You just thought she had a child that happens to be four years old. She’s divorced just like that colonel is over there.”

They turned red in the face because they knew I had them dead to rights because that stereotype of these two officers. On the surface, their conditions seemed similar, but they weren’t. And I knew both of their stories because I had taken the time and talked to both of those officers, not because they told me to, meaning my leadership told me to, but because I was a leader and that’s what I needed to do.



Chapter 6

Reaping the Rewards—Into the 1980s

In the 1980s, the Marine Corps implemented new concepts, doctrines, and policies based on lessons learned from the Vietnam War. Operationally, the Corps became a lighter, more maneuverable service and adopted processes and procedures to facilitate expeditionary warfare.

The Marine Corps was also evolving racially and socially. Emphasis in the 1970s on African American officer recruitment, career development, and retention had paid dividends. Black officers were more in the mainstream, becoming less conspicuous, although mentoring and networking remained important. They served in a full gamut of assignments. The racial climate was markedly improved due to the policies implemented earlier and to what Colonel Alphonse G. Davis called “enlightened leadership and an increased understanding and tolerance among Marines of different races.”¹

It was still challenging to recruit and retain the number of African American officers the Marine Corps desired. In the 1980s, black officer composition in the Marine Corps reflected a 40 percent increase as the number of African American officers grew from 627 to 880. In 1985, black officers represented 4.4 percent of the Marine Corps officer force compared to only 1.3 percent in 1970. A 1985 equal opportunity assessment found that the 62 active-duty African American officers represented 5 percent of all commanding officers in the Marine Corps and 32 represented nearly 4 percent of all executive officers.²

African Americans entered the ranks of general officers when Frank E. Petersen Jr. was selected for brigadier general in 1979. He continued to move up the ranks and was promoted to lieutenant general in 1986 to command of what became known as Marine Corps

Photo Left: LtGen Frank E. Petersen Jr. at the pinnacle of his career, as commanding general of what became known during his late 1980s tour as Marine Corps Combat Development Command.

Photo by SSgt J. S. Sanders. Defense Imagery, VIRIN: DM-SC-93-01672

Combat Development Command at Quantico, Virginia. Jerome G. Cooper, a Reserve officer, became the next African American Marine to be promoted to general, in 1983. Another highlight was the selection of Marine aviator Charles F. Bolden Jr. as an astronaut by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in 1980. Bolden made his first of four spaceflights as a space shuttle crewmember in 1986. Other notable events included Clifford L. Stanley serving as the parade adjutant at 8th & I, the Corps' show-place parade ground, and Alphonse Davis was chosen to lead the Marine Corps' national officer recruiting and procurement efforts.³

Lieutenant General Frank E. Petersen Jr.

Petersen: Frankly, I felt that if I were given the title of “general” and the subtitle of “black general,” I would have rejected the whole notion. But the Corps had come a long way since I joined back in the 1950s. Then, the question of whether or not there could be a black Marine general was purely academic. For when I went through flight training, it wasn't a question of what levels blacks could rise to. The question was, where are the blacks? . . .

I was not in a position to make even an educated guess as to the selection of a black general in the Corps. But if one were selected, the fact of it would make a hell of an impact. There were only two black colonels in the pipeline at the time, so it was surely between the two of us. [Petersen and Kenneth H. Berthoud Jr.] I would've been lying through my teeth if I'd said that my fingers weren't crossed.

Regardless of who got the promotion, it could not help but have a beneficial effect on the morale of black Marines, officer and enlisted. When dealing with a force that was about 16 percent black without their having any representation in the general officer ranks, this was something the kids knew and thought about. . . .

Truly, it was a matter of longevity. Black officers in the past hadn't stayed long enough to attain the maturation necessary for high-level assignments and promotion. The computation was simple. It took 27 to 30 years for an officer to progress to the rank of general. I was the first black aviator and I was a full colonel after 28 years of service—so I figured I was on track. . . .

In February 1979, President [James E.] Carter [Jr.] let the cat

out of the bag by announcing my nomination for promotion to brigadier general. By mid-March, the selection was approved by voice vote in the Senate along with eight other colonels to be promoted to star rank. I'd become the first black man to achieve flag rank in the history of the U.S. Marine Corps.⁴ . . .

Although I definitely considered my pending promotion to star rank the crowning point of my 30-year career in the Marine Corps, I tried to downplay that aspect of it throughout [the resulting] media extravaganza. More important things mattered. The fact, for example, that I was the first black to reach this position was significant because it meant a lot to the minorities in the service. . . .

The armed services were not at that point without racism, although it surfaced in those days only in isolated instances. The system was clean of any institutionalized racism because it was dealt with in such a severe manner. The Corps was concerned with quality rather than quantity—an encouraging sign.⁵

Colonel Fred L. Jones

Jones: The trailblazers in the Marine Corps that I talk about that really reached out to other black officers to help them, [Hurdle L.] Maxwell overtly would do it. Petersen was behind the scenes working the system, sitting on boards, making phone calls, talking to the Commandant. You see what I'm saying? Very effective that way. He's not the kind of guy that goes out and says "come over to my house." Maxwell was. I was. Berthoud was like Petersen. He worked the upper echelons of the Marine Corps for policies that would make it easier for black officers to stay and for the Marine Corps to reach out and increase the numbers. . . . [Anthony E.] Tony Manning was the kind of guy, [he and] his wife Marsha, they would give parties, not as many as we did, but they did. He was a supply officer also. But they socialized. Stanley would reach out a lot, but his wife was shot in the back early in his career by a racist who they killed, so she had been in a wheelchair for most of his career, so obviously they didn't do a lot at their house, but they did things away from their house. They did do things at their house later on. So Stanley would socialize. Of course, later on in life, the guy who picked up the gauntlet more than anybody in doing that in the '90s and be-

yond was [Walter E.] Gaskin [Sr.]. He really picked up the gauntlet and ran with it in terms of reaching out and touching folks. But these are the folks that made the effort to really reach out. . . . [Ronald S.] Coleman will tell you, [Willie J.] Williams will tell you, [Arnold] Fields will tell you, they will all tell you, it was important to them. They were all touched by these efforts, and they're flag officers.

Brigadier General George H. Walls Jr.

Walls: When I was assigned to the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing [in 1983], it looked like it was going to be a staff job. I didn't want to go there for a year and be in a staff job. At that time, General Frank Petersen was the commanding general of the wing. He and I had known each other forever. It's the only time in my Marine Corps career when I have ever called anybody and said, "I'd like to have this job."

Chief Warrant Officer-3 William E. Hutson: How had you known him "forever?" Where did you first meet?

Walls: Once Ken Berthoud left as the head of the minority officer procurement program, General Petersen came in as the head of that program and [as] the minority [affairs] advisor to the Commandant of the Marine Corps. So I met him there. . . . Everybody knew everybody because there weren't that many of us to know.

But I got in touch with General Petersen and said, "It looks like I'm coming to the wing, and it looks like I'm going to a staff job. But if there's any way possible, I'd really like to get my O-5 [lieutenant colonel] command." I didn't hear anything, but when I reported to Okinawa, instead of going to the G-4 [logistics], I went down and took over Wing Engineer Squadron 17, which was just a great sign. First time with a wing, though, so I had to learn all the wing stuff. It broadened my knowledge of the Marine Corps because as small as the Marine Corps is, there are officers that serve in the wing that don't know ground guys, and vice versa, unless you have one of these kind of crossover tours.

Hutson: From that tour you went to Washington to work for the assistant secretary of the Navy for manpower and reserve affairs.

Walls: Yes, I came back to work for assistant secretary of the Navy manpower and reserve affairs who at that time was [Charles G.] Chase Untermeyer. I expected to go to the Pentagon to do what

everybody else was doing over there, which was chase paper. . . . My initial assignment was as an advisor on minority affairs and recruiting, and I did that along with a naval officer, a Hispanic guy. We kind of covered all the minority issues that had to do with the Navy—officer recruitment, enlisted recruitment, training, the whole nine yards—liaison with LULAC [League of United Latin American Citizens], NNOA [National Naval Officers Association], and Montford Point [Association], and all that. So we did all of that for him.

Hutson: Were there any issues you dealt with in regards to recruiting black officers?

Walls: A situation came up. The chief of naval education and training had someone on his staff advance some proposals about standards for midshipmen in the Naval ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps]. And basically what these standards would have done was to put minority midshipmen at a disadvantage.

Hutson: How so?

Walls: It had to do with elevating grade point averages and scores on tests, and a number of things like that. I remember being in a meeting down at Pensacola, Florida, where an officer stood up and articulated the concerns that he had about what this was going to do to these five Naval ROTC units [at the historically black colleges] and maybe some others that were going to be jeopardized by this. He was basically told to sit down and shut up. I went back to my boss and told him what I had seen at the meeting. He told me to do some more fact finding and get a paper together for him. I got the paper together for him, and he had a meeting with Secretary [of the Navy] John [E.] Lehman [Jr.] where he took me along, as he usually did. He brought this up and explained what the ramifications were and what might happen. And really it just shocked me. I could feel the short hairs on the back of my neck stand up. Lehman turned around to his Marine aide and said, "Mate, get the admiral on the phone." He called the chief of naval education and training and said, "You will not put this policy into effect." So again, it was just interesting to see how things operated at that level and how some poor little Marine colonel could maybe influence something for folks.

The other interesting thing that had to do with minority officer selection and minority officer attrition concerned the numbers of

black naval aviation candidates in Pensacola. Their attrition was terribly high. We went back and looked at why this was happening and where it was happening, and in 90 percent of the cases, it was before they ever got to sit in a cockpit. It was when they were going through the training's swim qualifications. Black kids don't know how to swim. This was like at The Basic School with its attrition figures. There we found that in map reading and compass work, black kids don't do maps and compasses. So a simple fix, we told the Navy, was have your recruiters have these kids go down to the "Y" [Young Men's Christian Association] and take a swim class. We told the Marine officer selection officers, "Teach them how to use a compass." Some of these kids had never even seen a compass until they got to Basic School. Once those changes were implemented, the attrition went just like this [downward]. But what was happening, for example, at Pensacola is [if] a kid couldn't swim, . . . he had to go to remedial swim class while everybody else was going on doing their other things, and he just got farther and farther behind, and then you just washed out.

Major General Arnold Fields

Fields: Between 1970 and 1978 there had been some change, racially speaking, in the Marine Corps. Even when I got to Okinawa in '71 there were several black officers there. That was encouraging. When I went back in 1978, there were more officers. Not that I really focused on it as a result of any specific event. But the good news is that there was an increase in the density of blacks in the Marine Corps within that '70s decade. It was almost like going from zero to a fairly reasonably improved demographic in that period.

In 1979, that's the year in which Lieutenant General Frank Petersen was selected as the first [black] general officer in the Marine Corps. I would say in the '70s decade, and in the history of my association with the Marine Corps, that was the most significant event, I feel. It brought the most optimism for blacks and to the picture of race relations in the Marine Corps, and in the military in general.

Lieutenant Colonel Mark E. Wood: As we move into the '80s, what was your sense of the trend lines on the racial issue as you recall?

Fields: The characterization of the trend lines, in a word, I

would say “progressive.” After the experience I had as commanding officer of Fox 2/4 [2d Battalion, 4th Marines], [in 1979] they sent me to recruiting duty to Atlanta, Georgia. They made me the officer in charge of the district contact team, which is a training and inspection team. Again, I’m looking at these things because they are opportunities to succeed, or opportunities to be challenged, or opportunities to fail. Of course I always looked at them as opportunities to be challenged, and to succeed, and to contribute. So I spent three years doing that kind of work in support of 6th District, and I had an opportunity there to get my fingers directly on a measure of the recruiting process as well as the officer selection process. I know from that inside look that there was a genuine effort through the district and through the mandates that came out of Headquarters Marine Corps regarding the demographics and recruiting goals and objectives, that the Marine Corps was more than moderately interested in addressing this race issue. . . .

I left there and was sent to Command and Staff College for a year. From there they saw fit to send me back to recruiting as a commanding officer [in 1983]. I think at the time I was the second black recruiting station commander that the Marine Corps ever had. [Willie J. Oler was the first.] There were 49 stations at the time. Orlando was the third largest of the 49. I think Los Angeles was the largest, Chicago was next, and then Orlando. So I felt good about the opportunity that the Marine Corps gave me to lead a recruiting station. . . . That gave me a lot of personal confidence in my own abilities and the Marine Corps’ own [assessment] of me and the contributions that I might be able to make. It was, to me, somewhat of an endorsement of exposures and experiences that I had had preceding that assignment. I still knew, of course, that my work was cut out for me. . . .

Wood: That was when?

Fields: I took over Orlando in 1983 and remained until 1986.

Wood: You said that you saw a progressive trend. Did this perspective receive reinforcement by your experiences as the commander of a recruiting station, by what you saw there—a sign that the Marine Corps was working on these issues?

Fields: Well, again, just to characterize the ’80s decade, and I’m

looking at it through the eyes of Arnie Fields, I feel that the Marine Corps was trying to make a difference when it came to the race and the demographics thing. . . . Rather than this more decentralized approach that had preceded my tenure as the commanding officer there, the officer piece had been moved to district headquarters, I believe with the intent to better direct and control a process on which the Marine Corps focused on during that decade.

So in answer to your question, I think that was a positive maneuver, and much of this, what I'm telling you is more in retrospect. I didn't sit and analyze necessarily all of the reasons why the Marine Corps made these changes. I was too busy trying to do my work and make my mission. But in retrospect, I believe that is exactly what the Marine Corps was trying to do, to centralize the process in order to gain more synergy as opposed to the more decentralized recruiting paradigm.

Wood: We're getting into the mid to late '80s, after this tour in the recruiting command at Orlando, where did the Marine Corps send you?

Fields: By this time I had been selected for lieutenant colonel. . . . One of the other positions I had been offered was CO [commanding officer] of Company F, Marine Security Guard Battalion . . . living in North Africa and working in 17 countries and 24 embassies or consulates in that North African, Southwest Asia, Middle Eastern region. I elected to do that because I found it to be a bit more exciting. It would take me to a lot more challenging and in fact dangerous environments than I would have experienced at any of the other positions had I taken them. That's what drove me to North Africa. That was one of the best decisions I think I've made in my life because throughout the rest of my Marine Corps career, there was always some connection to make with the subsequent assignment and the experience that I had gleaned from the time I served in North Africa and the Middle East. . . .

It was my first foreign experience from the standpoint of command. I was living in a foreign country. But living in a foreign country full time, that was one thing. The other was living in a Muslim country. All of the countries in my area of responsibility were, and still are, Muslim countries. So it was my first exposure to the Muslim world, and to terror. Just before I arrived, there had been hijackings, killings, and executions and things like that. So I knew I'd be thrust

into the midst of all that stuff. But I saw that very much as what I came to the Marine Corps to do. . . .

In North Africa, I'm dealing with 17 ambassadors and a bunch of council generals, with the Department of State. And I really felt very good about having that level of responsibility. My boss gave me enough rope to hang myself out there. You have to decentralize your control in the MSG environment, and that's exactly what he did. And again, dignity and respect are very important to me, as I presume they are to other people. That is how Colonel Sean DelGrosso led me. . . .

I was not the only black MSG company commander. Then-Lieutenant Colonel [Gilford G.] Gil Robinson was commanding officer of one of the five companies under Colonel DelGrosso. He had Central and South America.

Lieutenant General Ronald S. Coleman

Colonel Kurtis P. Wheeler: What do you recall of your tour at OCS [Officer Candidates School] beginning in 1978?

Coleman: I'm a captain by now and they make me a platoon commander. That was some of the most fun I've ever had. I was a platoon commander for about three different platoons—Captain Coleman running around, deciding who's going to be an officer in the Marine Corps. That was making the birdie on the 18th hole. I did that tour, and . . . at that time, that was the highlight of my career. Not only that, I was the director of NCO [noncommissioned officer] school. I guess I did two or three platoons. I go out to Camp Upshur and I'm the [S-4] at Camp Upshur also. I'm having fun, and then I get selected for AWS [Amphibious Warfare School]. So [my wife] Jane says, "Now they've got you for another couple of years."

Wheeler: When you were selected to be a platoon commander, selected to go to OCS, one of things that they looked at as a critical factor in supporting black officers is having role models in those critical places like OCS and TBS. Do you feel your selection to go there was, in part, was based on that goal? Or were you just in the right place at the right time? Do you think you were selected to go to OCS because you were a successful officer up to that point?

Coleman: In all honesty, probably. I mean, I'm sure the personnel officer looked and said, OK, we need this, we need 12 officers here,

we need 14 there. I would think he probably thought, OK, I've got Solomon [P.] Hill, Lieutenant Colonel Hill, [Henry] Hank Napoleon [Jr.] out at OCS, we need another black officer out there. I'm sure he did. When I look at when I was at OCS as a platoon commander, the number of black captains at The Basic School [TBS] was probably at an all-time high. There had to be, I mean, you say all-time high, but you're probably talking 10. To answer your question, yes, I'm sure they thought, OK, here's a minority officer, hey, he looks sharp in his uniform, I'm sure he didn't know anything about my record. I don't know, does a personnel officer know anything about your record? But I'm sure he said, "Black officer, looks good in uniform: OCS."

Wheeler: What kind of advice did you get from these various officers? What was the thrust of their advice?

Coleman: The thrust was, I can hear them all saying, especially Fred Jones saying, "Seek the hard. Take the job that no one else wants." Everybody wants the platoon commander job; everybody wants the "Hey, I'm in front of the boss job." Take the hard job and do well at that. That was a big Fred Jones [point]. It sounds trite when you say, "Bloom where you're planted." No matter what the job is, work harder at the job than anybody else and you'll be successful. So Fred Jones, he really did mentor me, and he's the type of officer that would say, "I want you to meet this guy," or, "go here."

One of the problems back then, in my opinion, was that we couldn't get a lot of black officers to go to the [officers'] club. They would kind of shy away from the club. Not so much my generation, so to speak, because we knew that's what you're supposed to do, but the folks younger always had, in my opinion, a problem with going to the club. I would tell young officers that I learn as much at the officers' club as I do anywhere else. You know, you sit down, and whether it's a major or a captain, whatever, you sit there. Fred Jones ensured that we went. "If you're going to feel uncomfortable going somewhere because you're the only black officer there," he said, "you'll never make it in the Marine Corps." More times than not, you're going to be the only black officer there, just because of our sheer numbers. So you have to assume that you're always on the spotlight and you're always doing the best job you can.

In that Quantico time, Fred Jones and [Louis S.] Lou Jumber-

cotta [Jr.] [were mentors]. Then my second year as an instructor at AWS it was General [George R.] Christmas. General Christmas grew up in the town one over from me. So General Christmas would talk to me. Not only that, but [his wife] Sherry Christmas would talk to my wife a lot, just making you feel comfortable and welcome and that sort of stuff. Down to earth. My Quantico time was a good time. I'd never recommend that anybody spend as much time at Quantico as I did, but it all turned out well for me.

Wheeler: So you're a lieutenant colonel now, at this point. You're starting to become a more senior leader in the Marine Corps. You had benefited from this mentoring throughout your career. At what point did you begin to pay that forward?

Coleman: Surprisingly enough, I think as a captain, because when I went to OCS, and I looked around, and I didn't see a whole lot like me. I remember thinking, OK, you need to make sure that people know you care. And I remember my grandmother saying treat everybody with dignity and respect. . . .

There's a reservist, just retired here in May—Mario LaPaix, Colonel LaPaix. [Then] Corporal LaPaix was an admin Marine at OCS. He had his degree, and he wanted to apply for OCS. The [commanding officer] convened a board to look at these folks, do we recommend them for Officer Candidates School? And Corporal LaPaix sat across from me. At this point, Colonel Hill had left and Captain Napoleon had left. I'm the only black officer at Officer Candidates School, and LaPaix is being considered for OCS. . . . They were asking questions, and some of them I thought were softball questions. I said to Corporal LaPaix, "You know if you become an officer, things are different. If you go out here, you'll see Corporal Jones and Corporal Smith, there's a whole lot of corporals and enlisted Marines." I said, "How many black officers have you seen except me?"

He said, "Just you, sir."

I said, "So everywhere you go, you represent not only the Marine Corps, but every black Marine to these folks at OCS. You've got some people coming from places where they've never seen a black person. They're going to see you. What are they going to see?"

He said, "Corporal LaPaix."

I said, "That's not good enough." I said, "You've got that mus-

tache. Why do you have that mustache? Is that an identifying point? Does that make you a man?" I really drilled him. . . . The point was to let him know that if you make this mark, you might be out by yourself, but you represent not only every black Marine, but every black person. You gotta carry that weight. He made it, and the next time I saw LaPaix, I'm at maintenance battalion at Camp Lejeune and he's Major LaPaix or something like that. . . . He said, "I can't thank you enough." . . .

Did I take a special interest? Yes, I did take a special interest in minorities because there are so few. . . . Most times as a black officer, when we went somewhere, we were the only black officer there. You can't say "woe is me." You've got to adapt. If you go sit in the corner and say, "Hey there's nobody here that looks like me," no matter how much you cry, they're still not going to look like you, so you've got to adapt. You don't have to be like them, you don't have to act like them, but you need to get along with everybody because everybody needs somebody, and everybody can give advice. I tried to mentor everybody that I could. . . .

I was taught by General Stanley, Will Oler, if you see a senior black officer, go over and talk to them, because no matter what you go through, they've gone through more than you. I can remember the first time meeting General Petersen when I was in Okinawa—and that was just a chance meeting—and then seeing him down here when he was at Quantico. We were in the Marine Shop, and he just spoke to me, he said, "How you doin'?" He's a general, I think I'm probably a major at this point. He said, "Anything I can do for you? Any advice you need?" You're just flabbergasted that a general is going to take the time to talk to you like that, so I learned from some of the best. There's always somebody who can stand a pat on the back, or a smile, or whatever.

Colonel Alphonse G. Davis

Davis: I went down there to be the assistant for enlisted recruiting, the AER, but Colonel John [F.] Juul said, "I've got a problem. We need to put you in officer recruiting." So then I got my second officer recruiting tour. That's when we had the assistant for minority officer recruitment billets in the 6th and the 8th District.

Dr. Fred H. Allison: Special billets. Did they make a difference?

Davis: Special billets. They made a difference in the 8th District because you had guys like Jarvis [D.] Lynch [Jr.]—later, Major General Lynch—who was a very progressive thinking white guy. Athlete. He really, really mentored myself and another guy by the name of Ervin “Doc” Rivers, Colonel Rivers, who is retired now. We were two black officers stationed here. Together we were very progressive and wanted to generate the talk about how to get more diversity in the Marine Corps.

Allison: What do you mean by progressive?

Davis: Well, I’m the assistant for officer procurement, and I had a senior aviator who was in charge of officer procurement, but they said I’ve got the experience in officer recruitment so, as a captain, I was in charge. We targeted certain schools, we targeted certain activities. We tracked data. We made billets out. We co-opted certain role models, be it Hispanic or black. And we really had a very strategic way that we went after this. They [other districts] didn’t do that, even though in the 6th District, the minority qualified college population was probably bigger, with Morehouse and all those schools. Our leadership was different. Our meaning in the 8th Marine Corps District under Jarvis Lynch was different. And he made no bones about it. “Gentlemen”—he had a very measured way of talking—“we’re going to be successful. We’re going to do what we’ve got to do, by gosh.”

Allison: You were successful at bringing in more minorities?

Davis: Yes, that’s correct. In the 8th Marine Corps District we were because the leadership was behind us and gave us everything we needed. We had the latitude to be creative. . . . You’ve got to do it different because you’re assimilating people to an organization which historically didn’t have a lot of minority officers. . . .

We’re different, and I think a lot of folks hear those old stories about the Marine Corps. But if you flip the script, the fact that we’re different is what should make us more attractive to minority kids. That’s what made the Marine Corps more attractive to me.

Colonel Fred L. Jones

Jones: The NNOA [National Naval Officers Association] had started while I was at Savannah State. . . . It was started at the Naval

Academy by Ken Johnson, a Navy officer. The whole purpose was this effort by the Navy Department to increase the number of black officers in the Navy and the Marine Corps. His effort was focused on getting them in the Naval Academy because he knew the value of a Naval Academy graduate in terms of retention and potential for advancement. . . . He also knew that by creating this national organization with the blessings of the secretary of the Navy and starting chapters throughout different areas of where the Navy was, that they could act as a mentoring and professional development organization also by helping its members understand how to be successful. . . . It wasn't exclusively black because, as you can imagine, a lot of the mentors had to be white—that's who the senior officers were. . . .

While here at Quantico at Command and Staff [College], [and then] I went to Headquarters Marine Corps for my next assignment, now I'm getting more involved with NNOA. Now the informal networking, I'm really committed to this thing now because I know the value of it, because it had saved my butt, and it helped me professionally. So I said, man, we need to do something.

Cliff Stanley was in the area at the time. He was working for the assistant secretary of the Navy, John S. Herrington, and that was also part of the overall effort to increase black numbers. . . . Now we're talking late '70s, early '80s, the effort for bringing in, increasing, boy, it's full bore. The pipeline is being packed. I mean, we've got big numbers now. . . . So I'm feeling really good about it, so I said, "What can we do to at least retain the ones who have the potential of succeeding in the Corps?" Stanley got his boss, Secretary Herrington, to come right down here to Dumfries [Virginia]—we're talking '79-'80 time frame—he came down and met with a group of us, informally. We talked about strategies on how to succeed, and the ultimate goal was flag officer. That was the ultimate goal. The ultimate goal in any military organization is getting to be a flag officer, which is the serious leadership of any organization.

We talked about it, and he basically laid out things like, "Guys, for the moment, you're really going to be competing against each other when you get into the upper levels." He said, "There's no way that the Navy and the Marine Corps, at this point, are going to select more than one or two of you for flag officer. That's just the way it is,

socially.” He said, “Who do you think is running the Marine Corps now? There’s so few that make flag, they’re going to make people flag who look like them. And they’ll pick one or two of you, but that’s just the way it is right now.” That’s the way he laid it out. . . . So I said, OK, that’s the reality of things. Over time we can change this thing, but that’s the reality of things. So the real important thing is, what are the things that we need to do to be competitive for the next level? Those were the critical questions. . . .

My wife and I are sociable people. We would throw informal gatherings at the house for any of the black officers, primarily, who were in the area. They weren’t exclusively black, because some of my white friends who I knew were sensitive, I’d invite them too, because they were good mentors.

How did the word get out? The word got out informally, mouth to mouth. As a student at The Basic School, if you went to the barbershop over here, central barbershop, there was Mr. Jordan, Doc, and Mr. Pearsall. If you were a black officer and you came in there, one of the first things they were going to say was, “Do you know Lieutenant Colonel Jones?” If the answer was no, they said, “Well, you ought to know him. You know Major Stanley? Well, you ought to know him.” So that was the way those black barbers, when they saw a young black officer come in that barbershop, that’s what they would say to him. It was incredible. . . .

They came from NROTC units, the Naval Academy, and from the enlisted ranks—a lot of [African American] officers came that way. But the problem with the ones that came from the enlisted ranks is this: when they got to 20 [years], they were gone. Most of them didn’t have college degrees. So when they got to 20, they were either a captain or major, they’re gone. A lot of them didn’t bother to stick around. So there was a limitation on retention of former enlisted guys in the officer ranks. Now, [Major James] Jim Capers [Jr.] was different. He was recon, former enlisted, great Marine and all that sort of thing. Guys like Capers were different; they stayed as long as they could stay. But there weren’t a lot of Capers, if you follow what I’m saying. . . .

But this mentoring thing and this informal thing, you saw the movie *Pay It Forward*? That’s exactly what we were doing; we were

paying it forward. Because the knowledge that these guys got over at my house, I was a sociable guy, I gave the parties. . . . The guys that came and got the knowledge paid it forward and passed it on to somebody else, when they went to the next duty station. So that's what was going on. The word was getting out. And we were touting the NNOA. . . .

Character is what it is, and there are some great people, and there have always been wonderful, great people who have never bought into racism, and then there are the ones that do. . . . That's just the way it is. No point in over-dwelling on it, but you've got to recognize it, deal with it, and move on. That's what NNOA is all about and always has been about. That was [also] the message in these informal sessions. The message was, recognize that there are challenges of a racial nature. There are lots of professional challenges, period. The best thing you can do is learn to be the best officer you can possibly be. If you've got questions, here are some numbers and people you can call. They were not all black. But they were people who you could talk to, and they would give you straight skinny and tell you whether you were all wet or not.

A lot of times when a guy would run his hand up and holler racism, the first question I would ask is, "What evidence do you have it's racism? Why do you think it's racism?" Before you play that card, before you play that victim card, you've got to convince me you have done all the professional things that a Marine officer is expected to do. . . . Don't assume that it's racism. It might be something else. What have you done? You learn all this stuff, and open some eyes, and some eyes you don't open.

That was happening while I was at Headquarters Marine Corps. And we were still, the push to increase, the numbers were growing, buddy. The pipeline has never been fuller—and you check it out statistically—the pipeline for the Marine Corps was never fuller than in the early '80s, late '70s, early '80s, on until perhaps 1990. The pipeline was being pumped. The Marine Corps was conscious of it, they were pushing it. The Navy was pushing it. Then all of the sudden, it fell off.

Wheeler: To what do you attribute that?

Jones: I attribute that to complacency at the highest levels. You

assume that the problem is solved and the playing field is level. By that time, we had picked up a few flag [general] officers. By that time, Stanley had made flag, Walls had made flag. So now we've got three or four blacks. So folks were saying obviously the playing field must be OK now. Well, nothing was further from the truth. This is not something that gets fixed over night. They forget our history. You don't have slavery for over 300 years and then overcome all of that stuff in a hundred years. It doesn't happen like that. That's just not human nature. No country has ever done that. I mean, the United States is not unique in this regard. There are other places in the world with similar issues, but people were not paying attention to these kinds of things. . . .

You'll see the flare-ups that happened in the early '90s, just before I retired. There were some flare-ups that happened, that bring this home big-time, that we took our eyes off the ball. We did. We stopped emphasizing sending the right people out on OSO [officer selection officer] duty. We stopped emphasizing sending the right people to NROTC duty. Those are your primary sources for people who have the potential to succeed in the Marine Corps. And if you don't send quality people out there to recruit quality people, you don't get quality people. You have these horrendous wash-out rates at OCS, which we started to experience. And then the pipeline, if you don't keep the pipeline full, natural things happen in the pipeline. . . . You've got to keep them in the pipeline.

Lieutenant Colonel Doris A. Daniels

Major Beth M. Wolny: Were you a first lieutenant at Headquarters Marine Corps?

Daniels: . . . When I got back here, it was as a first lieutenant, [then] I picked up captain. That's when I knew General Petersen, because he was the senior black colonel. . . . That's where I got to know him, and he promoted me to captain.

One of the things that happened that was significant to me was at Headquarters Marine Corps as a young captain, I just went to work as I'd always done as disburser. When it was time for formations, I was there. When inspections went, I made sure I was ready. I put every waking hour to studying and doing those things that

would make me successful. I didn't believe anybody in the Corps could do anything in the Corps that I couldn't do. There were some things that I wouldn't do as well as them, but when it came to being a basic Marine, I could do that. I felt strongly about it because when I looked back, I [thought of] the Montford Pointers who [led the way]. . . . When it was time for the review for our fitness report, . . . we went up for our evaluation, and the battalion commander went over my fitness report and everything, and then they have to rank them. And I was just blown away when I walked out of that office. Of I think it was 14 captains he commanded, I was number one. And I was just amazed. I left there in a daze, and it wasn't because I didn't believe I was good, but I didn't understand them as well as I understood me.

Wolny: Where did you go from there?

Daniels: Amphibious Warfare School [AWS]. Women had never attended that school. It was for the premier captains of the Corps, Navy, and other services—all men. Lo and behold, I think it was two other women, three of us, went off to Amphibious Warfare School. I remember going to check in that fall. It was a nine-month course. Another first. They put us in what they call “dens,” and you had a colonel in charge of the den. He was like your den daddy. That had to be one of the most interesting nine months. The guys, starting off, hated me. There were only three women. They were angry because why did we have to get a woman? Why can't one of the other dens get a woman? I'm telling you, I remember the first day we were in there, the colonel is standing, giving an introduction, introducing himself, and he stopped, paused, and looked at me. And he kept talking. Then finally he said, “I'm sorry. I just never had a woman in my den before.” All the guys looked at me. There's 13 officers, captains. The only thing—and I think that's probably the dumbest thing I ever said—the only thing I could think to say was, “Well, I've never been in a den before.”

Wolny: Was it a tough year, then?

Daniels: Yes. I had to ask myself, “Is it me? Is it because I'm a woman? Is it because I'm black?” I don't know if they'd do another black officer like that because there were other black officers in the other dens. I said, “It's definitely because I'm a woman.” [The other

students thought] she's just a woman, they're just doing one of these affirmative action things. Others felt maybe that if I hadn't been there, another male officer would have that seat. This isn't a thing I'm just speculating. These guys debated this stuff right in front of me. They had no shame. And at no time could I afford to get up and say, "You know what you guys can do?" At no time could I afford to do that. I could have done it, but it would not have gone well. So that was a tough year, Amphibious Warfare School.

Colonel Kenneth D. Dunn

Dunn: I was the S-3 [operations] for 1st Battalion, 10th Marines. Back in those days, we had the nuclear capability in artillery battalions. You had something called the NTPI [Navy Technical Proficiency Inspections]. These were Navy inspections that you had to withstand once every other year. We had this top-secret capability in artillery. That's pretty much where I made my mark. In the 10th Marines, you had the five battalions, each one of them had a nuclear capability. That is, in the straight-leg battalion, so to speak, one firing battery is designated a nuclear certified battery. When I came in as the S-3, we went through an NTPI, so I knew all the procedures. When I was assigned a firing battery, I took over that nuclear certified battery, K 1/10 [Battery K, 1st Battalion, 10th Marine Regiment]. Man, I'll tell you, I always said that the Marine Corps didn't have to pay me, just take care of my family, because I enjoyed being a battery commander so much.

Allison: Why is that? In what way?

Dunn: I just think that at that time, I realized that I really enjoyed command. If just for whatever reason, I thought that I was very, very fortunate to be able to command Marines. I loved it, too. I never looked left, never looked right, I just said, "I want to command more and more and more." The racial climate in 1981, the Marine Corps just had gradually turned the corner by leadership, getting rid of people who didn't belong here. Drugs were prevalent, as was race, in those days. We had one kid that was convicted of murder in the battery. He'd just been convicted of murder as I got there, so he wasn't there, but we had drugs. It wasn't until we started bringing the dogs through that we got rid of the marijuana. I enjoyed that, though, get-



Courtesy of Col Kenneth D. Dunn

Kenneth D. Dunn early in his Marine Corps career, as a series commander at Parris Island, circa 1978.

ting my own barracks, but it was just a phenomenal time to be in it.

We had Beirut during that time. As a matter of fact, we got a requirement to replace a 3/10 [3d Battalion, 10th Marines] Battery with a 1/10 [1st Battalion, 10th Marines] Battery to go to Beirut with 1/8 [1st Battalion, 8th Marines]. I raised my hand to take us. We wanted to go, but because we had the nuclear capability, they wouldn't take us. They took Charlie Battery. I think I gave them five troops, [and] one of them was killed during the bombing, a PFC [private first class]. I remember all them very, very well. After the firing battery I went to headquarters battery and commanded that, but I went up to regiment headquarters to do all the nuclear stuff. A lot of people ran away from it, but since I'd been raised in it, I really enjoyed it. Maybe I'm somewhat perverted, but I enjoy that stuff.

Allison: So that was a pivotal tour for you.

Dunn: Yes, I was battery commander. I got selected for major. Then next I came to Quantico for the first time. Colonel John J. Carroll, my former battalion commander, was the director of AWS. He asked me to come join him as an instructor. . . . Remember, he's also got a strong bent towards competition. He wanted me to coach his football team, the flag football team. So I came up to AWS and was the first black instructor there.

Allison: That they ever had?

Dunn: Ever. At AWS, I was the first one. I found that out by looking at the placards on the wall. We got there in '84. I taught the class of '85 and class of '86. I taught the artillery package. Learned a lot. I was frocked a major while I was there.

Allison: So you're pretty junior, as the students are all captains.

Dunn: Yes. You had some long-ball hitters over there. General Keith [T.] Holcomb was a major there. On the racial side, I was the only black instructor there in my first year. The second year, Ron Coleman joined us. Of course we all know each other. All of us.

Allison: All the black officers?

Dunn: Yes. We all grew up together, [were] stationed together and played ball with each other. We got into pick-up basketball. Now it's golf—same thing. [Ronald L.] Bailey, he can even play basketball, but I beat him all the time. The racial attitude in that period of time, everybody's just trying to get that next rung on the ladder.

Allison: As an AWS instructor, did you have any situations or problems?

Dunn: The usual points; it's what you do. It's not about what you look like, it's what you do. It was a good run at AWS. I was there for two years.

I went to Command and Staff, as a student. I think in our class we probably had maybe five black students. We all knew each other. Then I went back to Okinawa where I was the S-3 for 3/12 [3d Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment] for two years, and then I was the XO for 3/12 for a year. Again, I was in hog heaven. I loved being an S-3, I really did, moving batteries and training and operations.

On the racial side, that was when I spoke on Dr. [Martin Luther] King [Jr.] to the Corps. They had just made the holiday legal. This was 1987–88. My commanding officer suggested that I give a speech for the Dr. King breakfast that we had in the battalion. Of course I said, "Yes sir." So I did all the research, and I've been speaking on Dr. King ever since.

But Okinawa was great. On the racial side, no real issues or anything. My family was happy. That's when a lot of us who were majors used to run together. Al Davis, Willie [J.] Williams, Ron Coleman—they'd go far. About six or seven of us, because we all lived in the same

town. Our families were there, and we would play basketball on Saturdays, go to Camp Shields, or go to Kadena, or go down to Foster. That's when we really got to know each other. I didn't know Al Davis until then. It was great. No racial problems or any of that kind of stuff. After being a three [S-3], I moved up to be the XO of the battalion. The only down side to all of this is I left the battalion in July of 1990, and then August is when Saddam Hussein crossed over into Kuwait. So I was completely out if it for Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

Colonel John W. Moffett

Moffett: The human relations branch of the Manpower department of HQMC [Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps] was in existence when I arrived [in 1980]. . . . I was assigned as the affirmative action program officer, and that was the beginning of the creation of processes to impact the acquisition of minorities within the Corps. A truly formal program did not exist, so after discussions with the branch head and other members of the affirmative action program team, we elected to take the statistics of these minority groups as the basis for minority growth across the Corps. Obviously, in many cases, the population numbers were too great to even consider a rate of success, but we used them anyway.

I guess I just formalized what others may have thought about but not put into practice, with goals and objectives. During the latter part of my assignment, we were able to get engaged with a Department of Defense [DoD] study and had a reassuring feeling that we had been on the right track in our pursuit. About that same time, HQMC Manpower hired a gentleman named Howard Jackson, who had worked on similar issues. He was hired as a Marine Corps equal opportunity consultant and focused his studies on the assimilation of minorities, primarily African Americans, into the Corps. After completing the draft documents, I recall the study was terminated since it did not provide any of the "magic sauce" and only served to validate that our efforts were close to being on track. I recall that the DoD study was conducted by a U.S. Army historian. . . .

Dr. Thomas M. Baughn: How, specifically, did you address minority representation and experiences in the Corps?

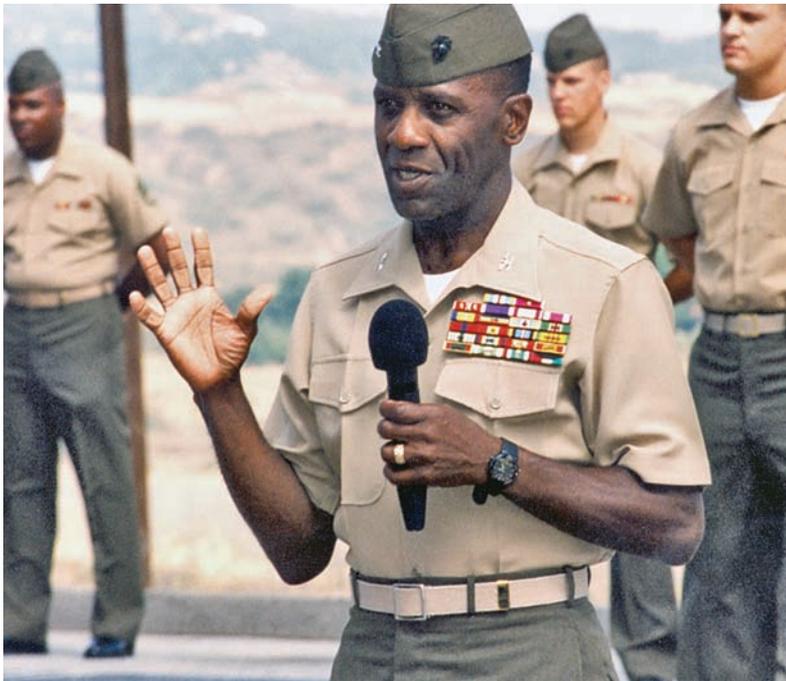
Moffett: After the word was circulated that we were seriously

pursuing growth of the Marine Corps population across all ethnic groups, the focus was broadened to include Hispanic and Asian Americans. We pursued formal Marine Corps participation in organizations that served as representatives of these minority groups, such as NNOA, LULAC [League of United Latin American Citizens], National Society of Hispanic MBAs, and National Association of Asian [American] Professionals. These organizations provided sources of qualified applicants for officer programs as well as providing positive feedback to these communities regarding the positive nature of military service. Visits and presentations to these organizations provided the best source of minority representation, with individuals like Lieutenant General Frank Petersen and Major General Jerome Cooper as role models to provide some real experiences from both active-duty and Reserve perspectives.

We did not have the general officer population at the time to

Col John W. Moffett speaking at his retirement ceremony in 1996.

Courtesy of Col John W. Moffett



make a major impact, but everyone we could touch on active duty, who was having a positive career, was engaged to return to their universities as examples of successful Marine Corps careers. These visits proved to be very successful/positive examples for the minority communities of all colors. Not all of our active representatives were minority since we had limited numbers in our ranks, but there were officers like General [Paul] P. X. Kelley who always set the positive drumbeat we needed.

Baughn: Did you work on the promotion process?

Moffett: I was able to sit on every augmentation board and many promotion boards with the primary purpose being the review of the statistics that successful officers and enlisted had achieved and were maintaining to be successful. This was a process that provided significant insight to the gates officers and enlisted needed to pass in order to be successful in our aggressive and competitive promotion processes. We did not want to take an approach that other services had recommended by promoting to a preselected quota. . . .

Baughn: Who did you look up to as far as a mentor or role model as how to be a Marine officer?

Moffett: [Charles F.] Charlie Bolden [Jr.]. When I was a major and working in Manpower and got selected for lieutenant colonel, he was junior to me in rank. But I made contact with him, and he was in the NASA program at the time, he had just been assigned, and I connected with him and said, "Hey Charlie, can I get you to come up to Washington, visit some high schools, visit some colleges?" I wanted him to show them what the Marine Corps was doing with minority officers.

He said, "OK."

Then I said, "Oh yeah, you have to get a haircut." He had one of those big afros and he had to get a haircut. "I don't want you wearing your flight helmet." And he did. He came up wearing his flight uniform and all his attire, and we took him around Washington, DC, and Maryland. But he was really tremendous. Then I started looking at other black officers assigned nearby, other races, Asians, what have you. . . .

Lieutenant General Petersen was one we looked up to. He's an aviator, but he's approachable, levelheaded, and he's a guy you can talk to, but you can also pull him aside and chat. . . .

I was also back forth with 8th & I because I had been assigned there. I knew how it could spotlight African American officers. For example, Stanley was on the parade deck at 8th & I. When he finished that tour, I said, “He’s going somewhere.” He had been the adjutant. Stanley got the exposure there, but from that time on, you’re on your own.

Colonel Henry L. Reed

Wheeler: One of the observations that some people have made as they’ve looked at this over the long period is that the Marine Corps will go through periods where they are very attentive and they make great progress. Then they kind of shift their attention to other issues, and there will be a period maybe where there will be some backsliding, and then they will focus on the minority issue again, and it will improve. What has been your perspective on that?

Reed: There were periods there which frustrated me, especially when I had the special assistant’s job. The Marine Corps did get away from it, and there were world events that were taking place that, rightfully so, the Marine Corps had to pay more attention to at that time. But I got the feeling that the Marine Corps never did let go of the fact that we have minority officers, that still we had to address some of their concerns. During that period, the ’87 to ’90 period, the females became very vocal. So those were problems that you had to address, but the thing is, I think the Marine Corps did the right thing. We can’t address just black officers; we’ve got to address all minorities.

One of the first things that got me one time is when I had my billet at Headquarters, Cliff Stanley was assigned to the Naval Academy. And you always had a black officer assigned. Well, they were going to replace Cliff with a female officer. That didn’t go over too well with the leadership in the Marine Corps. The general officers at that point, they meant good, but they left it on me to talk to the monitors. So I had to fight with the monitors.

Major General Leo V. Williams III

Lieutenant Colonel Mark D. Andrasi: At that time [later 1970s], was there a push by the civilian employers to look for qualified minority candidates coming out of the service?



Courtesy of Col Henry L. Reed
 LtCol Henry L. Reed demonstrating an antitank weapon to Republic of Korea officers while Reed was deployed to Korea in 1985 with the 3d Battalion, 3d Marines.

L. Williams: At the time, I'm not so sure that Ford Motor Company was as much looking for minority candidates as much as they were really interested in candidates with military experience. The HR [human resources] guy, the head of HR for the activity that I went into was a prior Navy lieutenant commander or commander, and he really had a high regard for guys with military backgrounds. First of all, he knew that most of us, especially those of us who were Naval Academy graduates, had degrees in engineering, and a few of us then had advanced degrees in business as well, so he saw it as a really good fit. The fact that I was a minority just was kind of an added benefit. So I didn't ever get the sense during that time . . . say around '76 through about 1980 or so—I never got the sense that Ford was really out trying to find black managers and black executives.

That did happen at a later time, but I think corporate America came along slower than the military did in terms of both integration and moving minorities into executive positions. So again, I just happened to kind of be one of the lucky ones.

In the activity that I went into in truck operations, there was a particular section that was the most highly regarded activity in truck operations. In order to get in, you had to have an engineering degree and a master's in business administration. It was very, very highly sought after, and you had to be interviewed and approved by I think at least three of the managers in the activity. I had the endorsement of two of them, and one of the two convinced the third one to say yes. It was a good way to be introduced into Ford Motor Company because they brought us in one level higher than they did most of their other engineering employees, and that gave us kind of a leg up. So that did absolutely work to my advantage.

[Williams transferred to the Marine Corps Reserve in 1978.]

In the Marine Corps, again, with the 1st Battalion, 24th Marines, we got two captains, two black captains in the same headquarters unit in Detroit. That was very rare.

Andrasi: What was the racial makeup of the unit at that time?

L. Williams: It was about 70 percent black. This is Detroit, man. And a lot of these guys in that '78 time period were guys that were drafted, but they were at the end of their enlistments, and some of them decided this Reserve thing is not a bad deal. A number of them came on active duty for two years, and then they had a six-year Reserve requirement.

It was an interesting time because it was, first of all, a time of long hair. So a lot of our guys would actually, when they went away from the armory, they were wearing afro wigs so that they could look like they really belonged in the community. It was a very unusual time. These guys really were not much interested in unit cohesion, not much interested in being the best unit you could possibly be. A lot of times we spent detailing guys out into the community to go knock on doors and find out why PFC [private first class], or lance corporal, or corporal so and so wasn't at drill this weekend. It was a time like I hope we never, ever have to see again.

I hear folks talk all the time about we ought to reinstitute the

draft. In my mind, that's the worst possible thing that we could do for the readiness and morale in the military. Bringing in folks who don't want to be there [is] not a good idea. And we proved it.

Lieutenant General Frank E. Petersen Jr.

Petersen: In June 1986 came what was to be the crowning jewel of my entire Marine Corps career—command of Marine Corps Base Quantico, the most unique post in the Corps. They called it the “Crossroads of the Corps.” Thousands of Marines attended professional military schools throughout their careers, but it was at Quantico that all Marine officers began their careers.⁶ . . .

Quarters Number One, typical in the military for the senior officers' housing, was big enough for three families. The two-story house had about eight bedrooms and a large drawing room. . . . In fact, I think it's one of the better sets of general officer quarters in the entire Marine Corps. I'd call it a showpiece for Marine Corps Base Quantico. A beautiful piece of ground. . . .

As I gave myself a tour of the house and its environs, a glance out back brought me up short. Behind the house were the remains of a small, six-bedroom house I would call a shack. It had been the domicile, in the olden days, in which the stewards who served the commanding general had lived—close by, waiting for his beck and call. The poor souls who used to live in that rundown shack were more than likely black stewards—guys who held the kind of job that Navy recruiters wanted to slide me into when I was trying to join the service back in the early 1950s.

One of my first official acts on Marine Corps Base Quantico was to have that sonofabitching house condemned and torn down. It was, after all, a derelict, and I am proud to report, had not been used for its intended purpose by recent Quantico commanders just before my time. So I had the debris removed and the spot turfed over. The act gave me a great sense of accomplishment and satisfaction.⁷ . . .

[Upon retiring in 1988] when I drove out the gate of Quantico . . . I saw something that made me twice as proud to have been a part of it all. As I drove by one of the sports fields, I saw a group of boys playing football. The group included white, black, yellow, and red kids. That's the norm around Marine bases these days. No problems there. You don't see

groups separated by skin color anymore. Finally, minorities were beginning to get a fair shake in the military. In fact, the military led civilian life in this respect.

I like to think I helped that come about.⁸



Chapter 7

Leveling Out—The 1990s

The optimism of the 1980s was dampened in the 1990s by charges that the Marine Corps had fallen short of being fair and equitable in its treatment of minorities. Discussions, claims, and counterclaims appeared in articles in professional service journals and most publicly on the television news show *60 Minutes* in October 1993. The recurring allegations regarded discrimination in promotions, jobs, and occupational field assignments. Meanwhile, some white officers asserted that official affirmative action efforts and perceived special treatment afforded minorities opportunities that were unavailable to qualified whites.

The Marine Corps aggressively confronted racial issues in its ranks. The Commandants of this decade, Generals Alfred M. Gray Jr., Carl E. Mundy Jr., and Charles C. Krulak, made priorities of racial diversity and equal opportunity. The public controversy lent urgency to these efforts. High-level coordination meetings and study groups worked to resolve racial issues. These included the Commandant's Task Force on Equal Opportunity, an ethnic diversity seminar at the 1993 General Officers' Symposium, and quality management boards to address excessive minority attrition at Officer Candidates School (OCS) and Marine officer career development. At the core, the Marine Corps remained committed to improving diversity as a key aspect of its efforts to improve the overall racial climate. One concrete policy that emerged was to increase the targeted goal of African American officers from 6 to 7.8 percent of the officer population in the Marine Corps.

Despite the negative publicity, the Marine Corps continued to move forward on racial issues. Although it did not reach the higher recruiting goals for African American officers, the number increased

Photo Left: BGen George H. Walls Jr. in Cuba with Haitian refugees while he commanded the joint task force for Operation Guantanamo in 1991–92.

Courtesy of BGen George H. Walls Jr.

to about 5 five percent of the officer corps. Highlights of the decade included Captain Eddie S. Ray, an African American company commander of a light armored infantry battalion in Operation Desert Storm, receiving the Navy Cross for heroism. He was one of only two Marines to be so recognized from that campaign. Promotions, augmentation, and command assignments improved for black officers, men and women. African American officers assumed positions of increasing visibility and responsibility. There was also a flurry of officers promoted to general; indeed, in 1997, the Marine Corps had four African American general officers in uniform, making a total of seven African Americans whom the Corps had selected to wear stars.

Colonel Alphonse G. Davis

Davis: When I got to the Headquarters [Marine Corps in 1989] to be the head of the national officer recruiting effort, there was a colonel by the name of [Robert C.] Bob Lewis. He was the director of the 9th Marine Corps District. He's key. General [Leslie M.] Les Palm is key. And they're key because they weren't afraid to do something different. Colonel Bob Lewis, a white guy, . . . he really helped me to craft, and I really took his idea and refined it more where we gave quotas for black, Hispanic, and other—BH and O. Instead of having a “minority” quota, we put out numbers for blacks, Hispanics, and other ethnic groups.

I had support because the deputy of recruiting was Conwill R. Casey, again, another well-intentioned, good man who like General [Jarvis D.] Lynch [Jr.], because Casey was General Lynch's deputy, so they are of the same ilk. These are guys who are—and again, not politically correct guys—just saying, “D*** it, we need some good black officers now. That's what I need you to do.” That type of thing. And so it's easy for me to say, “This is what we need to do.” All they said is, “D*** it, Al, you're going to piss some people off, but we'd better be d*** successful.”

And I said, “We are. Give me the support and here's what we need to do. We need to ratchet it up a little bit, and let's not just take any and everybody to fill a slot.”

Dr. Fred H. Allison: Recruit good people. They're out there.

Davis: That's correct. And man, when I got to be commanding

officer of Officer Candidates School, and me knowing all the ins and outs of recruiting in this Marine Corps, the average guy isn't going to survive. In this Marine Corps, the less-than-average black guy is going to get killed. That's just fact. What we did—and this is a big “we”—to make numbers, we allowed people who were in positions of recruiting people to give us less than their best effort. From a recruiting aspect, I knew this as an officer selection officer [OSO], I knew this as assistant for officer procurement at the 8th District, and I made sure that when I was at the national effort, we didn't do it. But I saw it when I became the commander of OCS.

If I'm talking to you, as a white guy, I'm just telling you, “Fred, you want to join?” See, I've got a bunch of guys that look like you, so I can just basically tell you, “Hey, here's the deal, sign the paperwork. You need to run; you need to do this, that, and the other. Check with me,” and what have you. But if you're a black guy, I'm talking to you about what the Marine Corps does for your résumé, that you don't have to think long term. Just come in and do the three years or the four years. Go and work out a little bit. In OCS, you'll be able to get through it. I'm changing my sales pitch. . . .

Because we had a targeted effort, we did some things that we got involved in the recruiting, like the Bayou Classic, the black sports events and all those cultural events, the sororities, the fraternities, those things that culturally mean a lot to black folks. . . .

OSOs have to do their prospecting; they have got to be more selective. You go to a guy who went to Saint Augustine High School because you know academics in that high school are good. You aren't going to be getting those skills in college. In college, they're preparing you for a major field of study. If a kid comes to me, and I'm a recruiter, the first question I have is, “Where'd you go to high school?” That kid tells me, “I went to Ben Franklin,” or, “I went to McDonald 35 in New Orleans,” or, “I went to Warren Easton,” or, “I went to Saint Augustine”—bing. I know that kid's got the skills that are going to help him pass that test. I don't care about what college he went to.

So that's how your prospecting has to be more selective. Now I will tell you, it used to be this thing, “Be careful of these kids who went to black colleges.” Well, no. What do you mean by that? Well, they don't do well in TBS [The Basic School] or OCS. Well, first,

you've got to be more selective in your prospecting to make sure whomever you talk to has got those basic skills to pass those tests, those standardized tests we have. Then we've got to do the mentoring to let them know they're coming into a different culture. . . .

The emphasis was on getting more minority officers. We got more specific in the different racial categories—black, Hispanic, and other. I thought that was helpful. And also, at that time, as opposed to now, the officer recruiting effort was centralized at the Headquarters in Washington, DC. . . . Me as a lieutenant colonel with six years behind me in officer recruiting at successive levels I felt was key.

Right now we have it where we've combined officer recruiting with one of the enlisted recruiting legions, and I think that's a mistake, I really do, because it suboptimizes the effort. Recruiting officers, especially when you're talking about diversifying your officer core, that's important. The numerical requirements for enlisted recruiting are very, very challenging. A lot more numbers, and it's a monthly thing to make those shipping quotas. I think to put officer recruiting with that does a disservice to the efforts to recruit more minority officers because of the numerical challenges of the enlisted recruiting. Plus right now, the equal opportunity branch is in Quantico [Virginia]. The officer recruiting effort is in South Carolina or what have you. And it separates it. Those efforts need to go hand in hand.

When I came up to Headquarters Marine Corps as head of the officer recruiting branch, they were working closely with the equal opportunity branch. But when I got there, we became more closely aligned. Some of the efforts that they were doing outside of the Marine Corps, the external efforts, have to impact us in recruiting. Plus if you have internal problems, you'd better well know about it when you're recruiting people because people read a lot. We have social media going on. If I'm out there trying to convince you to come into the Marine Corps and you say, "Hey, what about that *60 Minutes* thing?" and I can't talk about that, I don't know about it or can't talk about it from a position of knowledge, then I've lost you. Why would I want to go to the Marine Corps? . . .

Allison: You picked up the 8th Motor Transport Battalion in 1992.

Davis: 8th Motor Transport. They had just come out of the war, Desert Storm. I was told, again, “Get out at 20 years and go to work for MCI.” MCI at that time was a telecommunications company in Washington. I had met this Army officer who turned down colonel to go work for MCI, interviewed me and said, “Man, we want you to come and work for us.” General Krulak, who was then the head of Manpower, used to come down to my office, walk the halls, and I used to have a donut on my desk every morning. I’d leave my desk and it’d be bitten off and put back down. It was him. He asked what would it take to keep me in the Marine Corps. I said, “A good job.”

He said, “Well, you’ve got a good job now. You’re the head of officer recruiting.”

I said, “Come on, sir, a battalion.”

He called George Walls and called me down to his office and said, “Hey, I just got off the phone with George Walls. There’s a battalion waiting for you at Camp Lejeune [North Carolina].” Boom, I was gone. . . .

Allison: I believe that it was the *60 Minutes* episode in October 1993 that led to you returning to Headquarters Marine Corps to serve as advisor to the Commandant on equal opportunity matters and head, equal opportunity branch. How did that transpire, and what were the significant aspects of those positions?

Davis: *60 Minutes* happened. I was getting ready to move on base [Camp Lejeune] that Saturday. (This was before cell phones). I got a call at my home saying I needed to be up to Headquarters Marine Corps on Tuesday for an interview. My monitor wasn’t at liberty to talk about it. I said something like, “But I’m getting ready to move on base.”

He said, “If I was you, I wouldn’t execute that move.”

So I drove up there on Monday to go for the interview. It was about becoming an advisor on equal opportunity matters to General Mundy, because of this *60 Minutes* interview. General [Jerome G.] Cooper had recommended me: “Hey, this needs to happen, and Al Davis is the guy.” So I get up there and things were buzzing. I worked personally for General Mundy, interfaced personally with him.

Allison: What conclusions or advisement did you give so that another *60 Minutes* public relations explosion would not happen again?

Davis: I believe this whole flap happened because of a lack of diversity of opinions, which can be created sometimes by a lack of racial diversity in certain assignments at Headquarters.

Allison: In other words, there was not input by blacks at high levels?

Davis: That's correct. And the folks who were crunching the numbers were young guys—captains and majors—and they're looking at the stats. Then they said, "Gee whiz, blacks are not doing well in land navigation, and swimming, and shooting, and all that stuff." But if you look at it, for example, I come from New Orleans, and when integration occurred, they closed Lincoln Beach, where blacks went and we had our swimming pools. Pontchartrain Beach stayed open, but they closed the swimming pools. And so the only other places we were able to go swimming were some housing projects that had swimming pools. Then you had some guys like me from the city who didn't shoot weapons. . . .

When General Mundy's talking points were prepared, he would have benefited from the diversity of folks who are in those staff officer positions to be able to look at that and say, "That doesn't sound right."

Allison: What were some of the more important initiatives that you undertook when serving as General Mundy's advisor on equal opportunity?

Davis: Among my duties was to do a structured study on manpower, human fairness, for equal opportunity branch, which actually was in a whole other part or division in Headquarters, not the Manpower Division. So I looked at that, who we had there, who was assigned there, what was their quality record, what was their record of performance, what types of things they were doing, and what was the status of the initiatives there. The other thing I was tasked with doing was reviving initiatives to sort of help on the recruiting end and to help our image in the community.

Allison: The Marine Corps image?

Davis: The Marine Corps image. Initially, we had the diversity interest group, key people in the community, some movers and shakers, to advise the Commandant on some things we ought to be doing in the community. They would meet with the Commandant like

once a quarter. When I did the structured study thing, we moved equal opportunity to Manpower. We looked at the records of officers. Why assign guys to dead-end careers, or who did not perform well in a particular job? It's a self-fulfilling prophecy. Then we looked at the initiatives that we had going on, like Team Marines and all those things, to make sure those things got out to the field. I made visits to the field, to the FMF [Fleet Marine Force], did briefings and other things. And I really worked to solidify our relationship with the recruiting command, that we were doing things hand in hand. If there's this conference going on, we'd tell them we're going to have OSOs there. Who's going? What are our goals? What do we want to accomplish other than to just go set up a table? We did "hot washes"—what did we learn? What did we do good? What did we do bad? Do we have referrals and leads? What's the next step? We really expanded our relationship with the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People], with CORE [Congress of Racial Equality], those types of things, those high profile type things.

I wrote about it in the book [*Pride, Progress, and Prospects*].¹ We undertook this big effort, this campaign, led by General Les Palm, on diversity. It focused on recruiting, promotions, assignments, retention, career progression. All that was part of the campaign plan for diversity. That was in the early '90s. So that thing was pretty big. General Krulak played a role in getting that kicked off when he was down at MCCDC [Marine Corps Combat Development Command]. It was important because we began to talk about the issues. And then we really got to hear the deep-seated ill feelings that were out there. From both senior officers and young field grade, like senior captains and majors, that's where we had the problem—this thing about affirmative action and the idea that we were lowering the standards. That was when we were talking about diversifying the Marine Corps and minority recruiting and all of that, and the assignments and what have you. It was worse then than it was in the '80s.

Allison: There was some backlash?

Davis: Yes, there was backlash. It was all about "you're taking an opportunity from me," and "we're lowering the standards of the

Marine Corps.” Another key thing we did, and I credit General Mundy for this, we took a lot of our senior general officers to the Diversity Opportunity Management Institute. We were getting some attention and pressures from the Department of the Navy, from the civilian leadership. . . . I was going to these meetings with these folks, and we talked about diversity in the whole naval service. In the Department of the Navy, we were being viewed as being the recalcitrant ones in moving forward in this stuff, and we weren’t, because General Mundy was honestly trying to get some things done as a result of *60 Minutes* putting it on the table. But this thing that we did with the diversity campaign plan led by General Palm and then picked up by General [Clifford L.] Stanley, we were bringing people from all around the Corps to the table. So it was a real earnest effort, to talk about this equality thing.

Allison: So how did that end up?

Davis: A lot of that stuff worked. I left the Marine Corps in 1999, but I think it may be too early to make a final assessment. It would be interesting to see how we are doing on assignment, the ranks from captain, major, that gets you to lieutenant colonel. My concern was to repeat these special efforts with the 6th and 8th Marine Corps Districts, or the minority officer selection officers that brought me in. Do we have the same type of emphasis on it to make sure that we’re growing, we’re planting seeds again and getting kids who want to stay in to get to those levels?

Allison: Anything especially memorable from your time at Headquarters?

Davis: During my time there, a significant emotional point in my career occurred: going to Sergeant Major Edward R. Huff’s funeral. General Mundy and I flew down to North Carolina. Man, that was a significant, emotional event. I had met Sergeant Major Huff when I was a battalion commander at 8th Motor Transport. My sergeant major, a white Marine, and I were going to visit some Marines we had in the hospital at Lejeune. Somebody told us that Sergeant Major Huff was there in the hospital. The first time I had met Sergeant Major Huff, I was a second lieutenant at Lejeune. So now I’m back as a lieutenant colonel, a battalion commander, with my sergeant major, a white gentleman. And we go to his bedside, and I

grabbed his hand, and he's rubbing my hand. I said, "I met you as a second lieutenant." It was at a barbecue at his house. And I remember him sitting on the porch. He was retired then. I said, "Now I'm seeing you again here as a battalion commander. This is my sergeant major." He mouthed to the sergeant major, "You take care of him."

Allison: From there you take over as commanding officer at OCS, the first African American to hold that position. What do you consider the high points of that tour?

Davis: We named the academic building after Frederick [C.] Branch, the first black commissioned officer. How this happened is I was at a meeting, and General Mundy was there. This was on the same diversity thing. He said, "Al, what have you got to say down there?"

I said, "Well, sir, we're talking diversity, and we're bringing these kids to OCS, but they have no historical connection with previous Marines." I said, "Branch, he's the first black commissioned officer, the guy's an educator, PhD; I'd like to name that hall Branch Hall." So the generals sitting around the table remark, "We've never named anything after somebody living. Suppose this guy goes out and does . . ."

I remark, "The guy, he's on his last legs, what is he going to go out and embarrass us on?" So we finally got enough energy behind that. It was a big deal. It was in *USA Today* and on TV and all that stuff when we dedicated Branch Hall.

I raised standards for women candidates. When we would do certain activities, the guys had their packs on [while] climbing the rope and all. The women would have their tennis shoes on and the nylon shorts. The guys are doing the hard stuff. So the young ladies at The Basic School came and said, "Hey, sir, we've got to do something. We're getting our butts kicked at TBS. Why is the bar lowered for females?" So I got a group of women together to sit down and talk to the young ladies in a forum one evening and decided some changes had to be made. I ramped up the standards for the women to give them some tougher stuff so that when they got to The Basic School, they can lead men as platoon commanders. You can't lead if you think, "Well, we're on a three-mile run, a four-mile run, but I'm not doing it because I only did a mile and a half at OCS."

Standards were ramped up overall actually because of attrition

at TBS. [James T.] Jim Conway, the future Commandant, as a colonel was commander of TBS, he was my neighbor across the street. And Conway said, "Al, you've got to take care of them at your level because I've got to go to the secretary of the Navy to revoke commissions." So we ramped up the standards.

Major General Charles F. Bolden Jr.

Allison: In 1994, you returned to the Marine Corps after serving as an astronaut with NASA [National Aeronautics and Space Administration] for 14 years and served at the U.S. Naval Academy as deputy commandant. Then in 1995, you wrote an article for *Proceedings* magazine in which you noted that there was a failure in the Marine Corps to embrace cultural diversity and that discrimination continues to cast a shadow on promotions, accessions, and retentions.² Can you discuss that?

Bolden: At that time, the Naval Academy was trying to enhance its diversity and inclusion, but they weren't doing well. The evidence that I had was we did a conference. It was a leadership conference that we always did at the end of the Christmas holidays, and we brought the "stripers," the [midshipmen] brigade leadership, back a couple of days early for this. We invited the cadet leadership from West Point, from the Air Force Academy, Merchant Marine Academy, Massachusetts Maritime, we brought people in from around the country. . . . In looking at the presentations that were made by the various academies, one thing became painfully apparent to me. The Coast Guard knew how to do it. They did it incredibly well. They were head and shoulders above everybody with their programs on diversity and inclusion, and it was because the [Coast Guard] commandant said it was going to be that way. And that's why I said until leadership really, genuinely believes this and makes it their policy, it is not going to happen.

Marine Corps leadership did undertake positive action at about this time when people like General Krulak, General Mundy, and others went to the secretary of the Navy and got him to put in the precepts for promotions boards, the selection boards for general officers, "If there are black or other minority officers who are otherwise fully

qualified, pick them.” The board was told, “You have to pick them.” Up until that time, it was optional, because the board could always say, “Yes, they’re qualified, but there’s a reason that we should pick all these white guys.” He did it not only with minorities, but with other groups.

For instance, we had never had an intelligence officer selected general. . . . What General Krulak did was he went to the secretary of the Navy, I forget who it was at the time, and we got the precept that said, “If there is an intelligence officer who is otherwise best and fully qualified, pick him.” It didn’t leave an option. It said, “Unless they’re not qualified, pick them.” What was important was to have an intelligence officer as a brigadier general in the Marine Corps. . . .

Allison: Would you say this was an affirmative action program?

Bolden: I don’t think General Krulak considered it an affirmative action program at all. He figured it was absolutely essential for the Marine Corps. If we are going to be able to fight and win in a joint environment, if we are going to be a part of the joint environment, I have got to have [intelligence] officers sitting at the table. And so it turned out to be the only way he could do that was through what you and I would call an affirmative action program. I have got to have a qualified intelligence officer. The only way I can do that is if they be a general officer. Nobody’s going to let me send a colonel to be the J-2 on anybody’s staff. So it’s got to be a general officer.

At the time that he was the Commandant, at one time, we had four black two-stars. The one thing he did not do, and he just didn’t have time, but it had been done before him, General Petersen had risen to the rank of three-star. After that, there was not another three-star until many years later. And that was just a battle because there was no Commandant willing to do it.

Brigadier General George H. Walls Jr.

Walls: By this time [in 1989], I was a colonel and wanted to go do something that was just purely fun and maybe nice to round out my career. One of my former midshipmen was now the assistant monitor, [Melvin G.] Mel Spiese, who is now a major general, still on active duty in the Marine Corps. He called and said, “Don’t know what you’re planning to do for your next assignment, but there’s an



Courtesy of BGen George H. Walls Jr.

While he was commanding general of 2d Force Service Support Group at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, BGen George H. Walls Jr. (left) invited a legend of the Corps to morning colors in 1992, SgtMaj Edgar R. Huff, who had enlisted 50 years before, in June 1942, as one of the earliest Montford Point Marines.

ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps] opening, commanding officer of the ROTC unit at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill [UNC].”

I said, “Boy, that sounds interesting. Put my name in the hat for it.” It took a while. People called and said, “Do you really want to go do this? This is the kind of thing that people go do when they’re looking at the end of their career.”

I said, “Look, I’ve got my fitness reports. When the general selection board comes up, that’s the last report they’re going to see, and they were all good reports. . . . So they allowed me to go to UNC.

The process at UNC was to interview with probably a half a dozen professors. The University of North Carolina had been through some turbulence during the Vietnam War, and what they had done, they created what was called the peace, war, and defense [PWAD] curriculum. Army, Navy, and Air Force ROTC were all

under PWAD. So I had to interview with a team of professors from PWAD to get their blessing. It wasn't just a matter of the Marine Corps ordering me in there. The university had to accept me and all that sort of thing. I got through that fine and went over to UNC for two years.

Expecting to retire, I had made some contacts on the university campus and actually was a hair's breadth away from a job offer in student affairs there at UNC when I got a phone call from General Gray saying, "What are you doing down there at UNC?"

I said, "Well, sir, I'm a professor of naval science down here, and I'm doing my best to find some good Marines and some good sailors to go to the Navy and Marine Corps."

"Well, I've got another job for you. You've been selected for promotion." That was a real surprise. I had been passed over once, and I thought, "What the heck? That's fine." You make colonel in the Marine Corps, you're at the top of your game, and that's great.

He said, "You're going to do this?"

I said, "Well, yes sir." How was I going to say no? "Yes sir." Went to the brigadier general officer orientation course up at Headquarters [Marine Corps]. . . . Finished that, and probably the last day or so we had one-on-ones with General Gray. He called me in and said, "I want you to go down and take over 2d Force Service Support Group [2d FSSG] down at Camp Lejeune [North Carolina]."

I said, "Sir, I'm honored to serve, and thank you very much." So I went back to Chapel Hill and finished up the last part of my time there and then transferred to 2d FSSG and ended up relieving General Chuck Krulak, who ended up being Commandant of the Marine Corps. If I could have dreamed up an assignment, I could not have dreamed up a better assignment than the two years I spent at 2d FSSG.

No sooner did I get into command than the Haitian situation came up where [Jean Bertrande] Aristide was kicked out of power in a military coup. . . . Because of the nature of the FSSG and its engineer capability, and water purification capability, and all those things, logisticians were the logical people to be the nucleus of the joint task force. . . . We had at one time a whole Air Force tent city called Harvest Eagle that was set up there for my personnel to live

in. And then we had 12,000 Haitians in the camps all over Guantanamo Bay [Cuba]. Again, another very profound experience. . . . I developed a tremendous affinity for the Haitian people. As is the case with a lot of people when these kinds of things happen, they're just good people caught in a bad situation.

Chief Warrant Officer-3 William E. Hutson: I understand that you retired after that tour.

Walls: I finished out my time at FSSG and the Commandant said, "We want you to come back to Washington and fly a desk for a while." At that point, the family was here and pretty well rooted in North Carolina. I really had no excitement about going back and doing a staff job for a few years, so I asked him, with his kind permission, if I could be allowed to retire. I actually retired one year early.

Hutson: I want to ask about mentors, informal networks through the course of your career, and friends that pop in and out of your career. To what extent is that a formal thing that goes on? Or is this just a natural thing that happens in the Marine Corps?

Walls: I think it operates on two levels. It operates on the level of a commanding officer or a reporting senior doing the things that need to be done to professionally develop officers, particularly young folks who have just come into the Marine Corps. I had an inordinate number of people who helped me along the way. For example, in 3d Engineer Battalion, there were a bunch of people who would or could have just as easily just let me be another second lieutenant. . . . These were people who at one level, at one time or another took enough interest in me to kind of teach me the ropes and tell me which way to go, or gave me guidance and advice and those sorts of things. Those were all white officers. My black mentors were Colonel [Kenneth H.] Ken Berthoud [Jr.], Colonel Frank [E.] Petersen [Jr.], Major General [Jerome] Gary Cooper. So it operated on all different kinds of levels. I guess people looked at me and said, "Hey, this guy's maybe got some potential. Let's spend some time and work with him and see what he can do."

Lots of times what they did, they stretched me. They gave me things to do that stretched me, and they stretched my capability and caused me to learn things that I might not have learned to do other-

wise. So I think in my case, it operated at all different levels, and all of those people whose names I have mentioned in the interview—Colonel [Eugene J.] Paradis, [Robert F.] Bob Foxworth, and all these people—were all people who in one way or another positively affected my career as a Marine Corps officer.

Major General Arnold Fields

Fields: When I came into the Marine Corps, a black Marine lieutenant colonel was very hard to find. There were some, don't misunderstand me. . . . General Petersen would have been one of them. But by the time I had completed my tenure at the Army War College [in 1989] and was now prepared to go down to 2d Marine Division and now take over, eventually, the infantry battalion, I felt that we had made some fairly substantial progress, even though General Frank Petersen was still the only [active duty] black general in the Marine Corps. Things would begin to improve in that area in the early '90s. We had a few more colonels by then. But the senior level ranks in our Marine Corps, from the standpoint of minorities, specifically blacks, were still a bit short.

We had not reached, even until the point at which I retired in

MajGen Arnold Fields (left) visiting with United Nations peacekeeping forces in Sierra Leone during his time as deputy commander of Marine Forces Europe (2001–2003).

Courtesy of MajGen Arnold Fields



2004, a level at which there was anything above and beyond the expectation that when I entered a room as a Marine Corps officer that there would be more than one black officer of my rank in the room. That just was not the expectation throughout my entire career. And, might I add, [that was true] even into the federal appointments subsequently. . . . So while we're making progress, the density of blacks in the senior level ranks of our federal community—both military and civilian—is still behind the mark. I don't know if we'll ever reach that. I think we eventually will, and it's gradually happening, at a very slow pace.

Lieutenant Colonel Mark E. Wood: After the war college, you took command of a battalion and went to war. How did that go?

Fields: Yes. I left the war college and was assigned to Camp Lejeune. I was assigned to the 2d Marine Division. . . . I spent about a year, 10 months, kind of in a holding pattern. No one had told me necessarily that I'm waiting to take over anything of leadership, but especially an infantry battalion, but apparently I was. I spent those months as the deputy inspector general for 2d Marine Division. . . . Eventually General [William M.] Keys, who later became the division commander, elected to make me battalion commander . . . 3d Battalion, 6th Marines. . . . We were scheduled to go to Twentynine Palms [California] and do all the things there, usually template training for infantry battalions. Then Desert Shield/Desert Storm came along, so we wound up going to the real desert as opposed to going to Twentynine Palms.

I was blessed and privileged by the opportunity to be the battalion commander and blessed by the fortunate period during which I was able to do so with great leaders such as General Keys and certainly former Commandant of the Marine Corps Chuck Krulak. I feel that among those two individuals, I believe and still do, and forever will, that their hearts and heads were in the right place when it came to what was best for the United States Marine Corps at that point in time. And they were doing everything in their power to make things happen within the rules and regulations and the applicable dimensions within which each one of us is expected to operate.

Timing was great, and I did the best that I could with the bat-

talion. It was nice a war came along, but no one really wants a war to come along. But I was privileged to be in command at that time, and that was an experience from which I benefitted. I did a fairly decent job. . . . My regimental commander was Major General [Lawrence H.] Larry Livingston, now retired, who had served as an enlisted Marine at Hue City [Vietnam] and just really knew war fighting. Never yelled, never, to my recollection, raised his voice. But when he spoke, you knew that he meant business. And I could not have gone to Desert Storm or any other war under the leadership of a better division commander than Keys and regimental commander than Larry Livingston.

Colonel Fred L. Jones

Colonel Kurtis P. Wheeler: Some have said that the 1990s were a time that the Marine Corps slipped in its efforts to recruit African American officers. What is your perspective on this, and on the overall issue of recruiting and retaining black officers?

Jones: I was very involved with NNOA [National Naval Officers Association] at this time, so with the mentoring thing, the numbers are looking good, the pipeline is looking good, but the new stuff is not good. We're not making our numbers. As you know, if you read Al's book,³ this is a time that the Marine Corps is missing its numbers now for bringing in black officers. And there was a huge wash-out rate at OCS, which tells me two things. The people out there doing the recruiting are either missing the boat on who they're bringing in and the reason they're bringing them in, and perhaps at OCS, there's something going on out there. The drop-out rate was just horrendous.

I don't know the answer, but Colonel [David A.] Vetter, . . . the Vetter commission came up with stuff that did not surprise me at all.⁴ It destroyed a lot of the myths. People were making excuses as to why black officers were failing at OCS, all this crap about the historically black schools and all that, and all of these scores. Zero correlation. . . . It did not matter what their ACT [American College Test] scores or SAT [Scholastic Assessment Test] scores were when they went to college. It had very little to do with whether they succeeded in college. The point that a lot of us were trying to make to

the senior leadership of the Marine Corps [was that] scores don't matter. You don't need a 1,000 SAT score [out of a possible 1,600] to get a fine Marine. You don't need that. What you need is the right character. It's the right character and motivation for coming in that mattered. Why did you come in? You didn't come in because you scored a certain number on the SAT. You didn't succeed because of the SAT score. You succeeded because you wanted to be the best Marine that you could possibly be.

You had certain God-given talents that you honed in on. But you see people who are closet racists or want to keep a certain group out, they'll come up with all kinds of stuff to justify their reason for not taking a certain action. They'll say, "Oh, we don't want quotas." Give me a break. We've always had quotas. We have a quota on how many women we can bring in. We've got a quota on how many aviator contracts. . . . We have a quota for everything. All institutions have quotas. But if you use the word "quota" in connection with race, it's a bad thing. It's the same thing in civilian society. So you have to find another word. You can't use "quota." But we've always discriminated on what we're looking for in terms of making our organization what we want it to be. We always discriminate. You discriminate in OCS, you discriminate everywhere. You discriminate on a football team. You're always looking for certain skills and talents, but you don't use the word "quota." You don't use the word "discriminate," but that's exactly what you're doing.

So in any case, those were the kind of arguments that people like myself have been pushing for years in trying to understand and make this an equal playing field so to speak. You bring to the table what you've been raised with and what you're comfortable with. I read a couple of the old articles that upset me years ago. A couple of white officers wrote about the effort to increase the number of black officers and basically said, well, we don't really need you anyway. . . . These are articles in the [*Marine Corps*] *Gazette*, the couple of them that really upset the apple cart a few years ago.⁵ . . . They were basically saying that the Marine Corps had lowered its standards in order to achieve a certain number of blacks, and that wasn't good for the Marine Corps. That was really the message that they were sending. And a lot of people who are receptive to that kind of philosophy, they be-

lieved it. Of course the black officers who were overly sensitive about being a victim, they reacted another way, too. So it was very hard to get a balanced view. At the time I think somebody responded to it officially, and that was pretty well balanced. But in any case, those were the kinds of things that happened in the '90s. The '90s were not a good period of time for black retention in the Marine Corps, or accession in the Marine Corps.

While I was overseas, *60 Minutes* did a hatchet job on the Commandant, General Mundy. I personally knew General Mundy. I know what General Mundy had done in terms of recruiting blacks in the Marine Corps and all that, and I knew what his attitude was. He was the one who sent [Walter E.] Gaskin [Sr.] back to Savannah State. I knew that he wanted the Marine Corps to be representative [of society] and to be a strong Marine Corps, and he wanted quality. I knew that [what he said] had been taken out of context. I knew that's not how he felt.

And guess what, I'm the chief of staff now at a force service support group working for General [Carol A.] Mutter. . . . But I basically stood up and defended the Commandant in a sense and said that what he said was taken out of context, that I knew him personally and I knew what he had done. Action speaks louder than words. And I basically espoused my philosophy again about "victim." You're screaming racism and playing the victim card, and it's not necessarily true. A lot of them didn't like to hear what I had to say, but I didn't care at that point anyway. I was saying what I believed. I was sitting at the table, I had sat on selection boards, so I knew what was going on, and I basically told them that. . . . Every promotion board has minority representation and gender representation now. That's a policy of the Marine Corps. So I said if you're performing and doing what you need to do, then you've got just a better chance in this organization of succeeding than you do in the private sector, when they don't have to justify firing your ass. But I said that's not true in this organization. It isn't perfect, and we've certainly got racists in this organization. But you've got a much better chance of succeeding in this organization than you do in General Motors. That was the message.

A lot of those guys sitting around, and I didn't know them anyway, a lot of those black officers that I had never met. The numbers

had grown by then. This was '93, '94 time frame, getting towards the time that I'm getting ready to retire. I'm sure some of them called me an "Uncle Tom" and all that behind my back, of course not in my face. But in any case, that was the message that I was trying to get across to them then, but it was not a good time for the Marine Corps and minority affairs. It was not a good time at all.

And the NNOA, just getting orders or approval to go to NNOA conventions, a lot of the Marine commands were not encouraging it. A lot of the young black officers were running away from NNOA. That wasn't good, because the NNOA was not the enemy at all. It was an ally to help you be the best Marine officer you could be. That was going in the '90s.

Lieutenant General Walter E. Gaskin Sr.

Gaskin: General Charles C. Krulak, when he was Commandant, tried to fix it [the racial composition issue] with the 12/12/5. The problem with the 12/12/5 is, it meant 12 percent Hispanic, 12 percent African American, 5 percent others. At the time, the officer corps had 3 and 4 percent, and the women were frozen at 5 percent. So the thing was that when they said we've got to hit 12 percent, the legal people tried saying this was a quota, and everybody backed away from that quota thing.

Allison: That's a loaded word.

Gaskin: A bad word. And the second thing was that we went out and got every African American who was breathing, and so what happened was the attrition rate was horrible.

Allison: This was the late, mid-'90s?

Gaskin: That's right. It was horrible. And we were doing that through OCC [Officer Candidate Course], which is the last program that you want to do because these are the hungry guys. They can't get a job anywhere else. They're college graduates, they've got to get out of their parents' house, so they've got us. The Marine Corps is good as any. However, they weren't mentally or physically prepared to be Marines. So everybody said OK, you threw your standards out the window, they're just barely meeting the 1,000 SAT score, which I absolutely hate.

Allison: Why is that?

Gaskin: The SAT is a built-in prejudice because I was out there when they did it. I was an MOI [Marine officer instructor] at Savannah State, and the average SAT score for the state of Georgia was almost 900—895 or something. And the Marine Corps came out with the 1,000 SAT score. Not the Air Force, not even the Navy, who was far more technical than us, came out with 1,000 SAT score. It wiped out my pool.

So I came back to Washington. I wanted to know what the hell was going on. And I remember meeting with officers at headquarters. They said they had done a study at The Basic School, and they had determined that a lieutenant with a 1,000 SAT that shows up at The Basic School was 90 percent likely to graduate minus the recycle. So I said, “That’s all well and great, but we have a society with an issue with SAT scores. You’re going to target one community worse than others.”

They said, “Well, if they want to be Marines, then they need to retake it,” or whatever.

I said, “Well, then we need to have it on the front end.” I said, “We are the only institution that is using the SAT and ACT post-graduation. Everybody else is using it going into college. We’re using it coming out of college.”

What we also did was we gave them the GCT [general classification test] at The Basic School, but we never told them the impact on your lineal standing and your standing at The Basic School. Because we never told them, we had kids thinking that they were taking the thing and going out the night before and getting drunk and doing other things. And of course the stigma here is officers have to have a GCT of 120 or above. We’ve got kids coming back in here in the minority with 113, 116, 117—you know, this is the B team here. So they spend their time living through that until they can get out of The Basic School and take the thing again.

In my case, you have a difference of story. My GCT was 141. I could swim. Rather than saying I was someone who applied myself, I was treated as if I was an anomaly. “You’re not like the rest of them.” I heard that a million times. It’s an attitude, an institutional attitude, that we have to adjust that feeds itself back into the community. Recruiting out of the community becomes how do you treat the ones

that you've got? They all come and have past stories. That's why I say it was so important how we send people away from The Basic School that don't have it. We should say, "Thank you for wanting to be a Marine. You didn't have what it takes. Here's why." Instead, in order for us to prove to the secretary of the Navy that we should revoke a commission, we treat these kids like crap, and we stigmatize them. This kid may not be a Marine, but he could be an Air Force officer or a naval officer who doesn't have the physical rigor or problem-solving that we require. But no, if you check their DD 214 [discharge certificate], it's that these guys will have to go to BCNR [Board of Corrections for Naval Records] action to get a code removed before they can come back in. That feeds back into the community, and probably when I was recruiting, it was one of the toughest things to overcome in the community.

Major General Leo V. Williams III

L. Williams: I had the opportunity during this time that I was with Ford Motor Company to be called back on active duty. We had a group commander who was relieved of his duties. I was the deputy commander at the time of the MWSG [Marine wing support group]. General Larry [S.] Taylor was the CG [commanding general] at the time, and he called me and offered me the job. I said, "We've got an opportunity here." Larry Taylor really appreciated and wanted to give Reserve officers command opportunities whenever they arose. Taylor was able to convince MarForRes [Marine Forces Reserve] that instead of asking the Marine Corps to find another active component colonel right away, he asked me if I would try to get a sabbatical from Ford Motor Company and come in and take over the group. So I begged and pleaded with Ford Motor Company, and they let me go for six months so that I could take over command of the MWSG. A phenomenal time, absolutely phenomenal time. But then they brought in an active-duty colonel, and I went back to being the deputy for a while. Shortly after that, I got selected for BG [brigadier general], and it all worked out just fine. So I went from being the deputy to being the commanding officer and then back to being the deputy for a while.

But my head was always focused on command, command,

command, command. I don't know that anyone ever told me, except that when you've been around for long enough, you really do get the sense that if you've had command after command after command after command, it's hard for the Marine Corps to deny you whatever the next possibility is. When I came up for possible promotion to brigadier general, much to my surprise, I was the only Reserve general officer selected that year. It was almost to my horror because I knew all of these guys that I had been working with for years and years whom I thought were just every bit as [good], had exactly the same tickets punched as I had. . . .

I don't think that happened totally by accident. I think it's always a matter of being in the right place at the right time. General Krulak was the Commandant. I think General Krulak really took his authority and pushed it as much into the breach as he could. I'm vaguely aware of some of the officers who were on that board, and again, you never know where the impact is going to be, but some of those guys were captains with me. So those were guys I played basketball with, football with, volleyball with, on a regular basis. And even though they were active, many of them were active and I was Reserve, we had a history. So I do believe kind of all of the forces came together to work on my behalf and to allow me the honor of having been the only Reserve general officer to have been selected that particular year.

Lieutenant Colonel Doris A. Daniels

Daniels: I went to Albany, Georgia, and then I got picked up [for lieutenant colonel] while I was there as battalion commander. Even today I wonder if I made the right choice in that. I recently told myself, "It's not something to wonder. It is what it is." I did one heck of a job. I enjoyed it. . . . I'm sure the officers didn't [like it] because they were still saying that "she took the battalion; this is our battalion. It's a logistics battalion; she's not even a logistician." . . . But I'll tell you something that was said to me by the commanding general that stuck with me. It's almost like he was in tears, angry. He said to me one day, "I don't think the Marine Corps should give women who have children a command." I was so upset. That's the first time I went away and didn't handle it right. . . . What do you

say? I wasn't prepared. I'd done this job, I'm ready to leave, and he tells me this. I got in my car. . . . I cried all the way home. When I got home, my kids were coloring. I had a live-in babysitter. I got every one of them, and I just hugged them. And I just held them and they said, "Mommy, what's wrong?". . . I think when I drove home, I said, "I'm just not going to do this anymore." I remember saying to myself all the way home: "I will not do this anymore."

It ended up I couldn't live on base. I'm the battalion commander. They were renovating the houses. They couldn't find not one house, and you only had one battalion. Even the general was in that battalion. I lived off base and drove in every day because they couldn't find one house. I knew what that was like. . . .

Interestingly enough, the woman that replaced me had five kids, and one was a little baby. But I remember that's the first time. I just didn't handle it well.

Major Beth M. Wolny: How did race play into living in Albany?

Daniels: Oh, let me tell you. It was so polarized. Blacks liked what blacks did, and where blacks stayed, and what they do and they didn't want to be bothered with whites. Whites liked where whites stayed, and what they were doing, and didn't want to be bothered. It was almost like that old theory of separate but equal. As late as it was, it was so polarized, it was like cutting it. I remember reading Dr. [Martin Luther] King's book where he said Albany almost brought him to his knees. No town like Albany was still so racially separated. It was hard. . . .

Wolny: That was your last assignment?

Daniels: I came to Washington, DC, back to the Pentagon. The deputy assistant secretary of defense for equal opportunity called me one day and asked me to come work for him. One of the things that I can say with great pride is that I have been asked to work for several people as a result of my work and word of mouth; just people come and say, "I want you to do this." . . .

I tell people that my career with the Marine Corps is kind of like the Mona Lisa. One more stroke would have just been one more stroke with the brush. It was perfect just the way it was. If I could have stayed a few more years, or if I'd got out earlier, it was perfect

for a little old colored girl out of Mississippi. I didn't even know it existed. The experiences have been just absolutely rewarding, even as tough sometimes as they may have been. I knew there'd be racism. I was not as prepared for the sexism. And the sexism came even harsher sometimes from the black male officers.

Wolny: Really?

Daniels: Yes. Because, remember, they were kind of an unwanted class, so they're fighting to [preserve their place] . . . "we are not going to give up one inch of territory for a woman." So that became kind of difficult for me. There was a few of them I had to speak to. I really did. But I have very good friends; we were coming along together as captains, and we stayed as good friends. Most of my close associates, believe it or not, Major General [Ronald S.] Coleman, and General [Willie J.] Williams, we were all colleagues. We just grew up together on Okinawa. We would sit down and talk about things.

Captain Vernice G. Armour

Armour: One morning I was walking through the basement of the student union [at Middle Tennessee State University], and I saw a Marine recruiter down there at the table. Because I wanted to be a police officer and I was already in Army ROTC, I really wasn't looking for information, . . . but he definitely piqued my interest, and I ended up going to see the OSO, which is the officer selection officer, for the Marine Corps. I told him about my experiences with Army ROTC, one of which was at Fort Bragg [North Carolina] in 1994. When you're in the Army, you have to have a "battle buddy." You can't go anywhere by yourself. I had a battle buddy. She was on an aviation contract. She was going to be a pilot. Me, I wanted to be a police officer, so I was looking at the MPs [military police] and all that other stuff. It was career day, and we were in this big field. A bunch of static displays were set up for all the different MOSs [military occupational specialties], and after I went over to the MPs and a couple of other cool displays, she decided, "Hey, it's time to go to the aviation tent."

I was like, "All right, let's go." Went into the aviation tent, it's dim. . . . The sides are rolled up, dust flying everywhere, and as my

eyes adjust to the front, I see a black female in a flight suit. I'm like, "Man, why didn't I think of that?" And here my battle buddy, female, is already on her way to becoming a pilot, and it didn't even cross my mind. But when I saw that black woman in a flight suit up there at the front of that tent, it did something. When that Marine recruiter asked me if I had ever thought of aviation, I was like, "Absolutely."

Colonel Eleanor M. Wilson: After you were commissioned, what stands out as memorable experiences?

Armour: After graduating from The Basic School in June [1999], everybody drives away, and they try to avoid looking in their rearview mirror. Well, I was no different. Parents and family all

Captain Vernice G. Armour was commissioned in the Marine Corps in 1998 and flew in combat in Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003 and 2004 in Bell AH-1W Super Cobra gunships in Marine Light/Attack Helicopter Squadron 169. She was the first African American woman in any service to fly in combat.

Official of Marine Corps Photo



came up for that graduation as well. I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to work in HMX-1 [Marine Helicopter Squadron 1], which is the president's helicopter squadron. . . . I worked in the training section. . . . I was the assistant to the training OIC, officer in charge, and it was an awesome experience to get to work with those Marines.

To work in HMX-1, you have to be recommended. You have to be talented. You have to have a great record. So I got to work with Marines who had already made awesome achievements and had this awesome opportunity to work in this squadron. Here I am, brand new, fresh out of OCS and TBS, to be around that caliber of Marine, I think it really set me up for success. My OIC while I was there, he was new to as well, because he was on the green side. So he was getting his clearance and all his things set up and learning to fly all the different aircraft that were there. He said, "While you're here, you need to go over to the aero club"—which is the civilian club—"and take some flight lessons." That's absolutely what I did. I went over and got about 20 hours under my belt, and my last flight was a solo flight in a little Cessna 152, and it was awesome. That's the best advice that he could have given me.

But he also sat me down several times and talked to me, and this guy was a regular, average white guy, bald head, grew up in Louisiana. . . . He was telling me how he didn't feel comfortable around other blacks, how he had to carry a gun. One day he looked at me and he said, "Vernice, I'm not going to lie to you. A couple of years ago, I would have told you that you have a fair chance just like everyone else, that there is no discrimination or racism in the Marine Corps. But to be honest with you, I've seen it. I haven't experienced it, but I've seen it with the guys that I've worked with, and I wouldn't be telling you the truth or I wouldn't be honest if I didn't say it was out there. You're going to experience it, it's going to be hard, but it's not everywhere, and everyone isn't bad. Just do what you need to do to get where you need to be." And I really appreciated him for that good advice, because everybody knows it's out there, but everyone wants to be in denial, too, and say, "Oh no, everything is fair." But it's not. For him to look me in the eye and say he knew that it wasn't but that he knew that I could make it was pretty awe-

some. He said, "I don't see you graduating number one, but you'll be in there. You'll do well, and you'll do good things."

Wilson: Then you went to flight school. What is memorable about that?

Armour: In December of '99 I moved down to Pensacola, Florida, where I started flight school. In January, I picked up with aviation primary indoctrination. It's six weeks of just getting ready to start the real thing in flight school, so you're learning about aerodynamics and engines and how to do your water survival. You had to do your mile swim. As the old myth or stereotype goes, blacks don't swim that well. I think it's the bone-density thing or whatever. I don't know, but I was true to form, but I knew this. When I got down there to API [aviation primary indoctrination], about a month before it started up, I went over to the pool and said, "OK, instructors, I already know this is my weakness. Help me here. Teach me what I need to know so I make it through this training." They were more than willing to teach me the fundamentals about what I needed to know as far as that training went, so tread water, breast-stroke, holding my breath, the dead man's float—all of the stuff that we'd be going through as far as water survival and swimming and floatation in the water.

By the time I got to the mile swim, that day, I'll never forget it. We're all sitting on the bleachers. We're in those old ratty-tatty flight suits that are all torn to hell, who knows how many people have worn them for how many years, and we're getting ready to jump in the water to do this swim, and we have 80 minutes to do a mile swim in a flight suit. I'm sitting there with my little lip poked out thinking, "Oh God, just help me through this swim." Then in the water, everybody jumps in at the same time, and you're just doing this circle around the two balloons that are in the pool. You have to do I think it was 36 laps. I'm swimming, and everybody's swimming and kicking and passing me up, and I finally get behind this guy, and all I did was just look at his feet. I said, "I will just stay on his feet. I will not let him get more than two feet in front of me. If he kicks me in the head, I don't care. I am staying on his feet." That was I think after lap 13, and at some point he jumped out of the water. I'm like, "OK, I'm on my own." By the time I climbed out of that water, I was the

second to the last one. . . . It was 72 minutes. . . . I was so happy when I climbed out of that water. My body felt like it was 400 pounds, and I just had the hugest grin on my face yet once again. That to me was a big milestone. That was one thing I was worried about, going through there.



Chapter 8

New Century, New Conflicts and Challenges

On 11 September 2001, terrorists struck destructive blows on the United States of America. These attacks thrust the nation into a war that stretched through the first decade of the 2000s and beyond. During the “long war,” the Marine pathbreakers who had entered the Corps as a result of previous efforts to acquire more African American officers were now in positions of significant responsibility. This stood in direct contrast to the situation at the end of the Vietnam War when the senior black Marines were lieutenant colonels who commanded battalions or squadrons. African American officers now manned some of the most prominent positions of responsibility for prosecuting the war or conducting humanitarian operations. Major General Charles F. Bolden Jr. commanded the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing in the initial stages of the conflict. Then-Colonel Ronald L. Bailey led the 2d Marine Regiment in the fight at an-Nasiriyah, Iraq, in 2003 and later commanded the 1st Marine Division. Then-Brigadier General Ronald S. Coleman led the 2d Force Service Support Group and deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom as commanding general of the special-purpose Marine air-ground task force until November 2003. Then-Major General Walter E. Gaskin Sr., who would become the first African American infantry three-star in 2010, commanded the 2d Marine Division and II Marine Expeditionary Force in combat in Iraq in 2007. Captain Vernice G. Armour, the Corps’ first black female pilot, flew Bell AH-1W Cobra helicopter gunships in the march to Baghdad and the battles at an-Najaf and Fallujah.

Challenges remained. Recruiting and retaining qualified and upwardly mobile African Americans who had attractive options in

Photo Left: MajGens Walter E. Gaskin Sr. (right) and John R. Allen (left) after a meeting with tribal sheikhs in Ramadi, Iraq, 14 January 2008. Gaskin was commanding general of II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward); Allen was deputy commanding general.

U.S. Marine Corps photo by LCpl Julian Billmair

the civilian realm was an issue, especially in a social climate that regarded the military as a choice of last resort. Retaining African American women officers was especially problematic, as evidenced by 1998 statistics that showed that only one of the 22 African American colonels on active duty was a woman.¹

In this chapter, these later pathbreaking Marines, as well as some of their predecessors, look back at the advances for diversity within the Corps in the 2000s and ahead to what still needs to be done.

Lieutenant General Ronald S. Coleman

Colonel Kurtis P. Wheeler: In Operation Secure Democracy [2004–2005], you led a joint task force into Haiti. Can you describe that mission?

Coleman: It was a humanitarian thing, and I think for the most part, the Haitians are really good people, and they need a couple breaks. It was one of those deals [where] we had Chileans, Canadians, French, and the U.S. I was the CG [commanding general], and my deputy was a French colonel. You really felt like you were helping people. So that was the highlight. You say, OK, you did 35 years, how can any one thing be a highlight? I just felt like, these are people—and not because they're black—but they just needed something. I felt the same way when we went to Bosnia [in the 1990s], helping those people. . . .

Wheeler: Did you have any sense that your role as an African American leader in such an important role, was that, do you think, inspiring to the Haitian people?

Coleman: Absolutely. I can remember one day, someone had gone on the radio and said [that at an appointed time], they were going to give out some rice. People didn't have enough food. And I guess it was supposed to happen, it didn't happen, so they were demonstrating out in front of the warehouse, the whole bit. . . . We got a call saying there was some rioting going on down in the manufacturing district. So we went down, and there were thousands of people in the street. We stopped the car and started walking down the street, and it was so phenomenal that when we got out of the vehicle and started walking down the street, the people just parted and

were cheering for us. So yes, I think I had a special bond, I felt like I had a special bond with the Haitians. Was it because I am black? I don't know, but I felt a special kinship. But General [Charles M.] Gurganus was there, General Gurganus did a good job, and they had a great feeling for General Gurganus also.

Wheeler: This tour was followed by assignment to Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, first as director, Personnel Management Division, then deputy commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. These billets were among the most influential in the Marine Corps for shaping personnel policies. Were any of your initiatives in those billets related to the Marine Corps' goal of enhancing diversity?

Coleman: We did, but if I had to say, the thing that disappointed me the most was I didn't do, we didn't do more on the diversity side while I was there. Now I can excuse it and say, well, you're in the middle of a war, and between the war and the buildup to 202,000 [personnel] . . . [but] we should've done better. I wish we had, and maybe there are some folks saying some things. I don't know. But if I had to grade myself, I would give myself a less than stellar, I would probably give myself a failing grade because we didn't, [it was] a tough time. We went to a lot of events to try to spark that. But because of the war, it's tough to accomplish things outside the war when you're fighting a war. There really were some elements of the black community that saw this as not a war we should be involved in, so do we really want our sons and daughters enlisted, or coming into the military during that time of war? We had members of the Congressional Black Caucus at the Commandant's house for breakfast. And there was a congresswoman from California that said, I think the Marine Corps, I think the services do good things, and they help the nation, and it helps the folks that are enlisted and joining, but I can't recommend to anyone black in my district that they join the Marine Corps until after this war is over.

Wheeler: When you said that the Marine Corps still has a problem with diversity, do you mean that purely in a statistical sense, or are there other dimensions?

Coleman: Statistical is the way I'm looking at it. I've seen a lot of changes in the Marine Corps in my time. And I think we embrace diversity. The Marine Corps was conceived, and will probably always

be conceived, as . . . probably the most conservative of the branches of the service. I can remember when I came in, someone had told my wife, “I can see him going in the service, but why the Marine Corps? It’s so conservative.” . . . And it is.

But when you’re out there doing what needs to be done, I don’t think anybody looks at the color of your skin. It’s just hard to believe. I think things were different when I came in. But things were different, I mean, we’re a product of society, so that’s part of it. But I think when you look at it, up until just recently, the last three sergeants major of the Marine Corps in a row were black. So I think the Marine Corps is doing a much better job.

I think we still need to do a better job on the officer side. . . .

Wheeler: You talked a little bit about your promotion to three stars. You are only the second African American Marine ever to reach that rank. Do you consider yourself to be a trailblazer in that sense?

Coleman: You know, I really don’t. I know you sent me that [question], and I sat down and I thought about that, and I said, “Are you a trailblazer?” Maybe somebody would have to tell me what the definition of a trailblazer is. I don’t know. I think I’m fortunate, I think I’m blessed, I think I’m lucky, I’m a whole lot of things. I think the time was right; I was in the right place at the right time. In all honesty, not being humble, I think more people notice that than I do. General Petersen is one of the greatest people I’ve ever known. And for someone to say, “You’re in line with General Petersen”—I couldn’t tie his shoelace. I was just at the right place at the right time and fortunate enough to be there. It was phenomenal that General Petersen promoted me. . . .

I hadn’t thought about it, but people bring it up, and you stop and you think, wow, when you think that over 235 years, and at that point there’s only two of you. But here’s what has happened under General [James T.] Conway and General [James F.] Amos—there have now been three more. So we go for forever with no one, and then I get it in ’06, and then General [Willie J.] Williams and General Gaskin, so I think if that’s not progress, then nothing is. The fear is there will be a drop-off because we take our eye off the ball again.

But a trailblazer, no. I see myself as being blessed.

But from the time in the Marine Shop [in Quantico, Virginia]

as a captain, General Petersen said, “Hey, is there anything I can do for you?” And you just go talk to people, and I think that’s leadership, mentorship. And I like to think treating everyone with dignity and respect is leadership and mentorship. I think I do a lot of mentoring, but I don’t do it by any book. It’s just talking to people, listening to people, listening to what they have to say, and telling them what you honestly believe, and treating them with dignity and respect. If you’re doing that, then you’re doing all the mentoring you need to do.

Wheeler: You mentioned NNOA [National Naval Officers Association]. What has been your involvement with them?

Coleman: I started off with them, I guess it was when I was in the monitor shop, so that would have been the early ’80s I joined them. They’re a great organization. Like a lot of organizations, they ebb and flow; [there’s] the great influx and then the money goes away, so you can’t do as much. I’m not a lifetime member of NNOA, I’m a member of NNOA, but I’m a lifetime member of Montford Point Association. [I have] a lot more ties to Montford Point because of the history of Montford Point. I think those would be the ones that I’ve been most involved with. But I don’t think you have to have an organization to do mentorship. I think mentorship and leadership should be an everyday occurrence.

I think General Amos, right now, is doing absolutely, positively everything he can to increase [diversity], just like with the parade he’s doing in a couple weeks for Montford Point Marines. We’re back on track, but it’s one of those ones where we lose sight of the ball. When I came in, in 1974, there was a big push for minorities in the Marine Corps. We got to where we wanted to be, and we took our eye off the ball. And then in the mid-’80s while I was at Manpower, the monitor shop, there was another push to add minorities in the Marine Corps, and we added them in, I think it was 6th and 8th Districts, we put minority recruiters out there. We got where we wanted to be, and then we took our eye off the ball again, and now we’re back where we are now, and trying to increase now. I’m a firm believer in taking the best you can get from everywhere you can get them, and I do think we need to keep the push toward historically black colleges because I think we do extremely well there. That’s not to say we can’t do well at Michigan or Penn State or other schools, but I do think

we get a lot of our people, a lot of good officers, from historically black colleges, and I'd hope we'd continue looking at it that way.

Wheeler: Clearly General Amos has taken this issue to heart. What got this on his radar? Why do you think right now he is making such a big push for this initiative?

Coleman: I think he understands it. He wants, just like other Commandants have wanted—General Conway in the same way—wanted the Marine Corps to represent society, the American society. I think he's put a bigger push—we're adding numbers, we're in the war—he is more focused on diversity than the others, I would say. I think that's just the way he is. I've spoken to General Amos about this, and I said, "Hey, you're doing a great job."

And he said, "Ron, we haven't touched the surface yet. We're gonna get this, and we're gonna get it right." And I put it on him, he's doing a stellar job with that.

Major General Leo V. Williams III

L. Williams: I realized that once I made brigadier general, that's a huge level of authority and responsibility, and when you have that kind of opportunity, you've got to reach back, look for folks who deserve to be brought along, and give them as much encouragement and support as you possibly can. I think I really began doing that in a much more aggressive way once I became a brigadier, then a major general. Again, I did it on a conscious but less aggressive level when I was a major and then a lieutenant colonel and a colonel. But I really saw both the need and the opportunity when I became a brigadier and then a major general.

I've had some really great opportunities to help move [the diversity] agenda forward with the Marine Corps Reserve Policy Board, the Reserve Forces Policy Board, the Military Leadership Diversity Commission—all significant bodies that gave me a forum for raising diversity as a need. I had the clout and the support within those bodies to really make a difference. So the point there is there's more than one way to skin a cat. You look for all of those means of achieving that end, and you take advantage of all of them.

Lieutenant Colonel Mark D. Andrasi: What are some of the policies you recommended?

L. Williams: We're working on these things right now. They're all simple things that are within the easy grasp, for instance, of the Senate. And this is particularly aimed at the three-star and four-star appointments. If the Senate Armed Services Committee, which has to interview and approve three- and four-star selections, if they were to add to their list of questions, "Identify what you as a potential three-star or four-star have done in the arena of diversity and inclusion," it's not a question that's asked today. It's not something that those three- and four-star officers have to speak to. But if they were to just add that to the questionnaire, I think we would begin to see a changing of the culture as it appreciates diversity, especially at the higher levels.

Interestingly enough, my sense is that many of our young troops today really understand diversity and inclusion in a far better way than many of our senior leaders do. I think the simple fact of the matter is a lot of these kids today really grow up in a much more diverse and integrated world than many of our senior leaders today did. So where a lot of our senior leaders think that they have an appreciation for diversity, I think if you really were to ask them what they've done to promote it, they'd be hard pressed to answer that question. . . .

Andrasi: How do you think that the Marine Corps has changed in its recruitment of minority officers since your time in the Naval Academy?

L. Williams: My sense is that the Marine Corps has been like a sine wave and it has been very, very much dependent upon the leadership at the moment, and regrettably, not upon institutionalization of a culture that is focused on and that appreciates diversity and inclusion. I have seen a number of Commandants who I believe, regrettably, genuinely think that "every Marine is green," and that's all it takes. And I've seen a few who understand that in order to achieve this diversity leadership that I'm talking about, that you have to understand what cultural differences exist and how to use those cultural differences to greatest advantage. I've seen a number of very high-ranking leaders who really believe that it's OK if 50, 60, or 70 percent of the unit is black and the leaders are not, who don't appreciate that if you're going to keep people motivated to keep moving forward,

then one of the most effective ways to do that is to make sure that they have a role model who looks like them, who is representative of the fact that they can keep on moving to whatever that particular level or goal is. I've just seen far too few folks, leaders—senior leaders—who really have a deep appreciation for that. For those who do, they have been able to move the needle, and I think you can see if you track the numbers in terms of both senior enlisted and officers at the O-6 [colonel], O-7 [brigadier general], O-8 [major general], O-9 [lieutenant general] levels, and we haven't had yet a Marine Corps four-star, but if you just track the numbers, you can pretty well see, with not a whole lot of interpretation required, who put emphasis or who was looking at the needle and who was not.

I've had a good bit of discussion, and I've been very encouraged by both General Amos and General [Joseph F.] Dunford [Jr.], that both of them today really are genuinely committed to the Marine Corps achieving our optimal mission readiness because we appreciate diversity and inclusion. We are intent on making sure that we cast that net as wide as possible so that we provide opportunities, first of all, for those people who are qualified but don't even know that the opportunity is out there, and in the process make the Marine Corps much better because we really have attracted a broader, more capable body of Marines.

Major General Jerome G. Cooper

Mr. John J. Lyles: How far has the Marine Corps come in recruiting African American officers?

Cooper: We still are doing a poor job at recruiting minority officers. I've had a local major in another city come to see me about his concern with being able to make his quotas. And I asked him, "How are you going about doing it?" And basically, not a clue. Somebody needs—I suggested, to help this major draw a plan—to identify Marines in leadership positions at Alabama State, Talladega, Tuskegee. I never heard from him. So finally I called him, and I said, "Major, since you're too busy, why don't you have your colonel call me? Maybe he's got time to talk to me." So he called me, and basically somebody's still not following through to do it the right way. . . . At the University of South Alabama, if the dean of men is a Marine, why

don't you know him? Why isn't he bringing you on campus? If so and so is an Omega or Alpha or Delta [why aren't you talking to them]? So I think we're talking a good game, but we have not yet really mastered it. And it takes no brain surgeon to figure it out. So I am disappointed with our efforts in that area.

Lyles: Do you think it's a conscious effort of just not having a feel for it? Or is there some specific thing with recruiting, that the techniques of recruiting are not thought out?

Cooper: I think maybe lack of leadership. Do you know that until I was in charge of MR [Marine recruiting], we didn't recruit at any minority institutions? I sent the first ones out. And it took a while to explain to the general where the Air Force and Army were getting all these [minority] generals—from Prairie View, and Florida A&M, and such. Why are we missing out? Finally they started doing it, but the mind-set is still not there. But now I will tell you, General Amos in his position I think is changing that mind-set, and I think things are going to go a lot better.

Lieutenant Colonel Edward L. Green

Green: I mentioned [General Charles C.] Chuck Krulak was my battalion "3" [operations officer]. I probably saw more efforts after General [Robert E.] Cushman [Jr.], when Chuck Krulak was Commandant, to advance African Americans. You look at the African American officers that were promoted to general officer, one- and two-star, you have to go back and see that as under Chuck Krulak.

Dr. Fred H. Allison: Why was that?

Green: He had a heart and a head for the program. If you look at the Marine Corps general officer structure, we're heavy on the southern side. Most of them, I say with the exception of the current Commandant, who's making a special effort now to kind of do something more than they have been doing in the past, I think there was a gap between Krulak and Amos.

Allison: What you're saying, what I'm hearing, is it takes leadership from the very top to make this work.

Green: Got to do it from the top. And the guys down below, they read it, they get those signals. Let me just give you one more quote from General Cushman, basically he said, "Either get on board

or get out,” in a message to all of the officers within the Marine Corps. Get on board with it, we’re making special efforts. We need to do more than we’re doing. Either get on board with it or get out.

From what I understand, I think the current Commandant is catching a little bit of flak, from what I picked up in the grapevine, for putting the emphasis that he’s been putting on increasing diversity. He put a heavy emphasis on kind of recognizing the Montford Point Association, bringing it up to the level of the Tuskegee Airmen. . . .

Allison: What influence does that have on young black men or young black women?

Green: It’s the right tune. It is changing. The services have been a lot further ahead of civilian society, but for the African American, even within that service, you still find that there are hurdles that have to be overcome.

The services in general are conservative. . . . So when you’re looking at that, then you say, “OK, the Marine Corps is more conservative than all the other services.” And historically it has been. They actually take pride in that. So you’re really talking about changing the culture of the Marine Corps. It doesn’t happen over night. It takes time. It doesn’t happen in decades.

Brigadier General George H. Walls Jr.

Walls: When I joined the Marine Corps in 1965, . . . there weren’t many [black officers]. Like I said before, we all knew each other. A lot of the younger guys left early because of the pull of other things; either family or corporate America came after them. So there was an ebb and flow. So some of the people, like I’ll name some names—Lieutenant Colonel Ed Green was a few years ahead of me, and he left as a lieutenant colonel. A lot of people left at lieutenant or captain, for various reasons—either they didn’t like the Marine Corps, or they didn’t want to go back to Vietnam, they had family pressures. Or there was a job waiting for them that they took. So the numbers kind of rocked along for a while. That first effort that we had at minority officer recruiting I don’t think was very successful. We didn’t make the kind of numbers that we needed to make to have an influence on the Marine Corps as a whole.

If you look at the way you build an organization, it’s kind of

like a pyramid. You've got to put in a whole lot of second lieutenants down here at the bottom to get a bunch of majors up here in the middle and eventually get to the general officers at the top of the pyramid. Along the way, for a number of reasons, we either didn't bring in those numbers, or the ones that we brought in just didn't succeed or chose not to stay. So the numbers rocked along for a long time. Where I think I really started to see the change was probably [when] General Petersen made general in the late 1970s. [Major General Jerome] Gary Cooper made it [in 1988], but as a Reserve. And then I made it in 1991. So there were gaps in there. And there were black officers who were getting to be lieutenant colonels and colonels, but they just weren't getting over the hump to make flag.

I wasn't there, but I was told that there was a conversation between General Petersen and the secretary of the Navy about this. This would have probably been in like maybe 1990 or so. It was over dinner or at some occasion, and the secretary of the Navy took an interest in that. At that time, there were more black flags in the Navy than there were in the Marine Corps. And I think the impetus of that conversation may have caused the Marine Corps to be asked to take a look at this. After my promotion, there was a rapid succession of colonels making general. [Clifford L.] Cliff Stanley was right behind me, Arnold "Arnie" Fields was right behind him, and Leo Williams. There was just an explosion of African Americans rising to field grade rank. There was a high point, and then those numbers have probably come down and maybe leveled off a little bit now. Of course there have been a lot of colonels, lieutenant colonels, and majors.

If you look at the general direction, the direction has been positive. When you consider that [Frederick C.] Fred Branch was the first black officer promoted in the Marine Corps in 1945, up until now, I think that's pretty significant growth. But it ebbs and flows. People coming into the Marine Corps or the other branches, the economy has a lot to do with it, whether we're at war or not has a lot to do with it. There are a whole lot of things that factor into it. But I think generally, the numbers have been good. Could they be better? Sure, they could be better. There could be more, but it's not as if the Marine Corps has made a conscious effort to not promote and give African Americans the opportunity to make flag rank.

Chief Warrant Officer-3 William E. Hutson: Any closing thoughts?

Walls: Overall, if I had it to do over again, I would do it in a heartbeat. I'm kind of like the old warhorse. I'm way too old to do it now, but if the Marine Corps called, and I could still get in my greens—well, I probably can—I'd go. I would go. It was one of the greatest experiences I've had. I've had three or four careers, and I've had a lot of experiences in life. But the one that has had the greatest effect on me, and will to the day I die, is to say to people, "I was an officer in the Marines, and I was a general officer in the Marines." And it was a good experience.

Major General Charles F. Bolden Jr.

Allison: Do you have any summary thoughts on recruiting and retaining promising black officers in the Marine Corps?

Major General Charles F. Bolden Jr.: When I retired [in 2004], they were well on the way of being corrected. We had four two-stars in the Marine Corps at the time that I retired. My message there would be as good as things are, they are this way because we worked at it really hard. You have to work at it every single day. The emphasis must be on ensuring that equal opportunities were provided for everybody and that we were looking for talented people to bring into the general officer rank. It doesn't happen by itself. It takes leadership. It takes a Commandant foremost, and if the Commandant isn't interested in it, it definitely won't happen. If you look at what General Amos is doing, I think it's incredible.

It's a lot easier for most people to understand today because they come from units, in almost all cases, that are heavily diversified. It's not in the enlisted ranks, because that almost has always been the case. But now, unlike when I came in, there are probably several African American or Hispanic officers somewhere in all units. So it's not like it used to be. When I was a lieutenant colonel, you'd still have to look to find somebody of color. I don't think you have to do that today.

Lieutenant General Willie J. Williams

Allison: What are your thoughts on the relationship of the Marine Corps with the larger black community? It seems like the Ma-

rine Corps, historically, has problems recruiting black officers. What do you think is at the root of that?

W. Williams: We often try to get to that, and I have conversations on it quite often. I can't put a finger on it, but I think the only thing that I can come up with is that it's historical. The Marine Corps was the last service to integrate, so . . . if I heard of someone who went off to the service and came back, they usually went Army. That's usually what you heard in the black community, . . . whether it was a dad or an uncle. Any service that they heard of was probably Army. It was never the Marine Corps. So when they talked around the kitchen table, the Marine Corps never entered into the conversation. If an individual then got to looking at something, he probably just didn't look at the Marine Corps. . . .

I think you see a change in a lot of it as we go on, as we come up through the years. You see more and more now begin to understand the Marine Corps and what the Marine Corps does for a young

LtGen Willie J. Williams, director of Marine Corps Staff, speaking at a reception before the evening parade at Marine Barracks Washington in June 2011.

Official Marine Corps Photo by Cody A. Fodale



man or woman who joins the Corps, how they become upstanding citizens, whether they stay in for 30 years or they stay in for three years, whatever the case is.

There's a progression in thought within the African American community, but I think that's where it goes back to. I know even now, even within my own family, at least now they're beginning to understand what a Marine is. I'll tell you, in the past, early on, I was a "soldier." That's all they knew. . . .

I think it's just that within the African American community, they have had, historically, more exposure to the Army and less exposure to the Marine Corps. I do think on it a lot, and that's about as close as I can come to a reason why. Once they begin to learn and understand it, there's a high respect for the Corps through the community.

Allison: I've heard that some communities are very favorable to the Marines, so that makes a lot of sense.

W. Williams: Right. For those who have had that exposure, that's exactly what you get to.

Allison: And the Marine Corps, I don't think they've had trouble getting enough black enlisted men, but for officers, it's a different situation. There are more opportunities . . . [for] going into corporate America or whatever.

W. Williams: In some cases, you have your first-generation college graduates, which I was. I was the first one from my family to graduate from college, so the family, when they're looking at it, and they don't know anything about it, they go, "Wait a minute. No, no. I put you through college, and we did all this, and we sacrificed for you to go out and get a good job."

That is beginning to turn I think a little bit. I think we see especially in some of this generation that is coming up a desire for service. They want to serve, give back to the community, and all these sorts of things, so I think that's changing just a bit. It's not so much this money-driven focus. Again, you always have to put yourself in time and space and place to say, "OK, what drives you at that time?"

Major General Clifford L. Stanley

Stanley: What the Marine Corps stands for, I would say the closest thing I can say is it's like being an American. There's a disci-

pline, there's a love, there's a professionalism. Sometimes the mistakes are allowed, and sometimes they aren't. Some of the best leadership examples that we can come up with are of folks who stepped on it royally and they're allowed to come back. . . .

In my Bible class yesterday, I took the Marine officer guide. There's a reason for that. It's not perfect, and I'm not trying to put it up there close to God, because it's not, but it's pretty close. To be able to serve—servant leadership—everything I'm practicing as a deacon right now and doing, I could do in the Corps. Last to eat chow, last in line to serve yourself, troops come first. If you don't know what you're talking about, I wouldn't stand in front of the platoon not knowing what I'm talking about. Listening to the sergeant who knows more than you know, and you're a lieutenant. You know he knows more than you. Let him know. Participatory leadership. . . .

I've mentored hundreds of folks of all races and genders. The bottom line is that mentoring and helping others to actualize their potential has been a lifelong passion, and to see that, not for me, but to see other folks benefit from it. When I talk about my personal ministry right now of helping people to actualize their potential, that's what I'm dedicated to. It's not really about me. It's actually to see other folks enjoy not anything other than just being able to really see their real potential to help other people.

Lieutenant General Walter E. Gaskin Sr.

Allison: Looking back, what do you consider keys to your success? Who were your mentors or role models?

Gaskin: I've had a great career. I've commanded at every level, and I've had folks that have provided the greatest opportunity for me to excel and have mentored me that were white. First of all, there weren't that many [African Americans] up there ahead of me for me to have as mentors. I knew Lieutenant General Frank E. Petersen when he was a lieutenant colonel. And I knew Major General Charles Frank Bolden Jr. when he came back to the Marine Corps after 14 years working at NASA [National Aeronautics and Space Administration]. I knew Cliff's [Stanley] family. We were very close, and he's just a couple of years ahead of me, you know. And Major General Arnold Fields, and I knew Brigadier General George H. Walls Jr. I

know all of those guys. But other than the voice that said, “Hey, glad you’re doing OK,” they were not my mentors.

They were not [General Richard I.] “Butch” Neal, Lieutenant General Robert R. “Rusty” Blackman, Lieutenant General Wallace “Chip” Gregson, [Lieutenant General Emil R.] “Buck” Bedard, or Major General Lawrence H. Livingston. [There were] a lot of colonels, too, that did not get promoted to general. Colonel James A. Brinson, he was my model. When I came back from Okinawa, he said, “You’re going to Parris Island.”

“I don’t want to go to Parris Island. I want to go back to the division. I don’t want to go.”

He said, “No, that’s where you’re going. That’s where you’ll be.” So I became the first African American to command a company by being at Parris Island because they sent me there. It was there I actually decided that I was going to stay. The Marine Corps had a motto there at Parris Island that says, “Own your own company at 26.” And I said, “Wow, that’s me.”

But these guys were like heroes. Lieutenant General Wallace “Chip” Gregson was my company commander, and I worked for Lieutenant General William M. Keys both at Headquarters and had the 6th Marine Regiment when he was the MEF [Marine expeditionary force] commander. So I knew all these guys personally, and then General Charles C. Krulak personally. He handpicked me to be the colonels monitor. These are guys who shaped me. . . .

This is what I hear all the time. Retirees see that we have had four African American three-stars. They see that as the greatest thing the Marine Corps has done for the African American community, whether I’m talking to the Montford Pointers, or I’m talking to the young folks in NNOA, or the retirees out there, is that the Marine Corps gave a grunt an opportunity to be promoted. Typically, we had the opportunity for logisticians because there were more of them. We didn’t agree that we wouldn’t get another Lieutenant General Frank E. Petersen. When [Major General Charles F.] Bolden “bolted,” as we said, the likelihood of getting a three-star fell off the chart after Lieutenant General Frank E. Petersen. But the idea of having an African American who could be a division commander, who could deploy to Iraq, who could do those things that the ground guys had

done has been the greatest contribution itself. That's what the Montford Pointers see. That's the big thing, because that's what that record meant to them, and that's what I would like to see continued. Our lineage is drying up.

Allison: You don't see the African American colonels, lieutenant colonels coming up?

Gaskin: We have so few. And the thing is, you can't promise anything. They've got to go through all the wickets, and the fewer you have, and these guys, in my opinion, need to pay the dues that everybody else did. When I got selected to be a new commander, my peers didn't say, "Somebody gave you that." They knew I had been a BLT [battalion landing team] commander. I got a bronze star with "V" while BLT commander. They knew that I had served every step of the way, and so it wasn't . . .

Allison: Affirmative action?

Gaskin: Yes. So these guys need to do the same thing. There's so few of them. . . . I look at the combat arms—five colonels selected, one of them is combat arms. One's an aviator. But you see, the base is so thin to pick from. If you look at the numbers, the numbers are problematic because the ones who are lieutenant colonel, available to be promoted to colonel, and then colonel, those guys who have done everything for general, that's where your numbers go thin, a lot thinner than I felt that we should be at this stage. It takes 22 years to get to colonel. So you can ramp up your recruiting right now, but you're 20 years out from fixing that. My advice to the Commandant has been, from my experience, the same thing that he had done for the Montford Pointers, he had to take a look inside our Corps and say, are we nurturing, training, doing for the African American as you have done in my day?

In my day, [people were] looking after Lieutenant General Ronald S. Coleman, Lieutenant General Willie J. Williams, and taking care of Major General Charles Frank Bolden Jr. and his family, Brigadier General George H. Walls Jr. And then there's Lieutenant General Frank E. Petersen—all had had guys who ticketed [them]. I think if you were talking to Petersen, he would tell you that General Samuel Jaskilka had a vision for him and the future. And if you talk to people like Lieutenant Colonel Edward L. Green, who had such

frustration. Green was one of our bright and shining stars. Here's a guy who commanded a battalion in combat, who's coming back, and who separated from us, was so disillusioned by the process that he went off and worked for Eastern Airlines. They just throw them away. We really don't want this to happen. It has a far-reaching effect across the Corps.

We've spent a lot of time trying to address that. But most of the time, it's a Band-Aid effect, and it's personality driven, and it's such a short time, there's not an institutional commitment to doing that until we get a crisis. When we get a crisis, we roll over and put Marine Corps vigor behind it, and boy, we fix it. If the Commandant has defined an issue that we need to address, we turn two.

The Commandant is going around giving his heritage talk now about females in the military. He's come and talked to the 19 commanders who are going to be receiving women in their battalions and squadrons for the very first time. But what are you going to tell the lieutenant colonels and the captains and the majors out there who are in these units? "You can't screw this up, you know. You don't get to sabotage something that I have decided is important for the Corps." But I think we need to do that across the Corps as you look at your minorities as well. Get them a directive.

That's what we tell the drill instructor, or that's what we tell the recruiter when we need it. I remember telling my recruiters, "Hey, being a recruiter is like being an NFL [National Football League] coach. You win, you stay; you lose, you go. It's nothing personal; this is business. And the business I've got to do right now is I don't have enough African Americans. So I want you to beat the bushes, I want you to find these guys out there, the best our nation has to offer, and I want to make a Marine. I want you to compete with everybody else for our fair share of that pie." That's what you tell them.

You don't fall under this quota business because that's what we do anyway. If you don't think that I don't say to the recruiters that I need some band players, I need some guys with high GCT [general classification test] scores to go into communications, I need some to go into the various MOSs [military occupational specialties], aviation mechanics and whatever, and you guys have got to be at the G2 [intelligence] to do it. We already quota. . . . We target, you know, to

the health of the Corps. If you've got the health of the Corps at stake here, that's what you do.

Major General Ronald L. Bailey

Bailey: The board process, the promotions, selections process where your record is put up in front of 17 other officers and briefed, and each individual can challenge or add to anything in that particular package, and then present it to the board, and they vote. It is a very fair process. Now have we had some issues and problems in other areas like evaluations? Yes. Have we addressed them? Yes, we have. I have seen that issue in terms of things we can work on, but in terms of discrimination and promotions, I have not seen discrimination in promotions. I have sat on boards, and I don't think the process is a process that is a discriminatory process. So I think it is a very fair process. One of the things that I know that the Corps did early on is the Corps had written precepts to make sure that things were fair and correct. We still write precepts to ensure that our boards are balanced, fair, and equitable.

Dr. Thomas M. Baughn: Does this apply to job assignments?

Bailey: We all have a view or an understanding of our Montford Point Marines who were all put in service-type billets and not given the opportunity to lead combat units into combat. While I am saying this, there were some that did. They fought. They served in segregated units, and when they came back, they were not treated the same way.

But in terms of combat assignments, or let me address it by saying combat arms assignments, I have held every billet that a combat arms officer should have. I say that because I started off as a platoon commander. I was a company XO [executive officer], I have had company command four times, a recruit training company, a security force company when they activated Kings Bay, a rifle company, and a weapons company. Then I have been a battalion commander, I have been a regimental commander, I have been a brigade commander, and now I am a division commander. I was a regimental commander in combat. I don't think there was ever a conscious decision made to not send me or to send someone else when it came to going into combat.



Official Marine Corps Photo

MajGen Ronald L. Bailey took command of the 1st Marine Division in 2011. He led the 2d Marine Regiment in Operation Iraqi Freedom I in 2003.

Now am I going to sit here and say that there is no discrimination, or there have not been any racial issues in the Corps? Obviously not. There have been some. It's obvious. It's recorded that there has been some. One of the things that I have been very proud of this nation, and this Corps, and the military is that when something of that nature can surface, everyone has reached out and put their hands around it and choked it out and said "not in my military, not in my Corps." So I think that's where the nation has grown. The nation has progressed past what our Montford Point forefathers experienced, what some of our Vietnam family of Marines have experienced. . . . We all know of Captain Cooper (who retired as Major General Cooper) as the first African Amer-

ican to command a company in combat. You talk in ones and twos—that in itself tells you that there is some disparity there. There’s something going on, but we—thank goodness—we have progressed beyond that. . . .

Baughn: What are your thoughts on the current Marine Corps? How is it doing?

Bailey: The Commandant’s [General James F. Amos] planning guidance [is] to improve diversity in the Corps, and I think what he is doing is absolutely magnificent. I say that from the standpoint of how he views this as a strategic issue. When we improve diversity in the Marine Corps, he is saying bring [in] people from all walks of life. He explained it in the sense that when America looks at the picture of the Corps, they’re going to look at a picture of themselves. I think that’s the way it should be in that we are now pulling from all races, colors, creeds, and people. When we do it that way, it makes our military strong and our nation strong because it is not just a certain group or a certain class. It’s everybody contributing to our Corps remaining strong.

The experience of our Montford Point Marines is one that I respect . . . because they are the ones who, just like me, they volunteered. Can you imagine volunteering to go fight for your nation when you are called names and denied the basic opportunities and rights that everyone else [had] that you served with? Yet they did and they endured. . . . Those Montford Point Marines cut a path and opened the door for me. I often say, “I am you and you are me,” merely because it was those Montford Point Marines who had the courage to put up with mistreatment, name calling, denial. But they wouldn’t quit, and they didn’t quit, so what you see is not just another Marine, but you see a strong Marine Corps because of what they did. That’s the thing that I never lose sight of, and I appreciate and respect more than anything is those forefathers, those Montford Point Marines, who proudly stood for this nation.

And that’s what I say about the young men and women that I see today. They’re all volunteers—African Americans, Hispanics, whites, Asians. They all are volunteers, and they are volunteering to serve this nation because they believe in what it represents. They volunteered to serve this Corps because they want to be a part of

a Corps that says “Courage, Honor, Commitment.” . . . For 235 years we have been doing this. As we roll into another year of service, we’re still just kicking butt.

Notes

Introduction

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Chapter 1

¹ Frank E. Petersen Jr. with J. Alfred Phelps, *Into the Tiger's Jaw: America's First Black Marine Aviator* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1998), 17–18.

Chapter 2

¹ Henry I. Shaw Jr. and Ralph W. Donnelly, *Blacks in the Marine Corps* (1975; repr., Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 2002), 47–48.

² First Petersen paragraph from his 1972 interview with Henry I. Shaw Jr. Second and third paragraphs from Frank E. Petersen Jr. with J. Alfred Phelps, *Into the Tiger's Jaw: America's First Black Marine Aviator* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1998), 35–36.

³ Petersen, *Into the Tiger's Jaw*, 56.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 68–69.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 107–11. Petersen's letter to the editor is reprinted on p. 110.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 115. Petersen did not name the commanding officer or executive officer in the book.

⁹ Robert J. Schneller, *Blue & Gold and Black: Racial Integration of the U.S. Naval Academy* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008).

Chapter 3

¹ Henry I. Shaw Jr. and Ralph W. Donnelly, *Blacks in the Marine Corps* (1975; repr., Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 2002), 74.

² *Ibid.*, 75.

³ Frank E. Petersen Jr. with J. Alfred Phelps, *Into the Tiger's Jaw: America's First Black Marine Aviator* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1998), 152.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 156–57.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 166. The full mission is described on pp. 162–66.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 172–73.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 174.

Chapter 4

¹ Morris J. MacGregor Jr., *Integration of the Armed Forces, 1940–1965* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1981), 539.

² Colonel Alphonse G. Davis, *Pride, Progress, and Prospects: The Marine Corps' Efforts to Increase the Presence of African-American Officers (1970–1995)* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 2000), 17.

³ *Ibid.*, 15–16.

⁴ Frank E. Petersen Jr. with J. Alfred Phelps, *Into the Tiger's Jaw: America's First Black Marine Aviator* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1998), 185–86.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 192.

Chapter 5

¹ Frank E. Petersen Jr. with J. Alfred Phelps, *Into the Tiger's Jaw: America's First Black Marine Aviator* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1998), 197–99.

² *Ibid.*, 227–28.

Chapter 6

¹ Colonel Alphonse G. Davis, *Pride, Progress, and Prospects: The Marine Corps' Efforts to Increase the Presence of African-American Officers (1970–1995)* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Di-

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² Ibid., 13–15, 23–25.

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⁴ Frank E. Petersen Jr. with J. Alfred Phelps, *Into the Tiger's Jaw: America's First Black Marine Aviator* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1998), 263–64.

⁵ Ibid., 270–71.

⁶ Ibid., 290.

⁷ Ibid., 294–95.

⁸ Ibid., 320.

Chapter 7

¹ Colonel Alphonse G. Davis, *Pride, Progress, and Prospects: The Marine Corps' Efforts to Increase the Presence of African-American Officers (1970–1995)* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 2000).

² Charles F. Bolden Jr., “The Legacy,” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, June 2005, 30–31.

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⁴ For the 1992–93 OCS Quality Management Board, chaired by Colonel David A. Vetter, and its report, see *ibid.*, 32–34.

⁵ Daniel Harrington, “The Equal Opportunity Misconception and the Accession/Selection Paradox,” *Marine Corps Gazette*, April 1993, 38–42; Samuel J. Strotman, “Minority Officer Procurement and the OSO,” *Marine Corps Gazette*, April 1993, 43–44. See also Davis's discussion of the impact of these articles and the responses to them in Davis, *Pride, Progress, and Prospects*, 29–32.

Chapter 8

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Contributors

Captain Vernice G. Armour

Born in Chicago and raised in Memphis, Tennessee, Captain Armour graduated from Middle Tennessee State University in 1997. She served in the U.S. Army Reserve and was a police officer in Tempe, Arizona, prior to Marine Corps commissioning in October 1998. Armour attended U.S. Navy flight school and earned her wings in 2001. In Bell AH-1W Super Cobra gunships in Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 169, she flew in combat in Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003 and 2004. After leaving the Marine Corps in 2007, she became a speaker on leadership and personal development and authored *Zero to Breakthrough: The 7-Step, Battle-Tested Method for Accomplishing Goals that Matter* (New York: Gotham, 2011). Captain Armour was interviewed by Colonel Eleanor M. Wilson on 3 September 2006.

Major General Ronald L. Bailey

Major General Bailey, a native of St. Augustine, Florida, graduated from Austin Peay State University in Tennessee and was commissioned a Marine officer in 1977. An infantry officer, he served in a variety of command assignments. He commanded the 2d Marine Regiment in Operation Iraqi Freedom I during the battle at an-Nasiriyah. In 2007, Bailey took command of the 3d Marine Expeditionary Brigade and also served as deputy commanding general of III Marine Expeditionary Force. In 2011, he became the commanding general, 1st Marine Division. Major General Bailey was interviewed by Colonel Reed R. Bonadonna on 8 May 2003 and Dr. Thomas M. Baughn on 14 December 2011.

Major General Charles F. Bolden Jr.

Major General Bolden, a native of Columbia, South Carolina, and graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, was commissioned in 1968. A naval aviator, he flew more than 100 combat missions in Grumman A-6A Intruder aircraft in Vietnam. His Marine Corps service

was interrupted by 14 years (1980–94) spent as an astronaut with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), during which he flew four space shuttle missions, two of which he commanded. After returning to the Marine Corps in 1994, Bolden served as deputy commandant of the U.S. Naval Academy and commanding general, 3d Marine Aircraft Wing. He retired from the Marine Corps in 2004. In 2009, he was appointed by President Barack H. Obama to head NASA, the position he still held at the time of publication. Major General Bolden was interviewed by Dr. Fred H. Allison on 7 May 2008 and 27 February 2012.

Lieutenant General Ronald S. Coleman

A native of Darby, Pennsylvania, Coleman served in the U.S. Navy before becoming a Marine officer in 1970 after graduating from Cheyney State College (now University). A supply officer, he served in a range of assignments and commands of ever increasing responsibility. He was logistics officer for Joint Task Force Shining Hope in 1999 and was assigned assistant deputy commandant, Installations and Logistics, at Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, in 2001. Coleman commanded a special-purpose Marine air-ground task force in Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003 and Combined Joint Task Force Haiti in 2004. He became director of the Personnel Management Division and, upon promotion to lieutenant general, became deputy commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. He retired in 2009. General Coleman was interviewed by Colonel Nicholas E. Reynolds on 20 April 2004 and Colonel Kurtis P. Wheeler on 12 August 2011.

Major General Jerome G. Cooper

Major General Cooper entered the Marine Corps in 1958 after graduating from the University of Notre Dame. He commanded an infantry company in combat in Vietnam and earned a Bronze Star and two Purple Hearts. In 1969, he returned to his native Mobile, Alabama, took up managing the family business, and joined the Reserves. As a reserve officer, he commanded various units. Cooper was called to temporary active duty in 1988 to serve as director, Personnel Procurement Division at Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps.

The next year he was appointed assistant secretary of the Air Force for Manpower, Reserve Affairs, Installations and Logistics. In 1994, President William J. Clinton appointed him ambassador to Jamaica. Major General Cooper was interviewed by Mr. John J. Lyles on 7 December 2011.

Lieutenant Colonel Doris A. Daniels

A native of Prentiss, Mississippi, and graduate of Kentucky State College (now University), Daniels was commissioned in 1974 and became a finance/disbursing officer. Besides assignments in her specialty, she also served as minority affairs officer, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps; deputy director of the Military Equal Opportunity Office of the assistant secretary of defense, and in the U.S. Department of State as plans and liaison officer in its Bureau of International Narcotics Matters. She commanded the Military Entrance Processing Station at Atlanta, Georgia. After promotion to lieutenant colonel, the first African American woman to reach this rank, Daniels commanded the Headquarters and Service Battalion at the Marine Corps Logistics Base Albany, Georgia. She retired in 2001 and served as the city manager for Clinton, Tennessee. Lieutenant Colonel Daniels was interviewed by Major Beth M. Wolny on 25 February 2012.

Colonel Alphonse G. Davis

Colonel Davis was raised in New Orleans, Louisiana, graduated from Southern University, and was commissioned an infantry officer in 1972. He commanded units in the 2d and 3d Marine Divisions and later commanded the 8th Motor Transport Battalion. He also served extensively in officer recruitment and retention assignments. He was an officer selection officer in Dallas, Texas; assistant for Officer Procurement for the 8th Marine Corps District; head, Officer Procurement Branch, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, and advisor to the Commandant on equal opportunity matters; and head, Equal Opportunity Branch. In 1995, Davis became the commander of Marine Corps Officer Candidates School, the first African American to hold that post. In 2000, he wrote *Pride, Progress, and Prospects: The Marine Corps' Efforts to Increase the Presence of African-American Officers (1970–1995)*. Colonel Davis

was interviewed by Dr. Fred H. Allison on 16 February 2012.

Colonel Kenneth D. Dunn

Colonel Dunn, a native of Louisville, Kentucky, graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1974 and became a Marine artillery officer. He served in this capacity and eventually commanded the 5th Battalion, 10th Marine Regiment, the first African American to command an artillery battalion. Later he taught the artillery package at the Amphibious Warfare School. Dunn commanded the weapons training battalion at Quantico, Virginia, and served as the chief of staff, Marine Corps Base Camp Butler, Okinawa, Japan. He retired in 2004 but continued to serve as a civilian in Marine Corps Manpower Division, specializing in leadership development seminars. Colonel Dunn was interviewed by Dr. Fred H. Allison on 19 January 2012.

Major General Arnold Fields

Major General Fields was raised in Early Branch, South Carolina, graduated from South Carolina State College (now University), and was commissioned a Marine infantry officer in 1969. He commanded infantry units from platoon to battalion. As commanding officer of the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines, he went to war in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. In the 6th Marine Corps District, Fields was officer in charge of the District Contact Team and later commanded the recruiting station at Orlando, Florida. He commanded Company B (Middle East), Marine Security Guard Battalion. As a student at the Army War College, he was also a member of its Current Affairs Panel. Later commands included the Marine Corps Support Activity Kansas City, Missouri, and Headquarters Battalion, Camp Fuji, Japan. He was deputy commanding general, III Marine Expeditionary Force, and the director of the Marine Corps Staff at Headquarters, Marine Corps, the first African American Marine to hold this billet. Major General Fields was interviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Mark E. Wood on 16 February 2012.

Lieutenant General Walter E. Gaskin Sr.

General Gaskin, a Georgia native, graduated from Savannah State College (now University) in 1974. He was commissioned the

same year as an infantry officer. He commanded a number of infantry units, including Battalion Landing Team 2/2, which conducted noncombatant evacuations in Liberia and the Central African Republic. He commanded the 22d Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) in Operation Bright Star in Egypt and Infinite Moonlight in Jordan in 1999–2000. In 2006, Gaskin commanded the 2d Marine Division, the first African American officer to lead a division. While in this role, he also commanded II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) in Iraq in 2007 and Multinational Forces-West. As of this writing (2012), he is deputy chairman, North Atlantic Treaty Organization Military Committee. Lieutenant General Gaskin was interviewed by Dr. Fred H. Allison on 10 May 2012.

Lieutenant Colonel Edward L. Green

Raised in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, Lieutenant Colonel Green was commissioned in 1959 upon graduation from West Chester State Teacher's College (now University). As a communications officer, he served two tours in Vietnam. He was the first Marine African American instructor at the U.S. Naval Academy, where he taught leadership and military law and served on the admissions board. Green became special assistant to the Commandant on minority affairs in 1972 and aide to the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Samuel Jaskilka. In 1977, he commanded 2d Battalion, 9th Marines, and retired in 1980. He became a vice president with Eastern Airlines and remained in the airline industry. Lieutenant Colonel Green was interviewed by Dr. Fred H. Allison on 19 March 2012.

Chief Warrant Officer-2 Annie L. Grimes

Chief Warrant Officer-2 Grimes, a Tennessee native, enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1950. She worked in supply at a number of locations, including duty as procurement chief at Marine Corps depots in San Francisco, Camp Pendleton, and Philadelphia. In 1966, she was selected for warrant officer and retired in 1970 as a chief warrant officer-2. After retirement, she settled in Arlington, Tennessee, near Memphis, where she worked for the Internal Revenue

Service and local government. Chief Warrant Officer-2 Grimes was interviewed by Major Beth M. Wolny on 5 March 2012.

Colonel Gail E. Jennings

Raised in Dayton, Ohio, Colonel Jennings was commissioned in 1977 upon graduation from the University of Dayton. She became a finance/disbursing officer and served at a number of locations in this capacity. She served at Parris Island Recruit Depot as a series and company commander. Jennings also served on the Joint Staff in the Pentagon as vice director for Manpower and Personnel and in the Programs and Resources Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps. She commanded the Headquarters Battalion at Marine Corps Support Activity in New Orleans, Louisiana and retired in 2011. Colonel Jennings was interviewed by Major Beth M. Wolny on 7 April 2012.

Colonel Fred L. Jones

Born in Georgia and raised in Mississippi, Nevada, and Oroville, California, Colonel Jones attended Oregon State University on a football scholarship before being commissioned in 1964 as a supply officer. He served in Quantico, Vietnam, and Barstow, California, before being assigned as the first Marine officer instructor at the Savannah State NROTC unit. Jones was selected for Command and Staff College and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces and held logistics billets at virtually every level during his 31-year career, serving in Okinawa, Albany, and Richmond. Jones commanded Marine Wing Support Squadron 17 and culminated his career as the chief of staff of the 3d Force Service Support Group and the Marine Corps Systems Command. Colonel Jones was interviewed by Colonel Kurtis P. Wheeler on 10 August 2011.

Colonel John W. Moffett

Colonel Moffett, raised in Pensacola, Florida, enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1963. Upon selection for officers' training, he was commissioned in 1966. As an infantry officer, he served two tours in Vietnam. Moffett was a platoon commander at Officer Candidates School and later assigned to Marine Barracks, 8th and I, and Marine

Corps Institute. He later worked on the Affirmative Action Team, Human Relations Branch, at Headquarters Marine Corps. Colonel Mofett was interviewed by Dr. Thomas M. Baughn on 13 December 2011.

Lieutenant General Frank E. Petersen Jr.

Lieutenant General Petersen was born in Topeka, Kansas. He enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1950 and was selected in 1951 for the Naval Aviation Cadet Program. He completed flight training in October 1952 and opted to fly in the Marine Corps, becoming the first Marine African American aviator. As a fighter pilot, he flew combat missions in both the Korean and Vietnam wars. In Vietnam, he commanded Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 314 and was the first African American in the Marines or Navy to command a tactical squadron. Later, he commanded a Marine aircraft group, an amphibious brigade, and a Marine aircraft wing. Petersen served as the Commandant's special assistant for minority affairs in 1970 and participated in a Department of Defense investigation of racial issues throughout the military. Petersen served as executive assistant to the Assistant Commandant, U.S. Marine Corps, and was commanding general, Marine Corps Base Quantico and concomitantly, the Marine Corps Development and Education Command. He was interviewed by Mr. Henry I. Shaw Jr. on 1 August 1972. Where cited, additional material has been drawn from Frank E. Petersen Jr. with J. Alfred Phelps, *Into the Tiger's Jaw: America's First Black Marine Aviator* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1998), which is being republished by U.S. Naval Institute Press.

Colonel Henry L. Reed

Colonel Reed grew up in Burton, South Carolina, near the Paris Island Recruit Depot. After graduating from Hampton Institute, he entered the Marine Corps and was commissioned in 1965. As an infantry officer in Vietnam, he commanded an Ontos antitank platoon and was a company executive officer. He served as a tactics instructor at The Basic School in 1970, then returned to Vietnam as an advisor to South Vietnamese Marines. He was a Marine officer instructor at Prairie View A&M and from 1975 to 1978 was the special assistant to the Commandant for minority affairs. Reed served

as a brigade operations officer, regimental executive officer, and commanded 3d Battalion, 3d Marines, and a security force battalion. He retired from the Marine Corps in 1995. In retirement, he was the senior Marine instructor for Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps and oversaw five JROTC programs in Baltimore, Maryland, high schools. Colonel Reed was interviewed by Colonel Kurtis P. Wheeler on 23 October 2011.

Major General Clifford L. Stanley

Major General Stanley, a native South Carolinian, graduated in 1969 from South Carolina State College (now University) and was commissioned a Marine officer the same year. Originally a supply officer, early in his career he changed to infantry and eventually rose to command of the 1st Marine Regiment, the first African American officer to command a Marine regiment. Other career assignments included instructor at the U.S. Naval Academy, and Parade Commander at 8th and I, Washington, DC, the first African American so designated. Stanley was appointed Marine Corps aide for the assistant secretary of the Navy and later was special assistant to the director, FBI, in the White House Fellowship Program. He was also assistant deputy chief of staff for Manpower and Reserve Affairs and director of Public Affairs at Headquarters Marine Corps. He commanded the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, California. He then commanded the Marine base at Quantico, Virginia, and also was the deputy commanding general, Marine Corps Combat Development Command. Stanley retired from the Marine Corps in 2002. In October 2009, he was appointed by President Barack H. Obama as undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness. Major General Stanley was interviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Mark Andrasi on 28 February 2012.

Brigadier General George H. Walls Jr.

A native of Parkesburg, Pennsylvania, General Walls graduated from West Chester State College (now University) and was commissioned in 1965. In 1966, he deployed to Vietnam as an engineering officer. He later commanded the Marine detachment aboard the USS *Franklin D. Roosevelt* (CVA 42), Wing Engineer Squadron 17, and

the 2d Force Service Support Group. During this tour, he commanded Joint Task Force for Operation Guantanamo, a humanitarian relief operation for Haitian migrants. Walls served as Marine officer instructor, NROTC, at North Carolina Central University. In the 4th Marine Corps District, he served as an officer selection officer and was the assistant head of the Personnel Procurement Branch. In 1984, he served as the special assistant and Marine aide to the assistant secretary of the Navy (Manpower and Reserve Affairs). He later served as the commanding officer and professor of naval science, NROTC Unit, University of North Carolina. He retired in 1993. General Walls was interviewed by Chief Warrant Officer-3 William E. Hutson on 17 February 2012.

Major General Leo V. Williams III

Raised in Norfolk, Virginia, Major General Williams graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1970. Opting for the Marine Corps, he became an artillery officer. He served on active duty from 1970 until 1978 when he transferred to the Marine Corps Reserve. He commanded 4th Force Service Support Group, was vice director, joint experimentation, U.S. Joint Forces Command; and deputy commanding general, Marine Corps Combat Development Command. In 2000, the secretary of defense appointed him as a member of the Reserve Forces Policy Board. In civilian life, Williams was the marketing manager for the Ford Explorer and Sport Trac, Ford Motor Company. Major General Williams was interviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Mark D. Andrasi on 5 March 2012.

Lieutenant General Willie J. Williams

An Alabama native, General Williams graduated from Stillman College in 1974 and was commissioned in the Marine Corps the same year as a supply officer. He served in a number of supply/logistics billets including as the logistics officer, Contingency Marine Air Ground Task Force 3-88, in the Persian Gulf and commanded the Service Support Group of the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable). He later was commanding general, Marine Corps Base Smedley Butler and 3d Force Service Support Group, III Marine Expeditionary Force. At Headquarters, U.S. Ma-

rine Corps, he was deputy commandant, Installations and Logistics (Facilities) before taking command of Marine Corps Logistics Command Albany, Georgia. In 2009, he assumed duties as the director, Marine Corps Staff. Lieutenant General Williams was interviewed by Dr. Fred H. Allison on 23 March 2012.

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