

# ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT

General Robert H. Barrow

U.S. Marine Corps (Ret)

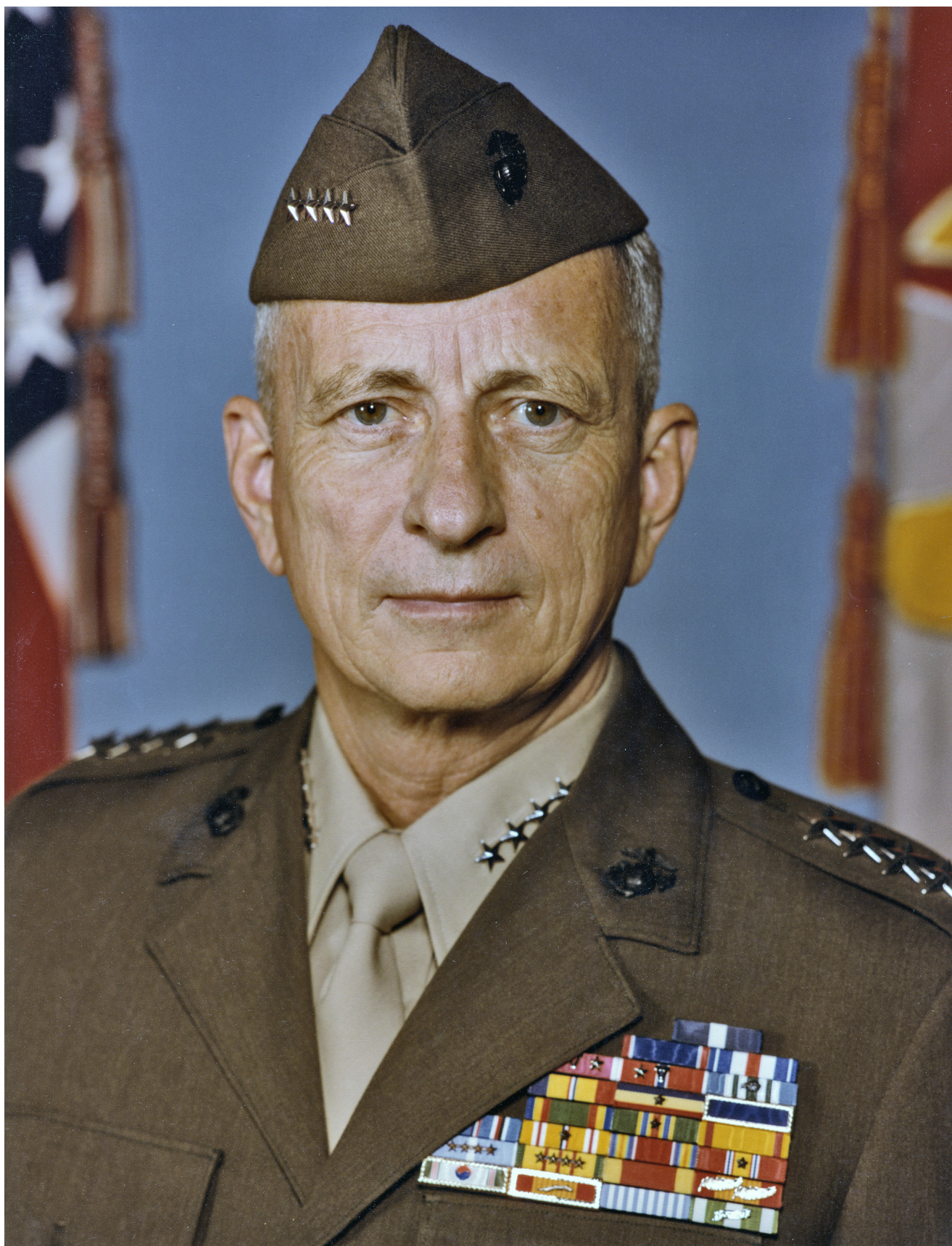


Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons  
Interviewer

HISTORY DIVISION  
U.S Marine Corps  
Quantico, Virginia

2015





Official U.S. Marine Corps photo

*Gen Robert H. Barrow*





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## FOREWORD

This volume is the transcribed oral history of the 27th U.S. Marine Corps Commandant, General Robert H. Barrow, USMC (Deceased). It is the result of a 19 session interview conducted by Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons, the then Director of the Marine Corps History and Museums Division, on behalf of the Marine Corps Oral History Program. This transcript is the work of many individuals, most importantly General Barrow who committed many hours of his personal time to complete the interviewing process. Others who assisted were Dr. Fred Allison, head of the Oral History program; and Angela Anderson, Editing & Design Branch Head; who reviewed and edited the transcript; W. Stephen Hill of Editing and Design who laid out the photos and graphics and Jennifer Clampet, who indexed the transcript.

The Oral History Program is one facet of the Marine Corps historical collection effort. Oral history provides primary source material to augment the official documentary records. Oral history is essentially spoken history, the oral account of eyewitness observations, impressions, opinions and perspectives of the interviewee recorded in the course of an interview conducted by a historian employing historical methodology. The experiences, perspectives and opinions herein are solely those of the interviewee and interviewer. The final product is a bound transcript, containing historically valuable personal narratives relating to noteworthy professional experiences and observations of distinguished Marines. The transcript has been edited to facilitate ease of readership, eliminating obvious gaffs, duplications and false starts, otherwise the text reflects what was spoken at the time and the reader is asked to bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of the spoken word, rather than the written word.

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

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

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



## GENERAL ROBERT H. BARROW, USMC

General Robert H. Barrow, 27th Commandant of the Marine Corps, was born 5 February 1922 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. After attending Louisiana State University, he enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1942 and was commissioned a second lieutenant 19 May 1943.

Lieutenant Barrow subsequently served as officer-in-charge of an American team attached to a group of Chinese Nationalist guerrillas. He entered China via India and after many months of operations along the periphery of the area held by the Japanese in central China, his team entered Japanese occupied territory and conducted intensive guerrilla operations for the last seven months of World War II. For this service, he was awarded the Bronze Star medal with Combat "V." After the war, Lieutenant Barrow remained in China for another year, six months of which was spent in Shanghai and six months in the Tientsin-Peking area.

He returned to the United States in October 1946, and served as aide-de-camp to the commanding general, Fleet Marine Force (FMF), Atlantic, until September 1948. Captain Barrow then completed the Amphibious Warfare School, Junior Course, at Marine Corps Base (MCB) Quantico, Virginia.

From 1949 until 1950, he served as commanding officer of Company A, 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

During the Korean War, he led Company A, 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, in the Inchon-Seoul operation and the Chosin Reservoir campaign. For the latter, he was awarded the Navy Cross for holding a pass near Koto-ri on 9–10 December 1950.

In February 1956, he commenced an 18-month tour with the 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, North Carolina. From the summer of 1957 to the summer of 1960, he served as the Marine officer instructor, NROTC Unit at Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana. In September 1959, he was promoted to lieutenant colonel.

Colonel Barrow graduated from the National War College in June 1968. He then served in the Republic of Vietnam, as commanding officer, 9th Marines, 3d Marine Division (Rein), and as Deputy G-3, III Marine Amphibious Force (III MAF). During the nine months he served as Commanding Officer of the 9th Marines, his regiment participated in numerous combat actions in the vicinity of the DMZ, Khe Sanh, Da Krong Valley, and A Shau Valley. For extraordinary heroism in Operation Dewey Canyon, he was awarded the Army Distinguished Service Cross.

After promotion to brigadier general, he served as commanding general at Camp Smedley Butler, Okinawa. On further promotion to major general, he became commanding general, Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, South Carolina. He was promoted to lieutenant general in 1975 and assigned to Headquarters Marine Corps as deputy chief of staff for Manpower. In 1976, he was named commanding general, FMF, Atlantic, at Norfolk, Virginia.

General Barrow became the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps in July 1978, so serving until appointed the Corps, Commandant on 1 July 1979.

General Barrow was the first Commandant to serve, by law, a regular four-year tour as a full member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He was instrumental in acquiring approval of production of the American-modified for the Marine Corps Harrier McDonell Douglas AV-8B aircraft, in awakening interest in new and improved naval gunfire support, in getting amphibious ships included in the U.S. Navy's new construction programs, and in returning hospital ships to the fleet, especially on station with Marine Corps amphibious task forces.

General Barrow retired as Commandant on 30 June 1983 and returned to his native state of Louisiana. Upon retirement he was presented with the Distinguished Service Medal.

General Barrow died in his sleep on 30 October 2008 and was laid to rest at Grace Episcopal Church Cemetery in St. Francisville, Louisiana.

In addition to the Distinguished Service Medal, a complete list of his medals and decorations include the Navy Cross; the Army Distinguished Service Cross; the Silver Star Medal; three Legions of Merit; the Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V" and gold star in lieu of a second award; the Presidential Unit Citation with one bronze star; the American Campaign Medal; the World War II Victory Medal; the China Service Medal; the National Defense Service Medal with one bronze star; the Korean Service Medal with three bronze stars; the Vietnamese Service Medal with one bronze star; four Vietnamese Crosses of Gallantry with palm; the Republic of Vietnam National Order, Fifth Class with gold star in lieu of a second award; the United Nations Service Medal; and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal.



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION  
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Interviewee: General Robert H. Barrow, USMC (Ret)

Interviewer: Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons, USMC (Ret)

Date of Interview: 27 January 1986

Place of Interview: Visiting Flag Quarters, Washington Navy Yard, Washington, DC

SESSION I

**Simmons:** Today I am interviewing General Robert H. Barrow, the former Commandant of the Marine Corps. This is the 27th of January 1986; we are in the Visiting Flag Quarters at the Washington Navy Yard. And a bit unusual for Washington, it's a snowy day. Not a seriously snowy day, but there's a little light powdering of snow on the ground. This is the first of what I expect will be a good number of sessions with General Barrow. I'm going to start at the very beginning. When and where were you born?

**Barrow:** I was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, February 5, 1922.

**Simmons:** Were you born in a hospital or at home?

**Barrow:** I was born at home.

**Simmons:** That was rather usual in those days, wasn't it?

**Barrow:** It was. I was born at nine o'clock on Sunday morning, and Dr. Tom Speck Jones, whose son I saw just a few weeks ago, also a doctor, delivered me and told my mother that I was just in time for Sunday school.

**Simmons:** I was born at home, and I still have the record of the amount. I cost \$25. I'm not sure how much you cost.

**Barrow:** I don't recall. I don't remember that.

**Simmons:** At what age did you move to St. Francisville, [Louisiana]?

**Barrow:** Actually, my family came from West Feliciana Parish. St. Francisville is the parish seat. I was born in Baton Rouge incident to my father being there with respect to employment. As was typical of many people in the rural areas of the South during the early part of this century, employment was difficult to find, and farming was a disaster. So most of the young men

went to the city, and my father was typical of that group. That's why we were in Baton Rouge. We returned to St. Francisville, and my father went back to farming when I was about seven or eight years old.

**Simmons:** What was your father's full name?

**Barrow:** His name was Robert Ellason Barrow, and that's a little confusing, because there are three Roberts in my family. I have an older brother named Robert Ellason, who is named after my father. I was named after my grandfather, Robert Hilliard. The Ellason is a contraction of a name contrived by my grandmother, who had one sibling, a sister, who died as a child, and her name was Ella. So when she had her first son, she named him Ellason. That's why my father's name was Robert Ellason Barrow, my oldest brother Robert Ellason Barrow Jr. I'm Robert Hilliard Barrow, named for my grandfather. I also have an uncle, my father's brother, named for his father; so he's Robert Hilliard. There were two before my grandfather, going back to early 1800s. So if you see any family records, the name reappears frequently.

**Simmons:** What's the age differential between yourself and your brother?

**Barrow:** I had an older brother seven years older and another six years older. The oldest is now deceased. We grew up with six and seven years difference, which is pretty significant for a youngster. I had a little sister who died when she was about four. So therefore, in the country a lot of my growing up was without the companionship of a sibling close to my age.

**Simmons:** If your older brother was Robert Ellason and you were Robert Hilliard, what did they call you around the house?

**Barrow:** I was always Bob.

**Simmons:** And your older brother was called?

**Barrow:** They called him R. E., which is a technique I've never liked, but I don't know. I think they were trying to make a distinction between him and my father. In any case, that's what he was called.

**Simmons:** Your next older brother, his name was?

**Barrow:** His name is Haralson, named for my mother's maiden name. Her name was Mary Haralson. He was named for her.

**Simmons:** And your sister's name was?

**Barrow:** Rosa.

**Simmons:** Where was your father born?

**Barrow:** My father was born in West Feliciana Parish, which, again, St. Francisville is the parish seat. So was my mother.

**Simmons:** How old were they, respectively, when you were born?

**Barrow:** My father was 34, and my mother would have been 29 when I was born.

**Simmons:** If I understood you correctly, you were the youngest of the four children?

**Barrow:** My mother was 27 [when I was born]. I was the youngest, other than my little sister who died.

**Simmons:** I see. I believe that your family came early to Louisiana. How early? Is this true for both sides of the family?

**Barrow:** Yes, it is. I don't know the motivation that caused them to come to Louisiana. One could say that it might have been that the postrevolution economy of the Eastern Seaboard was not as good as it should have been, and there was a desire to move west and seek better opportunities for economical reasons. One theory is that perhaps they may have been Tories, which, in some instances, may have made them feel uncomfortable and had the desire to move west.

In any case, they were originally from North Carolina, Edgecombe and Halifax Count[ies], typically the Barrow part of it, and they left there in the late 1790s, stopped in Nashville, Tennessee, where there were some members of the family who had gotten that far and settled there, and they stayed for some several months, then came south, probably over the Natchez Trail [also known as Natchez Trace] , the Natchez of Mississippi Territory. That would be about 50 to 60 miles from where they ultimately ended up in Louisiana, the 31st parallel [north] at that point separating the territory of Mississippi from then Spanish-owned Louisiana.

They and others were attracted to that specific site by generous giving of land by the Spaniards in terms of land grants. The Spanish had a very tenuous hold on that part of Louisiana, the west part of Louisiana, I should say. The capital was in Pensacola, [Florida] and that was pretty distant from the western extremity of their holdings, which was called West Florida. They wanted it settled, and I think they were not too particular about who settled it, so much as they wanted people to settle. So my family, as did others, acquired a lot of land through Spanish generosity.

**Simmons:** Is Rosale [Plantation] part of that land? How long has Rosale been in the family?

**Barrow:** Rosale is the name of the place I presently own, and it was a Spanish land grant, but it was to a fellow named Alexander Stirling, no relative of mine, a very prominent local early citizen. My great-grandfather and his bride went there as newly married in 1844. That happened to be where I really grew up and where I am now in retirement.

**Simmons:** This is an old-fashioned and perhaps outdated question, but what kind of ethnic stock do you come from?

**Barrow:** English, Scotch-Irish. On my mother's side, we didn't talk about them, but they came into that little community about the same time. The Barrows were primarily planters. The original house that they built about 1801 is still standing—the Barrow house, called Highland Plantation. I'm digressing a bit, but it helps fill in that since you expressed an interest in it. That generation that came in there, there was actually a widow and about seven children who came from North Carolina, some of the children being grown, and the land that they acquired most of them built rather fine but simple homes, simple Georgian or what one would call West Indian architecture—ground floor and two floors above it, the ground floor being the kitchen, etc. Sometimes the kitchen was outside with outside stairs, French Colonial influence or Spanish or a combination. Some of these are still standing.

But the sons and daughters of that first generation had the good fortune of engaging in a kind of farming that was very lucrative—cotton, with ready access to the Mississippi River for transportation of the cotton and for bringing things to them. They became enormously wealthy and built homes reflecting that wealth. Most of those were Greek Classic Revival kind of homes, and a number of them are still standing in the parish. But the point I make there is that the Barrow family were caught up in agriculture almost exclusively, and they left some really fine records of the things that they did in their interest in diaries published with the proper editorial and long preface and summary, etc. It covers much of this period by [unintelligible] Barrow.

Since we're talking about early history, I'd like to make one little point. I spoke about the tenuousness of the Spanish hold on that part of West Florida. In 1803, when we had the Louisiana Purchase, many people don't realize that the only thing included in the Louisiana Purchase that is east of the Mississippi River is the city of New Orleans. In the purchase agreement, I think it's referred to as the Isle of Orleans. It's really the present city of New Orleans, out a little ways south of Lake Pontchartrain, Lake Maurepas. But all the rest of the Louisiana Purchase was west of the Mississippi River.



So the citizens in this little community, most of whom hadn't been there but something less than 10 years, suddenly found that west of them was U.S. territory. South of them, down to New Orleans, which is really south of us, was also, and that north of them was Mississippi Territory. So they said, "Why not us?" So in a sense, they sort of bit the hand that fed them. Having gotten generous treatment from the Spaniards in land grants, they tried to gain recognition from the Washington administration—President [James] Madison [Jr.], as I recall—when they started making their appeals for annexation, to no avail.

This went on for quite a number of years, and in 1810, it came to a head when some of the leading citizens, most of whom were farmers, agricultural planters, met secretly and then more openly. One of the first mass meetings that was held with respect to what they proposed to do to have their authority be different from what it was, was held at what is now Rosale, where I live. It was then called Egypt Plantation. Alexander Stirling lived there. One of my ancestors, William Barrow, was a leader in that movement.

They finally took things in their own hands in an orderly fashion. I say "orderly" because they sat down and wrote up a declaration of independence. They had a battle song. They had a flag—which was a lone star, a white star, on a blue background, antedating the one in Texas by some 30 years—and raised their own horses and marched on the nearest Spanish authority of any size or force in Baton Rouge.

In a very bloodless way—I say "bloodless," I think one person was killed and two wounded—they overthrew the Spanish in Baton Rouge and set up something called the Republic of West Florida. I love to tell this story, because even among U.S. historians, this is such a minor footnote that most of them have not heard of it. We've come to be a country by so many unusual means, the original 13 colonies, the revolution, the Gadsden Purchase, the war with Mexico, ad infinitum, the Louisiana Purchase. This is a simple little act, but it had great meaning, and still does, to the people of that small community. So the Republic of West Florida had its capital in the little town of St. Francisville, Louisiana, [and] had its own constitution. There was no expectation on their part that they would remain an independent republic, but it was a move to be annexed, and it worked.

On December the seventh, an easy day to remember, 1810, under the orders of President Madison, Governor [William] C. C. Claiborne, who was the governor of the territory of Louisiana, headquartered in New Orleans, moved north by boat to St. Francisville, and in a

ceremony attended by all the locals, they brought down the lone star and put up the flag of the United States. The Spanish were too weak to protest. As a matter of fact, if my memory serves me right, it was 1819 before Florida was transferred from Spain to the U.S., and that's not very long ago in the context of our lifetime. But all that had to do with breaking up the Spanish empire on the U.S. mainland, North American continent, and it's an interesting little footnote. But anyway, enough of that. They prospered.

Meanwhile, my mother's family had come in primarily as lawyers and doctors, with one exception. There was a French general whose name was Pond Bruillet, who was in Santo Domingo, [Dominican Republic] and in the uprising, which was about the same time as the Louisiana Purchase, as I recall, 1803 or thereabouts. He, along with many others, was thrown out, or they fled for their lives or whatever, and came to Louisiana—which many did because there was already a French population. Somewhere in that early part of the eighteenth century, he married into my mother's family, but they were mostly doctors, lawyers, and not big property owners or planters, as what came from my father's side. But they all arrived about the same time.

**Simmons:** These two family plantations that you mentioned, Highlands and Rosale, how far were they from the river itself?

**Barrow:** Well, Highland is, as the crow flies, five or six miles. Rosale is perhaps, as the crow flies, eight or nine miles. Greenwood Plantation—which is the most magnificent of all, built by William Ruffin Barrow, the son of the people who are at Highlands—was closer and had his own steamboats. He was the largest slaveholder in the state of Louisiana at the time of the Civil War and was one of the signers of the ordinance of secession, which made him a marked man. When the war ended, I'm not sure what actions were taken, but he had to forfeit Greenwood. It's there now, much reduced in size, as most of the plantations were. Taxation took place, much of which compelled the owners to get rid of their land because it was the only way they could pay the taxes, to give up part of it as a tax payment. So my great-grandfather had something like three or four plantations, and the home place was probably about 5,000 acres. I now have 500 [acres], which is more than I need, but it's the example of the shrinkage that took place at the end of the war until the time I acquired it in 1950.

**Simmons:** This William Barrow Ruffin, how is his name spelled?

**Barrow:** R-U-F-F-I-N. The same Ruffin that we know about, Edwin Ruffin, who was the firebrand that helped kick off the Civil War, at least, I think, down at Sumner, when he was an

old man. He helped fight the first round. That's all the same family. It's kind of interesting history. I've never been one who was interested in genealogy in terms of trying to assert that my family was better than someone else's family or did more or anything else. As a matter of fact, I'm confident that it was such a large family, and they stayed in one area for so long and did so many things, I'm confident that if you shook the tree vigorously enough, a lot of bad fruit would fall out. But they were an interesting group, and they were instrumental in producing a lot of changes in that part of the world. One of the early senators from Louisiana was named Alexander Barrow in about 1830, died while in office, as a matter of fact, a U.S. senator. My great-grandfather brought the first Brahman cows to America in 1859, formed his own unit for the Civil War, outfitted it, offered it to the state, and it was accepted. By the time of [the Battle of] Shiloh, he became the commander of the regiment.

**Simmons:** Did we get his name?

**Barrow:** He was another Robert Hilliard, my great-grandfather.

**Simmons:** I see.

**Barrow:** If you were to come there, you'd find that most people know the name, because there are so many plantations, even though they're owned by other people now; some [are] still in the family. Ours is still in the family. The fellow who owns it now is named Barrow Norwood; his first name being the family name. There are still a lot of these places around, and so people say, "Oh, yeah, we know who they are." And that's about it.

I went back there in part because of all that. I don't mean it's a conscious thing, but I believe that one can say that Southerners, in general, have a very strong sense of place. My place for 41 years was the Marine Corps, and I have a strong sense about that. But then I also had this strong tie and good feel about where I came from. I'm not saying it's related to the fact that my family has been there in a somewhat prominent manner, so much as I grew up there, and I liked it. The value of the community and whatnot is a value that I hold dear. I think most Southerners have a strong sense of place, and I went back there in large part because of that.

**Simmons:** This next question is related to what we're talking about, I think. What was the religious background of your family?

**Barrow:** It probably was various faiths, as we look back, but as long as I can remember, they've been Anglicans, Episcopalians. The second oldest Protestant church in Louisiana is in St. Francisville, formed in 1827, Grace Episcopal Church—a very fine Gothic brick church in a

grove of live oak trees, with the graveyard around it. It's there today, a beautiful rose window, extremely well cared for. For a little small town, small community, it's well endowed by people who left money in their wills. It was shelled in the Civil War by federal gunboats in the Mississippi River, the marks of which are still there. Anyway, that was my mother's church, that was my father's church, and so had it been for some generations. I don't know what else they may have been, but that's what they were. I was an acolyte in that church as a youngster growing up.

**Simmons:** I presume that once you moved to the farm, your life there was continuous. Your father didn't move away and take you away again?

**Barrow:** No.

**Simmons:** So you grew up.

**Barrow:** That's right. I grew up out there in the country.

**Simmons:** On Rosale?

**Barrow:** On Rosale.

**Simmons:** And you're five or six miles from St. Francisville?

**Barrow:** I'm about six miles from the little town of St. Francisville.

**Simmons:** What was the population of St. Francisville before World War II?

**Barrow:** About 800. Today it's about 1,800. [Laughs]

**Simmons:** How far is it from Baton Rouge?

**Barrow:** My place, from Baton Rouge city limits, is probably 35 miles.

**Simmons:** And from New Orleans?

**Barrow:** About 110 miles.

**Simmons:** How often did you get to Baton Rouge when you were growing up?

**Barrow:** Not too often. Transportation was a scarce item. A lot of families didn't have cars during the period I grew up in. There was no easy way to get there. We didn't go too often.

**Simmons:** How about New Orleans?

**Barrow:** Very rarely. Two or three times a year.

**Simmons:** When you did go, did you go by train or did you drive?

**Barrow:** We usually drove.

**Simmons:** I guess in those days it was several hours?

**Barrow:** Several hours.



**Simmons:** What was it like as a small boy in rural Louisiana in the late 1920s and early 1930s?

**Barrow:** Well, for me it was a happy life. I say that with all sincerity. I was out in the country; you'd say isolated, isolated for many reasons. Much of the time during the Depression, times were very difficult and we didn't have a car. Of course, you didn't have the amenities that one has today which has made country living so much more pleasant, such as electricity and things of that sort. So I grew up under what would be characterized as austere circumstances. Much of the food that was on the table was a consequence of that which was grown or somehow put on the table from the place. It was a very isolated, insulated kind of life, but a happy one, in that my parents were happy; theirs was a happy marriage. They were certainly good parents to all of us, to the three boys, and there were a lot of things to do in the country that were the only things to do. I did all of that, and that's probably a good experience. In general, that relates to nature.

My father was a man who had patience in explaining things to me, and I used to trail around with him. He knew trees and birds and things, and would talk to me about them. He made me conscious of wildlife and nature. So that marked me a lot. I'm very much one who has a certain high regard and respect for nature. I even belong to the school that says that most of the good things in life—if you trace them back far enough, literature or art, whatever it may be—has its rooting to some extent in nature. So I had that good experience.

We had about 8 or 10 black families that lived on the place, and I will tell you this was a period of segregation. I don't mind talking about that, because my own particular experience was not an ugly one, though it was one that was segregational. My father was a kind man, and he felt a deep sense of responsibility for the blacks who lived on the place, because as bad off as we were in terms of not having much in the way of money, etc., their lot was worse. He tried in his own way to relieve that, and he was a considerate person. All of the kind of ugly things that one associates with segregation, turning [unintelligible] to blacks, I never heard. They were my playmates for the most part. I grew up with blacks who were playmates. It was usually their fathers, however, that I hunted with, and I hunted at night. My two older brothers were quail hunters. One was a fox hunter. I was not interested in either one; I liked to hunt squirrels. That's a daytime thing, but I did that by myself. But at night I liked to hunt possums and coons [raccoons].

**Simmons:** You must have had dogs.

**Barrow:** Yes, had dogs. I had dogs. At age 12, 13, 14, I would go possum or coon hunting, usually with two or three black adults. This was the favorite thing that I liked to do.

I think that in some respects, that experience had an influence on me, which made me sensitive to people, because I was white and they were black, and that was the only reason there was a certain deference shown to me. It was just the way it was in those days. If they were playmates, that deference sort of cast me in the leadership role. You could say that I had early leadership experiences in directing black playmates to do things. As a matter of fact, one can make that argument about why a lot of Southern planters were pretty good leaders in the Civil War. One was because they were slave owners. We don't like to talk about this.

**Simmons:** Some people don't like to talk about it. I don't mind.

**Barrow:** I think that the good ones, as evil a thing that it was, were probably good slave owners, and if they were, they were very attentive to the well-being of their slaves, and they transferred this to their soldiers and were interested in taking care of their health and morale, knowing how to control large numbers of people to do things. So they were pretty good leaders. Like Wade Hampton, the largest slave owner in the South, I guess. Anyway, I'm not saying my situation was comparable, but that's the kind of experience I had.

The other thing that I had, too, that probably did more than any other single thing to prepare me for the future, I had an insatiable appetite [for] the written word. I read. I read every day, and I read all of the things that youngsters growing up would read in those days, and often reread them.

**Simmons:** There was a library in St. Francisville?

**Barrow:** There was a library in St. Francisville and a school library.

**Simmons:** Where did you go to school?

**Barrow:** I went to the little town of St. Francisville.

**Simmons:** How did you get back and forth?

**Barrow:** By school bus. My place was half a mile off the road. [I] walked up, would stand there, and wait for the bus to come by. There wasn't much traffic on Highway 61; nothing like it is today. Louisiana schools only went through the 11th grade, so I finished high school at age 17.

**Simmons:** Who were some of your favorite authors? What were some of your favorite books in the early period of your life?

**Barrow:** Well, I read all of the stuff that was not very heavy, but it was kind of fun to read, the usual things like *Robinson Crusoe* and [*The*] *Swiss Family Robinson*, and I used to read a lot of [Pearl] Zane Grey. I know he's not a foremost writer, but he was appealing to a youngster in the country, I guess. A lot of fantasizing takes place when you read those kinds of things. I just read a lot. I read all of Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*. We happened to have a lot of books at home. I read most of them, some of which I can't recall, but they were available. I didn't have much choice sometimes, so I read whatever was there.

**Simmons:** We spoke about hunting. How about fishing?

**Barrow:** Didn't do much fishing. I have now, as we did then, a couple of ponds on the place—lakes, if you want to call them that. There are more now, well stocked. I still don't do any fishing. I keep saying I'm going to. I might have done a little bit.

**Simmons:** What part did the Mississippi River have in your growing up?

**Barrow:** Oh! That's very interesting, because the school was one large brick building that housed the grade school and the high school. It was on a high bluff overlooking the Mississippi. See, the parish [county] I grew up in is rolling hills in Louisiana, below the 31st parallel, and everywhere else except that one little community is pretty much flat as a pancake, and ours was subject to overflow and flooding. But suddenly you have this bluff country, not unlike Natchez, [Mississippi] which is about 60 miles to the north. So the school was on a bluff that overlooked the Mississippi River. I remember study hall, for example, had windows that overlooked the river, and it was very common to be more interested in what was going on, on the river than what was going on in the books. There was a consciousness of it being there. As I say, I read a lot of things about the river. An uncle gave me some very beautiful—still have them and some day will decide what to do with them—early photographs of Mississippi River steamboats, [Matthew] Brady-vintage photographs. They're obviously of some value. I look at those. I don't know; the river clearly is a factor for people who live close to it.

**Simmons:** Let's suppose that you're now a teenager and you're ending high school in the same building where you'd gone to grade school on the bluff there. What were your extracurricular activities in high school?

**Barrow:** Well, we did not have . . . and this varied. The school was not any larger in population or anything, but when my brothers were in high school, they had a track team and they had a basketball team. For what reason I don't know, but when I was in high school, we had neither,

but we had a football team. That was not easy to field, because we didn't have much to draw on. My high school graduating class only had 22 in it and no 12th grade. So you can see, half male, half female, 9, 10, 11 grades; you don't have [but] maybe 20 people playing football. But I played football, of course; played both ways. I played in the line. I was a tall, skinny youngster. That's about the extent of it.

We had a little school newspaper. My senior year I was quote "editor" of the newspaper, and I can't even remember the name of it. I was president of my class as a junior and again as senior. That about accounts for it. I was not by any means the brightest student in class. It's interesting that the people who finished first, second, third, fourth, and fifth, or thereabouts, the first four or five—and I was not the first, second, or third—all started in the first grade together and finished together, and they're all still living there.

**Simmons:** What year did you graduate from high school?

**Barrow:** 1939.

**Simmons:** St. Francisville undoubtedly had a movie house, some place where they showed movies. How often did you go to the movies? Or maybe you called them picture shows.

**Barrow:** Picture shows. Probably did. The Alamo Theater was probably put up about 1935–36. We probably went about once every two weeks. I don't recall it being a big thing, really. I didn't go that often, but I went, yes.

**Simmons:** You don't recall any favorite stars or favorite films?

**Barrow:** No, not really. Not really. My interest, as I mentioned earlier, from very early on, was in the military. I remember as a very young child, I used to practice writing my name with different titles and ranks associated with it. Little things like that. I read a lot that related to military. When I was 15 or so, I sent off to [the United States Military Academy in] West Point [New York] for a catalog, brochures, etc., and would have liked an appointment to a military school, but I was discouraged in that. If you recall, in those days politics had an awful lot to do with it, and my family was not right politically. So no effort was even made to do that.

**Simmons:** Quite probably, though, you knew some veterans of World War I. Quite possibly you knew some veterans of the Spanish-American War and even the Civil War.

**Barrow:** Yes. I had a great-uncle, Charlie Barrow, who lived at Belmont Plantation [and] was a veteran of the Civil War. Interestingly, his father, as I said earlier, my great-grandfather, formed a unit called Rosale Guards [and] offered them to the state of Louisiana; they accepted them, and

they became I Company in the infantry. There was Belmont and Pea Ridge and some of those actions around Shiloh. But the oldest son, Uncle Charlie, was too well known at the St. Francisville area to enlist there, and so he rode horseback over to Clinton, Louisiana, and at age 15, a big boy, he enlisted. When the war ended, he was somewhere in that backwater left by [Union General William T.] Sherman, and I don't recall whether it was on the post when Sherman turned to Savannah in 1864, or somewhere in that vicinity. I've often thought about this. Here he was, 18 years old, a veteran of three years, and he rode horseback from wherever he was in that part of the country, back to Louisiana. So he was living, and I remember him well. I think I was maybe 12 or so when he died.

Yes, I remember various other veterans. There were no heroes, people that had any military reputation of any consequence in that little community.

**Simmons:** I think this is a good place to turn this tape over.

[Break in the recording.]

**Simmons:** We were speaking of the influence of some of the veterans you might have known. You were speaking of your Uncle Charles. Was your father a veteran of World War I?

**Barrow:** No, he wasn't. I don't know why. He had two children; that may have exempted him. But he was not.

**Simmons:** Were there any battlefields near your home?

**Barrow:** Port Hudson. In all frankness, I didn't have as much of a feel for Port Hudson or its importance. That was quite a conflict there at Port Hudson. It lasted longer than the Vicksburg, [Mississippi] siege, as I recall, the same kind of thing. That's about the only one close.

**Simmons:** Did you play at war when you were a child? Did you organize your playmates?

**Barrow:** Some of that. That's right. I did all that. That's what I wanted to do. I never had any other thought about what I wanted to do in the future.

**Simmons:** Had you ever heard of [Lieutenant] General [John A.] Lejeune before you came into the Marine Corps?

**Barrow:** No, I had not.

**Simmons:** As you grew older, there were probably certain great events, which you remember, as for example, the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt as president, the assassination of Huey [P.] Long [Jr.]. What particular events stand out that you remember as perhaps impressing you or having an effect on you in your teens, so to speak? What was your awareness of the larger world around you?

**Barrow:** Well, I'll have to tell you, very provincial in that sense, not a consciousness of worldly things. We didn't have a daily newspaper or television or magazines that a fellow who liked to read as much as I did would have; as a consequence of that, [I] read more about international and national events.

**Simmons:** Listened to the radio news? Lowell [J.] Thomas?

**Barrow:** Listened to it some. A lot of times didn't have a radio. One of my father's brothers, named Reid Barrow, graduated from LSU [Louisiana State University] with supposedly the highest score in electrical engineering that anyone had had for years. He was a real smart fellow. He went to work for Western Electric in Chicago and, on one of his trips south, bought an old-fashioned radio with an antenna perched on the top of it. It was battery operated. So we didn't have much radio either.

**Simmons:** Rosale was built over several periods, wasn't it, the house itself?

**Barrow:** The old house, the real magnificent one, was probably built about 1838 or so or earlier. It burned in 1888. My grandmother and grandfather were living there at the time, and they moved to one of the dependencies, which was about 200 yards away, itself a nice house of the same vintage about 1830, two stories, center hall, a guest house, and school house for the youngsters in the big house, etc. They lived in it for seven years. For reasons I have never understood, they decided to move it from where it was to the old house site, where the house burned. And how they did it, I don't understand, because it had two interior chimneys, four fireplaces, and plaster walls. None of that seemed to have suffered in the move. They moved over in 1895 and proceeded to add on to it. That is the third house.

**Simmons:** You said you had no electricity up to a certain point. What kind of lighting did you have?

**Barrow:** Kerosene lights. One of my chores, as a child, everyone had this chore as children, was cleaning the globes, making sure it didn't fill up—or if it did the night before, that you got rid of that—and filling the laps with kerosene. Sometimes I would read, so at night my parents thought I had gone to bed. They would go to bed early, and then they'd say, "Now, you go ahead and go to bed." They may have gone to bed at nine o'clock and expected that I'd go to bed at ten o'clock. I would read until the kerosene ran out, more often than any other thing that would cause me to go to bed. That might be twelve o'clock, one o'clock at night.

**Simmons:** When did electricity reach Rosale?

**Barrow:** About 1941. Something like that. Of course, that was REA, Rural Electrification Administration. Of course, it was things like that, that endeared Roosevelt to a lot of people, particularly rural people. Whether he deserved the credit or not, he got it for bringing electricity to the rural communities. There just wasn't any. Few people had Delco plants, very expensive.

**Simmons:** Any acetylene lighting down there?

**Barrow:** Yes, there was a little bit of that.

**Simmons:** You graduated from high school in 1939. What came next for you?

**Barrow:** I went to LSU, which was now 1939. Just to pump those who might think otherwise, that was still the Depression. There had been some things taking place, like WPA [Works Progress Administration] and all these other projects that started at an earlier time. That still didn't really give any good relief to the Depression.

**Simmons:** Let's talk a little bit about Louisiana State University at that time.

**Barrow:** Well, it was probably no more than 5,000 or 6,000 students. I was leading up to that in talking about the Depression. One thing you can say about it, it was a very inexpensive school to go to, but that's a relative thing. If you don't have the money to meet the requirements, you're still hard-pressed. While I'm thinking about that, I think there was no tuition for in-state, but you had to pay something called a general fee, which took care of quite a bit of things. You know what general fees do in universities. That and the books, etc., I think I needed \$150 to go to school. I borrowed it from the Episcopal minister. That tells you something about the distribution of wealth. [Laughs] The Episcopal minister was one of the more affluent people in town, and I remember it just as well. I told him, I said I didn't know when I would be able to pay him back, but hopefully I would with some kind of interest. And I did a number of years later.

When I arrived at LSU, I also felt compelled to work. The \$150 was to get me in the school. I had to pay for my room and board. I worked in what was called the Boarding Club, which was a school-run eating establishment, an enormous building. Part of the bottom floor was broken up into two or three different kinds of restaurants, like a little coffee shop; another would be for a full meal, sit down and have it served to you, etc.; and a cafeteria. But the Boarding Club was on the second floor, and it was three meals a day. I think it was \$15.50 a month, and you got a pass and got it punched as you came through with the ticket, color coded. The food was ample, not unlike service food, kind of starchy but ample. I got a job serving tables there. This is not some dainty table-serving job like one would have working in a sorority house or something; this

was feeding males only, teenage types who liked to eat a lot and were not the most gentle mannered in the world. And I had three tables that I was responsible for, 10 people at a table. That meant setting those tables up, serving those 30 people, and taking the tables down, three meals a day. That took care of my food. I did that for \$15.50 a month.

My room rent was \$6.50 a month. We stayed in what they called Pentagon Barracks. As an aside (we can get into this more later on), LSU was one of the land-grant colleges that paid a lot of attention to the military aspects of that arrangement and, during the period pre-World War II, ranked along with Texas A&M and Clemson [University], as I recall. Those three schools produced a very significant number of Army officers to the United States Army, some regulars, but mostly reserves. So the ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] there was very much a part of the school life, and some stayed down in the stadium, which was built to do that. The infantry stayed in what was called the Pentagon, a building shaped like a pentagon. They were three stories and sectionalized, three to a room, usually. I stayed in the Pentagon, Company A, infantry. I was the janitor; responsible, that is, for removing the trash that came out of 12 rooms and the ladder and hallways and bathrooms that served three floors of those 12 rooms, 4 on each floor, three floors. I had a great big long bag, like an old cotton-picking bag that I grew up with and used to watch. I didn't do any cotton picking myself.

So my day consisted of rushing over to set up the eating arrangements and getting rid of that, then rushing back to get rid of the trash and clean up the passage way and staircases in the barracks. I had my classes scheduled so they started, I think, at nine o'clock. Anyway, \$150 borrowed, a hash-slinging job, and a janitor job took care of all my responsibilities in going to school.

**Simmons:** What major were you pursuing?

**Barrow:** Well, I didn't think it made a hell of a lot of difference, because I wanted to get an ROTC commission and hopefully become a regular Army officer. So I was in arts and science, doing the usual things. I took the placement tests, which put me in the upper bracket. I had a good foundation in those schools in St. Francisville. One of the things about a community like that, if you had to characterize it, was stability in every sense of the word. People didn't come and go. You didn't see many strangers ever. People weren't uprooted. The teachers were the same, been there for years and years and years. Everyone knew everyone. There was a lot of



stability. Good preparation to go to school. So I had arts and sciences, the usual courses for that kind of curriculum.

I was vice president of the freshman class. I got talked into running for political office, if you can imagine. I was vice president of the freshman class, very much caught up in the ROTC, the important thing, and it was compulsory. It was not a question of volunteering; everyone did it for two years. Then if you wanted, you went on beyond that. We had a gray uniform with a black stripe down the side, of Confederate gray, [and] wore white shirts and black ties and black shoes.

**Simmons:** How often did you wear your uniform?

**Barrow:** We wore it three days a week. We had drill. Usually, the third day of the week; certainly if not every week, two out of three would be formation of some importance, usually a parade. So it was not just drill; we'd parade. Not quite like Texas A&M [University], which, as I recall, they wore it every day of the week. A little different.

**Simmons:** Then along came [the attack on] Pearl Harbor [Hawaii].

**Barrow:** An early awareness that I had of some interest would be the war in Europe. I went to LSU in 1939. Of course, that was beginning to rage. That was one thing I kept up with and had an interest in, and all of the same preliminary activity in Pearl Harbor, as a consequence of Pearl Harbor. So when Pearl Harbor came, I was 19 years old, very impressed that I needed to be involved. As you may recall—and for the benefit of those who are reading this—in most of the country, especially it was true down where I came from, the draft almost need not have been, because so many people rushed to the colors. So a lot of my friends who didn't go to college, and even some in college, enlisted in one Service or another. My oldest brother enlisted in the [U.S.] Navy. My second oldest brother was in South America. So I was very anxious to be a part of it somehow, but I also knew that if I stayed in school, I would have a prospect of getting a commission.

There were a couple of things that moved me to do something that was a little bit unusual. Wake Island had made an enormous impression on me. That was my first awareness of the Marine Corps, really, and the message read by President Roosevelt in connection with Wake Island and so forth. Also about that time, some enterprising recruiter ran a double-spread ad in the *Baton Rouge Morning Advocate* covering both pages, center section, public service—I'm sure he didn't pay for it—that showed a World War I-type Marine jumping out of a trench, not a foxhole. They hadn't acquired foxholes by then. He had an old rifle in his hand and a World

War I tin helmet on, leggings. I remember that picture just as well. But the words had great appeal. It said, "Join the Marine Corps and you will have a rifle in your hand and a man to show you how to use it within 48 hours." This came at a time when, if you went to the movies, the newsreels would show things like Army units training with wooden rifles [or] an Army truck driving by on maneuvers with a sign on the side spelling out "Tank." So this had great appeal. I thought, "My God, an outfit like that must be up on step. They must be really something." So that, in combination with the Wake Island business, got me interested in the Marine Corps.

There showed up on the campus a Major Williamson [?]. I think he was called "Red" Williamson, a tall, fine-looking guy, black belt. He was there to recruit [for] PLCs [platoon leaders classes]. This is a shaky part of my background in terms of how I got off of one direction and got into another. As I recollect, the promise was that I could become a commissioned officer in the Marine Corps quicker than I could if I stayed in the ROTC, something about early opportunity. I'm not sure what it was, but anyway, I signed up for the PLC. I don't know what waivers I had to get in the ROTC or anything else. This was 17 March 1942. So that's my paying entry base date. Is that what we used to call it, PEBD [pay entry base date]?

**Simmons:** Yes.

**Barrow:** I was a PLC all the rest of that semester. This was one of the most difficult periods of my life. Because while I was in something that had more appeal to me, I still wasn't happy, because the war was on and I was beginning to feel like a draft dodger, that somehow my friends were, for the most part, enlisted. I can't remember any being drafted. So there I was.

That summer I worked to help defray my cost of school for the next year. This would be the summer of '42. And when school started, I started . . . this is the first revelation, because nobody had ever asked me before, and I'd never felt obliged to tell them. I told people I enlisted in the Marine Corps in March of 1942. I didn't go as far as saying what that meant. I left school, knowing full well that that was the same thing as going to the Marine Corps, and that's exactly what happened. It was November, however, before they put me on a train for San Diego, [California]. So you're talking to a fellow, that if you go to the roots of his Marine Corps career, he was a failed PLC candidate. I can reconcile that and rationalize that. Young, eager, wanted to get in the war, kind of mixed-up about the whole thing. The happiest experience of my life was getting on the train to go to San Diego to boot training. If there was ever someone being put in a

situation that pleased him, a duck to water, whatever the various terms are, it was Bob Barrow going into the Marine Corps.

I arrived in San Diego. I was the only person on the train that particular day going to San Diego to be in the Marine Corps. It was about a three- or four-day train trip. I was put in a platoon that was made up of about 50 percent from the Los Angeles area, many of whom were zoot-suiters. You remember the zoot-suiters?

**Simmons:** Yes.

**Barrow:** The zoot-suiters, they weren't bad. We were shocked at their exaggerated dress, but that, frankly, was about all there was to it. They were a bunch of peacocks with fine feathers and bravado, but they weren't anything like street gangs, not the ones I knew, anyway.

The other half of that platoon was made up of Polish boys from Detroit, [Michigan] the Hamtramck area. So I was the only Southerner, and I was called "Louisiana" in my platoon by my fellow platoon members and by the two drill instructors.

Am I getting too far away from LSU?

**Simmons:** No, not at all.

**Barrow:** I carried you along rather quickly.

**Simmons:** I'd like to go back and pick up a few dates. You enlisted in the PLC in February of '42. Then that summer you were working and so on, but you failed to go back to school that fall?

**Barrow:** Went back and dropped out.

**Simmons:** Dropped out.

**Barrow:** With the understanding that, that's what I would do. That was like enlisting.

**Simmons:** You were draft deferred as long as you had that piece of paper saying, "Private First Class, USMCR," but you had to maintain yourself as a student in good standing, otherwise you were subject to the draft.

**Barrow:** That's right.

**Simmons:** My roommate was in exactly that status.

**Barrow:** He did essentially the same thing?

**Simmons:** Except he waited it out. So then you went on active duty about November of '42.

**Barrow:** November. I don't remember the exact date.

**Simmons:** While you were at San Diego as a recruit, what were the highlights? You've already described the composition of the platoon. What were the highlights? Do you happen to recall the names of your drill instructors?

**Barrow:** My drill instructors were two corporals—one was named O'Rosky and the other was named Griffin. They were good drill instructors, but I wouldn't characterize them as outstanding. As I look back on it, I didn't know this at the time, but as I look back on it in the fall of 1942, I would assume there must have been an enormous search on throughout the Marine Corps to find staff NCOs [noncommissioned officers] and NCOs to cadre up the then-forming divisions and units that had become divisions in the Marine Corps. So I would assume that places like San Diego were stripped to the bare bones, and they would have just a few old hands, experienced staff NCOs, and turned the drill instructor business over to junior NCOs, corporals.

I had two corporals, and they were all right. I don't have good, warm memories. They were not effusive or any of that. I never saw any of that or heard any. I just don't think they were particularly conscientious. One of them, for example, as a show-off thing, I suppose, used to lay on his bunk and drill the platoon up and down the parade deck, counting cadence, which any of us could do. If you've done a lot of it, you don't have to be with the troops. You can pretty much keep a rhythm going. I'm sure to someone passing by, of which there were never very many, they would wonder how in the world that platoon was doing all these things with no one seemingly in charge.

I remember that I saw no officers that I recollect or what I would describe as senior staff NCOs. The big advantage that the recruit-training endeavor had was that people who were there as recruits were volunteers and wanted to fight the war, [were] anxious to get out there and get on with it, and were already about 90 percent disciplined from their background in family, school, community. I was a perfect example. They didn't have to do a lot to bring us around. We were eager and disciplined, those two things.

So there were many highlights to that experience that I reflect on. The so-called physical fitness for the Marine Corps at that time was just that, so called—woefully inadequate. But again, the Marine Corps got away with it, because many of the people who came to the Marine Corps were in better physical condition than some who come today. We've become a nation of spectators, and we get some vicarious pleasure of seeing all this stuff on TV, but many of our youngsters don't themselves do it, whereas in my generation and your generation, Ed, people

walked instead of rode cars, and they did athletics because there wasn't anything else to do. [There was] no television in many communities, no chance to do anything else, so we did a lot of sports and outdoor things. So most of the people came already conditioned, fortunately, because the conditioning activity was about as close to zero as one could make it. I remember it so well. Every morning—maybe not every morning, I think every morning, maybe three or four mornings—the entire recruit depot at San Diego . . . mind you, we had in the area toward the [San Diego] Bay from the macadamized parade deck, where now a lot of it is taken up for parking for cars. It was the same one that was there then, and there weren't any cars on it. There weren't many cars, period, anywhere. Same one. That sandy area between that macadam grinder, as some people referred to it, the parade deck, and the bay was Quonset huts and mess hall and, over in one corner, some tents and a couple of bayonet courses.

The physical fitness consisted of starting about seven o'clock, I reckon, it must have taken at least an hour, all of these recruit platoons were maneuvered out on that enormous parade deck, and by morning colors, you had a mass of recruit platoons in various stages of training, assembled out there—enormous number of people. We all respected the colors at eight o'clock, but preliminary to that, we had physical fitness under arms. Over a loudspeaker system would come these songs like "Merry Widow Waltz" or whatever, and we would do these almost silly things with the rifles, over your head in unison, down, out front, back, butt up, back, barrel up, back, over your head. The amount of physical benefit derived out of that would have to be close to zero, as you can imagine. [Laughs]

To me, the most unusual feature of that entire morning activity, the biggest challenge was to the drill instructor in being able to skillfully maneuver his platoon into that mass and not run into one another. So that was one thing I remember.

I remember washing clothes, scrubbing clothes. That was something I'd never done. I don't guess most males had. But we scrubbed those white underwear and everything, and the usual inspection took place. You draped it over both arms and you stood out there with your arms stretched out, and you had all your skivvies and whatever else you were washing, and they came along and looked at it. About the closest thing to hazing that I can recall in recruit training was occasionally the drill instructor would take his swagger stick and pluck a piece of underwear off someone's arm and throw it into the sand, thus telling him to do it over, the admonition being that he didn't do a good job. He was trying to make everybody attentive, I guess.

**Simmons:** Did they teach you the care of the uniform?

**Barrow:** Sure did. They sure did. We did that. The bayonet work was the typical rundown course: horizontal butt stroke, vertical butt stroke, parry, thrust, and return. Maybe not in that exact sequence, but something like that.

I'll tell you, the candidates there, recruit training, I place enormous stress on the value of it today, because I think it is more needed today than it's ever been in the past, but that experience during World War II was not one that prepared someone to go off and be a fighting member of a fighting organization, I'll tell you. We went to the rifle range, of course, transported up there at Camp Elliott [at Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Miramar, California], as I recall, and that was important. Probably the most important thing in boot training was learning something about how to shoot the rifle.

**Simmons:** Had the M1 [rifle] by then?

**Barrow:** Yes, we had M1s. I had a couple of people in my platoon who were retreads from Nicaragua. We used to talk about it. There were a couple of older ones in there. But an interesting thing, I liked the military so much, when I was in LSU in the ROTC, I was a good cadet. My freshman year, I was a good cadet. My sophomore year, the biggest honor they could pay you was to make you guide, and I was the guide for my company, and I liked and thrived on it. So when I got to recruit training, I had a little bit of a head start over the others. But I also had a lot of interest and enthusiasm in things that they did: the drill and whatnot. So the last couple of weeks of recruit training, the drill instructor, whichever one, used to order me to take the platoon to evening chow. Again, there had to be some skill there, because they converged on the mess hall from all directions, and not many people let their recruits drill. So I'd get a certain amount of harassment from the drill instructors, "What are you doing over there, private? Get 'em out of here!" So I had to be skillful and tactical, too, in taking them to chow. That's how loose things were, and that's the way troop training was.

**Simmons:** Here's a picture that might be familiar to you. [Shows Barrow photograph.]

**Barrow:** Where in the world did that come from?

**Simmons:** That's your recruit photo. You don't look so much different. We'll be putting that into the oral history transcript. In fact, you can keep that copy.

**Barrow:** I thought I was taller than that. I would have had shoes on too.

**Simmons:** Just a shade under 6'3".

**Barrow:** Yes. That's very interesting.

**Simmons:** You stayed on as a drill instructor. I think I see how that came about. They were already using you as a junior at the end of it, and then there must have been some selection process. Also you said that they were busy stripping out NCOs and sending them.

**Barrow:** I would think that they would be stripping out NCOs, because, one, you didn't see many senior ones running around, and that made sense. I always say I accepted that because they were hard up for drill instructors, and I was pretty good at drilling. Really, I was quite good at it and liked it. So, yes, I was kept there as a junior drill instructor. I was assigned to a staff sergeant who was an old-timer. He must have had 20 years then, I'm sure. His name was Mann, and he was a good man. I liked him very much. So the two of us were drill instructors for the next platoon that popped up. I only worked a couple of platoons before I left San Diego. So when I say I was a drill instructor, it's really sort of overstating it.

But I had one unusual experience. It's a testimony to the respect that people in recruit training had for Staff Sergeant Mann. He drew one of these platoons, or he was assigned one of these platoons, made up of technicians that were given grades, like tech sergeant, staff sergeant, etc., because of their civilian work in applications to the Marine Corps, and some who were retreads from World War I. We had in the platoon cameramen from Hollywood; we had a master sergeant who had never spent a day in the military, who came off the Allis-Chalmers assembly line, and therefore somebody tagged him a tank expert, knew something about those kind of engines and whatnot. We had a lot of those kind of folks in that platoon, all of whom, while they were in that platoon, were bare armed. But it was a funny-looking platoon, because some of them were 40 years old, World War I retreads, and they were just older looking people, just different looking. So I remember the other drill instructors . . .

**Simmons:** I'm going to stop right there.

[Break in the recording.]

**Simmons:** We were talking about Staff Sergeant Mann and yourself taking through the recruit platoon, which was made up of an odd assortment of retreads and so forth. I suppose that now that you were a drill instructor, you did get some liberty and got to see a little bit of wartime San Diego and so on. What are your recollections of San Diego at that time?

**Barrow:** I liked liberty. I confess to being very interested in the girls, and in that connection, I particularly liked to dance. I grew up in that little community of St. Francisville, where there wasn't a heck of a lot to do, but there was a pavilion of an old country club, a pavilion

constructed by the local men of the community, where they had dances during the summer almost every Saturday night, well chaperoned, very dignified, you wore a coat and tie, that sort of thing. So I learned to dance at an early age and liked it. Still do. I don't do much of it.

So I used to go down to the Pacific—I don't know what we called it—Pacific Club, Pacific something, Pacific Ballroom, that was it. An enormous thing that had a lot of name bands. I was absolutely flabbergasted, fascinated, that I could go down there and listen to some of the bands that I'd only heard records of on the radio. It would be packed with humanity, lots of sailors, of course, jitterbugging. I was not a jitterbugger. There wasn't an awful lot of other things one would do in San Diego. I didn't wander up and down the beach very much, but I used to go on liberty and go there.

**Simmons:** Balboa Park?

**Barrow:** Did some of that, yes. Did that. Went to Los Angeles a couple of times and found my way to the [Hollywood] Palladium [theater].

**Simmons:** Took an electric train up?

**Barrow:** Once. Once I went by private car. There's a story on that in a minute.

Back to this period of assistant drill instructor. The day that platoon graduated and they all put on their stripes, it was an impressive sight and looked strange. I remember one incident that took place and is important, in a sense. I remember we were waiting to go in some formation, waiting to do something, and, as always, some recruit eyeballing, the DI [drill instructor] would say something he shouldn't be eyeballing, but his eyes were skyward because of the plane noises. Pretty soon he got very excited, and everybody looked, and there were two [Lockheed] P-38 [Lightnings] that had a midair collision over that area. Both the planes came down near where what's San Diego airport now.

It was during that period that someone said, "You go up to the depot headquarters, Barrow, for an interview, and take some tests." I don't recall who it was who passed the word, but it was not issued as an invitation; it was more or less a directive. It had to do with application for officer training. I was interviewed by a Colonel Elmer [E.] Hall, who was the CO [commanding officer] of the recruit training part of that establishment. There was also a field sergeant major, as I recall, who had something to say to me, and someone else. Then I took some tests.



The next thing you know, I was told I was going to go to Officer Candidate School. We who had been selected that way, and they must have done it over several weeks and throughout the depot, were all segregated [and] moved over to some two-man tents that would be along the fence line closest to the San Diego National Airport. I drew a tentmate selected to go to officer candidate class named [William H.] “Will” Price. We had been there for some time, and I knew that he was from down in Mississippi, Hattiesburg or somewhere down there. He was older than I. One day he said to me, “Did I ever show you a picture of my wife?”

I said, “I really didn’t know you were married, Will.” He opened up his old wooden footlocker, the likes of the kind we had, and pinned into the top of the footlocker was a picture of Maureen O’Hara, properly inscribed “To my loving husband.” I didn’t challenge it. It just seemed like it was true. I might add, speaking of not challenging it, one thing that my generation brought to wherever they were going was a lot of innocence. [Laughs] It would never occur to me to say, “This guy’s trying to pull a smart one on me.” I just knew that had to be who it was. So I tried to not make too much of that.

He said, “Maureen’s coming down to pick me up this weekend. I know you’re off. Would you like to come with us and join us for a weekend?” Which I did. So that was one of the things I went to Los Angeles and stayed with them. It was a very enjoyable experience.

**Simmons:** You left San Diego to go to the 25th Officer Candidate [School] class in March of 1943. You mentioned Will Price. I remember him. I was probably one of your map-reading instructors.

**Barrow:** You were. Correct. And I remember you.

**Simmons:** So there you are in [MCB] Quantico [Virginia]. Who are some of your other classmates there in the 25th OCS [Officer Candidate School]? Do you recall?

**Barrow:** We had a class that did not produce many people who stayed in the Marine Corps. Those who stayed in were [James W.] “Jim” Donnell, made colonel and retired, George [E.] Lawrence, a fellow named Holt from South Carolina, who retired early as a major, Elmo [J.] Stingley, supply officer, a fellow named Benjamin. Elmo Stingley retired as a colonel. Benjamin was something like a major [or] lieutenant colonel. And [Richard B.] “Dick” Smith, who retired as a colonel, now lives in Charlottesville. I think, over the long haul, there couldn’t have been more than about eight people that stayed in. Some others who were in that group were Congressman Barber [B.] Conable [Jr.], well-known congressman from upstate New York. I’ve

kept up with him, particularly in recent years. A Washington lawyer named [Richard A.] “Dick” Bishop I see from time to time. I would say that it was a good class, but not one that had anything unusual happen to it. Twenty-fifth OCS became the 28th ROC [Reserve Officers Course].

**Simmons:** You graduated from OCS fifth in a class of 236, so you did very well, in case you had forgotten that.

**Barrow:** Did you find that in the records?

**Simmons:** Yes.

**Barrow:** Is that in the records somewhere?

**Simmons:** Yes.

**Barrow:** I never knew for sure. That’s the first I’ve known of that. I knew I finished high enough that it put me in a position to get a regular commission.

**Simmons:** That would come from the 28th ROC, rather than the OCS, but from OCS you were fifth in a class of 236. To put a date on it, you were commissioned in the Marine Corps Reserve on 19 May 1943. Then, as you say, you went into the 28th Reserve Officers Class. Any particular recollections of ROC as opposed to OCS, the transition from candidate status to second lieutenant status?

**Barrow:** I think the biggest transition was in the things we learned, as opposed to any feeling that you suddenly acquired with rank and with it more responsibility. You still didn’t have any responsibility beyond yourself. You weren’t suddenly put in charge of a platoon or something. But the instruction, I think, took a jump up.

**Simmons:** Do you remember some of your instructors and some of the subjects?

**Barrow:** I remember you, Ed. I do remember you. That memory has probably been refreshed through the years, is one reason why I do remember you. A fellow named [First Lieutenant Wesley R. “Wes”] Christie was not a subject instructor; he was one of the platoon leaders.

**Simmons:** Wes Christie.

**Barrow:** Wes Christie. He stood out because he was stern and soldierly looking, no nonsense.

**Simmons:** He was a classmate of mine in the 9th ROC.

**Barrow:** He teaches speech down at Valdosta State College in Valdosta, Georgia, not far from [Marine Corps Recruit Depot] Parris Island [South Carolina]. Colonel [Samuel S.] Balentine [?] was the battalion commander. See, if I had just thought about it, that you were going to ask me

these questions, I would have dug down and finally got it out of myself, various other personalities. [First Lieutenant John K.] Hogan was one.

**Simmons:** Also a former jawbone corporal from San Diego, another member of 9th ROC.

**Barrow:** Now deceased. If I sat here, I could pop them all up, but it would take a while.

**Simmons:** Let's come in at it from a different direction. What are some of your recollections of Quantico as a place, as opposed to San Diego?

**Barrow:** Well, obviously, I think we had to do more things physically, and still I don't think it's anything like as demanding as Officer Candidate School is today or the day students. But we did take hikes, marches, movements that we wouldn't get in San Diego. We never did any of that. Distances, who knows, 12, 15 miles would have been average. You felt like you were being tested a little more on hikes and marches. We did night work, which obviously we didn't do in recruit training, not one iota. And I liked that night work and map reading, in general, I liked.

I think that map reading is something that, for the average military person, irrespective of rank or responsibility, is one of the most important things he can just learn and keep current in and have tucked away in his head all of his career. I am appalled to know people who must have passed the course in map reading but are not very good in map reading. I'm one who fancies himself to be a superb map reader, if I may say so. I won't make many claims, but I can look at a map and it takes on an almost three-dimensional appearance. All those contour lines kind of pop-up. I'm good at it. I like that. I don't know how well I scored on tests and all that, but I liked it—the practical application of it, in particular. I liked night work. I liked everything about it. I liked the people that I was associated with. One of my dearest friends was a fellow named [John F.] "Moose" Barrett, who was from Chicago, got killed in Saipan, [in the Northern Mariana Islands] as I recall. He and I were very close. Barrett and Barrow, we were bunkmates and we went on liberty together several times.

I had a good experience at Quantico. We were there when we had a snowfall. This must have been in the OCS part, because I went there in March. Somehow, we had a snowfall, as I recall, must have been the latest one in the history of that area. We had a machine gun instructor who was teaching machine gun that day. That's one reason why I remember it, too. He was an old-timer. Tell me his name.

**Simmons:** It could have been Lieutenant Colonel Johnson.

**Barrow:** No, a warrant officer. He was an old-timer. I think it was Biddle that gave us bayonet instruction. It was good experience.

You say I finished fifth in the OCS. I must have finished well enough in the ROC to rate commissioning. I would say the reason why—let's put it where it belongs—if everyone was trying as hard as Bob Barrow to do what needed to be done, particularly to get a regular commission, I might not have gotten one. I think I put forth a lot of effort. I took to it, as I've already indicated.

**Simmons:** Early interest.

**Barrow:** Early interest in life, early interest at LSU, immediately interested when I got in the Marine Corps. I used to think, before I ever got a chance to go to Officer Candidate Class, I said, "I want to make this a career somehow." I didn't even think that through to the fact that I'd be an officer. I just loved it. So when I got to Quantico, I just took to everything there. I liked it very much.

**Simmons:** After graduating from the 28th ROC on 27 July, you were sent to Marine Barracks Naval Ammunition Depot New Orleans. Here you were assigned as assistant mess officer. Neither the station nor the assignment sounds very promising. How did this come about?

**Barrow:** Do you already know, and that's why you're asking me? [Laughs] Because it has an interesting background. Again, this is Bob Barrow's memory and interpretation. The people coming out of ROC who were given regular commissions or who were prospects of getting regular commissions are those who finished up near the top of that class however one measured it. Apparently, they were being sent, at least during that period of 1943, to the sea school and were sea going. I reckon that in Washington there were a lot of senior officers, generals, and others, who believed—still believed—despite our great feelings about the Fleet Marine Forces, of which they were getting organized to fight the war already, that sea duty was sort of the duty for a regular officer.

That's why, again if my memory serves me well, we had a fair number of officers who were good officers, became general officers, who in World War II they were sea going. [Robert D.] "Bob" Bohn, I think, falls in that category; Rosa [inaudible], [Samuel] "Sam" Jaskilka. I don't think any of them were in the FMF [Fleet Marine Force]; they were all sea-duty types. So I was one of those. Five of us or six of us were going to sea school down in Portsmouth, Virginia. I'm told someone said, "Wait a minute. The place is backlogged with people down here waiting

to go to sea school. We can't accommodate any more, don't need any more people to go to sea school." I had visions of dozens of officers sitting around doing nothing, waiting to go to sea school.

The day before we were to leave Quantico— And I remember orders issued to lieutenant graduates of ROC were called scatter papers. "We'll get our scatter papers tomorrow and we'll go over and be scattered." All of us were sent to the nearest Marine facility to our address of record. I've forgotten who it was that was sent to the Marine Barracks, Charlestown Navy Yard [Massachusetts], another was sent to Marine Barracks Brooklyn Navy Yard, somewhere in New York, and I was sent to Marine Barracks Naval Ammunition Depot, New Orleans.

I remember so well that this came in the day before graduation, a great deal of fun and relaxation. Things weren't really uptight at that point. Kidding and joking went on, and some of the people who were going to the FMF poked a lot of fun at that. I remember one guy; he would throw himself down on his bunk and say, "I don't want to die! I want guard duty in a Navy yard!" It infuriated us! We thought, "My God, what's going on here?" Well, it turned out that that was meant to be an interim assignment. We don't know what else to do with these guys. I think, really, perhaps they had in mind ultimately sending us still to sea school, which they didn't do. That's how I ended up in New Orleans.

**Simmons:** On the Marine Corps' birthday, 10 November 1943, you commanded the firing party at Major Daniel Carmick's tomb in New Orleans. Do you recall that occasion?

**Barrow:** I do, very well.

**Simmons:** Had you begun to learn something about the history of Marines in Louisiana by that time?

**Barrow:** Yes. It had piqued my interest, what he had done, and I remember the occasion very well, very well indeed. Although you described my duties as, among other things, mess officer, I was also just a general guard officer.

**Simmons:** Or more formally, officer in charge of drills and instructions. You had that additional duty about that time. Any other recollections of this duty or wartime New Orleans?

**Barrow:** Oh, yes. To begin with, the Naval Ammunition Depot, Belle Chasse [Louisiana], which is down in one of those big bays in the river on the west bank, not too far from Belle Chasse out in Caernarvon Field, the naval air station down there, really a swampy, isolated, spooky area. They had put up this naval ammunition depot, whose primary duty was to arm

boats—outfit boats with ammunition as they moved south. LSTs [landing ship, tanks] were being produced in great numbers and would come down, stop there, and get their ammunition. I don't know where they were making them.

**Simmons:** Pittsburgh [Pennsylvania].

**Barrow:** Yes. Did they come down the river?

**Simmons:** Yes, down the Ohio River.

**Barrow:** So that was an example, but it was really isolated. Apparently, it had had some problems, the first contingent of Marines in the barracks, due to a weak CO. The Marines themselves, a good many of them were just back from Guadalcanal and most of them deserving of being “heroes,” but a lot of them kind of used that as a means of lording it over others and made a lot out of being veterans of Guadalcanal. Some of them were downright mischief-makers. I wouldn't want to characterize the barracks as being undisciplined, but it was close akin to that, part of that being the location. It was hard as hell to get into New Orleans from there, and New Orleans was a great liberty port. You might as well have been on another planet out at Belle Chasse.

**Simmons:** How far are we talking about?

**Barrow:** We're talking about maybe 10 or 12 miles, but we didn't have much in the way of transportation. Whatever truck that took people, then you had it. Same way with coming back. If you wanted to stay longer, you wouldn't make it in time and had to break off.

The thing I remember most about that experience, I arrived right after the new CO arrived, who had been picked to “straighten it out.” He was an old-timer who, at that time in the summer of 1943, had 35 years' experience in the Marine Corps, and he was a major. His name was Herbert S. Keimling. He was about 6'4” and stood very straight, had a hawk nose, and he was a forbidding looking character, stern. He was a product of a lot of wartime (Banana War) and peacetime experiences. He was knowledgeable in all of those things that a young officer would not be knowledgeable in, so he was a source of learning. He took it upon himself, since I was the only regular officer assigned, that he would be my personal tutor. [Tape interruption]

. . . all of his office hours, and he had them every day. That was a great learning experience, because he was so skilled in understanding human nature, and he'd heard it all, that he could tell easily when someone was trying to pull a fast one on him.

Herbert S. Keimling had enlisted in the Marine Corps under an assumed name of Frank Kennedy. I'm not sure why he felt compelled to take on an assumed name, but I saw all of this because part of his tutelage of me was also to show me his records, and there his records were, copies of the original, whatever. Some time after Veracruz—when was that?

**Simmons:** [In] '14.

**Barrow:** Yes. After he'd been a sergeant and had about six or seven years under the assumed name of Frank Kennedy, he was offered a commission. He had to reveal his true identity, I suppose, or he felt compelled to, his birth certificate, whatever, so then he became himself again, Herbert S. Keimling. That made quite an impression on me. I learned things good and bad out of it, impressions of both.

But going to the Naval Ammunition Depot New Orleans was not a bad experience for me. I didn't stay too long, and I had this unusual commanding officer who had an unusual interest in me.

**Simmons:** While you were there, your regular commission that you had sought caught up with you.

**Barrow:** That's right.

**Simmons:** Then you left there the 21st of February, according to your record, 1944, and were sent to [MCB] Camp Lejeune [North Carolina], where you joined the 51st Replacement Battalion. But you were not there long. On 6 April, you were detached and sent to Washington [DC] for duty in the Office of the Vice Chief of Naval Operations. What's going on here?

**Barrow:** Tell me the first date. When did I get there?

**Simmons:** The 21st of February, you went from New Orleans to Camp Lejeune. At least your orders are so dated. Then on 6 April, you were detached from the 51st Replacement.

**Barrow:** I had a BAR [Browning automatic rifle] platoon in the 51st Replacement Battalion. Readers of this will say, "What in the world is a BAR platoon?" It was a platoon training. No platoon ever had all BARs, but that's the way they trained them. So I had a BAR platoon. It was about, I guess, maybe 60 people. It was a big platoon. Most of the training that the replacement battalion did, it must be sort of the forerunner [inaudible]. It was field skills and weaponry, a little bit of tactics, but it was mostly the BAR learning all about that BAR, how to take it apart, put it back together under all kinds of conditions, how to fire it, [and] just getting familiar with it.

**Simmons:** There were two colonels there at that time, Colonel Victor [F.] Bleasdale and Colonel [William N.] “Wild Bill” McKelvy [Jr.]. They probably influenced this a great deal.

**Barrow:** Maybe so. I recall that the only recreation we had on Saturday night, we could catch a boat at Paradise Point, which is now the New River Marine Corps Air Station [North Carolina], and it would go right across to the dock there at the Officers’ Club. You could go in there and get a steak dinner for 75 cents. That was really big stuff. And I remember seeing Colonel Bleasdale, who someone called him the “silver fox.” The 51st Replacement Battalion commanding officer was a reserve lieutenant colonel named [Robert D.] Taplett. I may have to correct that later. That’s the first time I’ve thought of him in so long. A very nice man.

As an aside, as we watched other units form and move out to be replacements, that was my first and only experience—and a rather shocking one—of seeing the brigs cleaned out. Troops marched off lockstep and [were] put aboard trucks to get aboard ship to go fight the war. That’s sort of an interesting little thing about our past that might be worth exploring some time, how well they fared or didn’t.

Anyway, I remember being in the presence of the colonel and saying something along the lines of, “When are we going to go?” And he said, “Well . . .” He misunderstood my question, but he said, “Well, if you have any idea of going on liberty, I think you ought to do it this weekend.”

And lo and behold, I had a friend named [Second Lieutenant] Charles I. [“Chuck”] Campbell [Jr.], who had about a 1936 Plymouth and a proper ration for it, who about a day or so later said, “I’m going to New York this weekend. Would you like to come along?”

**Simmons:** Is this Chuck Campbell, who later became General [Clifton B.] Cates’ aide?

**Barrow:** That’s right. So I said, “Fine.” I’d been to New York about twice in my life when I was in ROC. So about three or four of us jumped in that car and drove. We got proper permission from the battalion XO [executive officer], and it was all understood that our liberty began at a certain time. We kind of cheated on that a little bit and left a little early by a few hours, as I recall, but it was not something that wasn’t done routinely. We drove furiously in that old car. I think about it now; the roads weren’t very good. We arrived at New York, and we were going to stay in the Biltmore Hotel. As we checked in, lo and behold, I was handed a message that said, “Call Lieutenant Colonel Taplett, Camp Lejeune,” Tent City or whatever it was. Tent City was where Camp Geiger [North Carolina] is now. “At 0730.” We had gotten there about



0630, so I had one hour of extreme anxiety. I thought, “Maybe we shouldn’t have left a little early.” That worried me, because we’d done something wrong. So anything short of admonishing me would have been something I would have been just delighted to have happen.

So when I finally called him, his words were—and I’m going to tell you a little story here that maybe isn’t worthy of oral history, but it does say something about my intensity and my interest in the Marine Corps—he said, “Barrow, what the hell are you doing in New York?” I started stammering and stuttering, giving him an explanation. He said, “Never mind all that. Do you want to go to China?” I was so relieved that he wasn’t reading me off that I blurted out—and I remember the words as clearly as anything—“Yes, sir, I want to go to China!” You know, like he’s just given me a guaranteed invitation and I was giving him a short RSVP. He said to me, “Well, if you want to go, you’d better get back down here!”

I took that literally, and I literally dashed out of the hotel. I had registered and went by the desk. They waived my registration. I already had a roommate, so it was just a matter of not having to pay anything. I rushed out of the hotel and jumped in a taxi. I had seen enough movies in which the occupant of the taxi would say things like, “Get me to such and such a place and I’ll make it worth your while.” So I said to him, “Get me to LaGuardia [Airport] and there will be something in it for you.” Right out of a B movie. But it worked. It was the right thing to say, so he drove furiously to LaGuardia.

I dashed in and asked what planes were going south. I hadn’t even thought about trains; that wouldn’t get you there fast enough. This all was innocence of mine and optimism and enthusiasm. I believed anything could happen if you wanted to make it happen.

So I found out that the farthest south I could get was Washington, DC. There wasn’t anything going down close to Camp Lejeune. As I recollect, that was Eastern Airlines. I asked to get on, and I think the fare was something like \$15. It wasn’t very much, maybe \$20, somewhere in that range. But I was told, “Oh, no, we can’t get you on that.” I didn’t rate getting on there. Sort of like a ration.

With that, I whipped out this cryptic note written in the Biltmore Hotel, written on Biltmore Hotel stationery, “Call Lieutenant Colonel Taplett, 0730,” and I whistled up one of the managers. I think it was Eastern Airlines. I said, “This may not tell you anything, but I have to get back to my duty at once!” And he put me on there for Washington National [Airport].

I got off at Washington National. Every move I made was done on the double, and I rushed to the nearest phone booth. I had it in my head that Anacostia Naval Air Station [Washington, DC] just might have something going in that direction like [MCAS] Cherry Point [North Carolina]. So I called Anacostia Naval Air Station and got the operations officer. He said, "As a matter of fact, there's a Marine [North American] B-25 [Mitchell bomber] that's getting ready to take off for Cherry Point." I said, "I've got to get down there. Can you hold him?" He said, "Well, I don't know if I can hold him. I can tell him that you'd like a ride, and that's about it. I'd say you'd better get over here." So I rushed out of Washington National, jumped in a cab, and said, "Get me to Anacostia and there'll be something in it for you." [Laughs] A fast ride.

We pulled into Anacostia. I think the building is still standing over there. I rushed in. I only had a little handbag. I said, "That B-25!" He said, "It's already flown over to Bolling [Air Force Base in Washington, DC]," which was contiguous, and you could go from one to the other. I gather the runway was longer over there for takeoff, so some aircraft had to leave from Bolling runway. He said, "I'll tell him that you're on the way. And I'll do better; I'll put you in a jeep and send you."

So I got in a Navy jeep that went whistling around there, and he was pulled up opposite the gate. Indeed, he waited for me. I remember so well that the prop wash blew my barracks cap off and made me look silly. I ran and retrieved it out of the bushes, ran back, holding onto it. I went up through a little door, which was where the bombardier would go up, to be seated behind the pilot and copilot, back in the bowels of this thing. This thing was stripped of everything. It even had some ballast in it, as I recall, of sand bags or something to give it ballast, because it didn't have any guns or anything on it. And we took off for Cherry Point. I think we made it in 45 minutes, had a tailwind or something. Anyway, we made it down there in really record time, a B-25.

I get to Cherry Point. I got out and rushed into the squadron office. I said, "I have to be at Paradise Point, Tent City, at once!" And again, my intensity and whatnot must have persuaded him. He said, "Who would like to take this lieutenant over to Paradise Point?" Somebody said, "I'll take him."

So I got in the back of a [North American] SNJ [aircraft], and we took off and landed over there. We were met by the OD [officer of the day], and he said, "Where you going,

lieutenant?" I said, "I've got to get over to Tent City," which was only a mile away. He said, "I'll take you there." So I got in a jeep.

I'm here to tell you that from calling Colonel Taplett at 0730 that morning, before 1100, with two taxi rides, three jeep rides, and three airplane rides, I was standing in front of his desk, and he was the most amazed man I'd ever seen. He was from New England, maybe New York. He said, "I just talked to you in New York! What are you doing? How'd you get here?" And that's how I got there.

The moral of that story is essentially this. One of the things I carried throughout my Marine Corps career was "Get the mission done. Get the job done with a certain intensity." I no more accepted the thought that I couldn't get back where I was supposed to be than flying to the moon. Let me add this to what he said, which really was the final blow. He said, "You didn't have to come back today. I didn't mean that you had to come back now. You could have spent your weekend in New York." [Laughs] But anyway, that story repeated itself when I was a colonel. I did essentially the same thing flying out of FMFPac [Fleet Marine Force Pacific] in Hawaii to Saigon [Vietnam]. I'll tell you that when we get to that history, almost a direct repeat of that. You can do all kinds of things if you really put your mind to it. Hence, that little footnote story.

**Simmons:** We'll stop at that point and make another switch here.

End of SESSION I

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION  
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Interviewee: General Robert H. Barrow, USMC (Ret)

Interviewer: Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons, USMC (Ret)

Date of Interview: 28 January 1986

SESSION II

**Simmons:** General, we left off last time talking about your adventures—and they were adventures—in China, when you were there with SACO [Sino-American Cooperative Organization]. Let's pick up there. We were talking a little bit about your living arrangements and where you were. It might be good for the record if you would spell the name of the location of your base camp, which was either number five or number two. That's a point I'm going to have to resolve.

**Barrow:** Yuangling [Yangling]. Y-U-A-N G-L-I-N-G, if I remember correctly. The next time we meet, I will have dug up one of my old China maps and will have gotten the exact spelling.

**Simmons:** Thank you. Captain Milton A. ["Milt"] Hull was out there, too, wasn't he? Did you have any contact with Hull?

**Barrow:** The most senior person in the area was then Lieutenant Colonel John [H.] Masters of the Masters brothers. He was up . . . I'm not sure where he was, somewhere up north. Milt Hull, Major Edward [P.] Dupra Jr., and Major Vincent R. Kramer for a while. In my particular case, First Lieutenant William E. Buckley and First Lieutenant Malcolm S. MacGruer were two other lieutenants, along with myself in this camp.

**Simmons:** Just what were your duties as an advisor or whatever? What is it you were able to contribute?

**Barrow:** It was an interesting assignment in a number of respects. The first experience I touched on the last time we met was meant to be, for me, a breaking-in experience. I went with a small group of Americans. I was not in charge. We joined a Chinese column headed by Colonel Wong. They called him the "Yellow Tiger." He was a little sort of dried-up looking fellow and had a reputation of being a fighter. As I indicated, we were just west of the Japanese corridor,

participated in several operations, returned to base camp, and then after a brief period—I never understood why—several of us were ordered to go down to Nanning [China], which is west of Canton, which would be the other end of what the Japanese corridor was all about. So we were to train and subsequently operate with the people we trained against that end of the corridor. I think we were just looking for people to do that, and they didn't have any other source but to rob, take some away from the existing camp. So I went down there.

It began by my going back to the 14th Air Force forward fighter base at Chekiang [Province] and waited a day or two for transportation. I was quite ill, but [there was] little I could do about that except continue to carry out my orders.

**Simmons:** Was this dysentery?

**Barrow:** No, no. It was dengue fever, which was mosquito borne, and I thought it was the flu, because that was the beginning of it that I got aboard a transport, a [Douglas] C-47 [Skytrain] or a C-117, if you will. We left Chekiang and stopped at Kweilin, a very famous part of south central China, where there are interesting rock formations you've seen pictures of.

A little interesting en route story. There were something like 12 members of a [Consolidated] B-24 [Liberator bomber] crew that had been shot down and picked up, and they were on this flight. It was clear that they were still feeling that experience that they had, and they all sat rather tensely on the edge of their seats, with parachutes on. The crew chief had said to the other five of us who were passengers—one was a chaplain, [U.S.] Army, one Air Corps, Army rather, and one was a major, Army Air Corps, someone else, another fellow, and myself. He gestured to the rear of the airplane and said, "I don't see any reason that you'll ever need them, but there's some parachutes back there," and gestured back to a stack of parachutes.

We were perhaps halfway along to Kweilin when he came back with a rather anxious look on his face and didn't need to say anything. You could hear it for yourself that one of the engines was coughing, sputtering, and carrying on. He said, "We're having engine trouble with the right engine. It would be a good idea if everybody put on their parachute." Well, I thought I would be the cool, calm, collected one that you hear about in times of panic, and so I let everybody else make a mad dash for parachutes, which they did. When "Mr. Cool, Calm, and Collected" made his move for parachutes, there weren't any left. Mind you, I said I was sick, and I was feeling really bad, not as bad as I felt a few days later, but the combination of my feeling

bad and not having a parachute gave me a pretty anxious time. [Laughs] I still don't know what I would have done. Happily, the engine, after quite a spell of coughing and sputtering and what have you, caught, and we landed at Kweilin.

I was, by that time, really sick. It was evident to someone, who said, "You need to go to the hospital." So we went to a very primitive kind of a hospital that the Army Air Corps was running there. I had dengue fever, which would play itself out. It was also called bone-break fever, and that's a good description, because you feel like there's someone in every square inch of your body trying to break whatever bones you have in your body. It's terrible, very, very painful. However, in this hospital I was categorized as an ambulatory type. So every night the Japanese would send over a single aircraft, kind of a nuisance raid, usually late at night, and it compelled the hospital to evacuate. The ambulatories, of which I was one, were then required to help those who couldn't move well. We went back up in the hills into some caves that were not far from the hospital. That contributed to an unpleasant experience. That being over, I went back on air transportation from Kweilin down to Nanning.

In comparison to the other places I had later served in China, Nanning was a very pleasant experience. It's semitropical, really tropical, because bananas were plentiful. The recovery from dengue fever is a very slow and difficult one, and the thing that pulled me through was that I had a steady diet of bananas. I ate bananas all day long.

We did engage in the training of another column that was in the Nanning area, and in the so-called training, which is mostly marksmanship and demolition training, I would make up explosives and put the caps in and do these kind of things. When that concluded, I went back to Camp 2. The idea then was that I was going to take out a small American group of four, a larger group of Chinese irregulars—not very large, but maybe 15, 20—and we were to achieve a passage of the lines. [We] had to go into the Japanese corridor carrying a very substantial amount of supplies and weapons to a column that had been previously supplied and needed some more supplies, resupply, and additional weapons.

**Simmons:** What were the basic weapons?

**Barrow:** They were Thompson submachine guns, pistols . . .

**Simmons:** [A] 1911 pistol?

**Barrow:** Yes.

**Simmons:** Rifles? What kind of rifles?

**Barrow:** . . . and a carbine. Some revolvers, .38[-caliber] revolvers. The [U.S.] Navy provided those. We started, after a motor movement of only a day or so, we then spent the better part of a month to get to where we were going, which was in an area east of Changsha [China], which was right in the middle of the corridor, not too far from another city of some size, smaller than Changsha, called Liling.

That movement into the corridor and all subsequent movements thereafter—they were almost daily—was the most unusual experience and one which left a lasting impression on me, an impression which I drew on when we encountered the Chinese in Korea and later when I had some experience in Vietnam—the amount of equipment and things, supplies, etc., that could be moved by manpower.

We had an advance force, usually made up of about two or three big, tough-looking Chinese irregulars. I remember two of them by name—Lo Mai and Lo Li. I wouldn't want to meet either one of them in the dark someplace, very large Chinese. They would always operate about one day, one or the other sometimes both, with one or two others, but operate one day ahead of the rest of us or less, sometimes only a half a day. They had the party that would find their way with good intelligence. The Chinese knew all the time where the Japanese were, and they skirted any area, bypassed any area, where there may have been a little contingent of Japanese. They would contact the leading official in the village that we would go to and arrange for coolies, peasants, farmers, if you will, for the next day's movement. When we arrived, all we had to do was bed down for the night. Since this was a temporary thing, this would often be in a school, not an abandoned school, but a regular school or some kind of set of buildings that they'd find, any kind of village.

We were carrying loads made up of . . . and I think I described this previously, about the baskets. You take about 200 coolies, each carrying 80 pounds, that's 16,000 pounds, or 8 tons, which is a lot of gear.

**Simmons:** What incentive was offered the coolies? Were they paid? Were they intimidated? Or was it their hatred of the Japanese?

**Barrow:** I think, as I reflect on it, they were pressed into service, not motivated so much by hatred of Japanese but feeling compelled to do so. There were one or two times when Lo Mai

and Lo Li had to get firm with the local officials to ensure that he had the people there the next morning, but they were always there. They never were sullen; they were always happy. The next morning, you were usually awakened by the fact that they had arrived, and such jabbering and gibberish you've never heard, usually in a courtyard or schoolhouse yard or whatever, all this noise going on. So we would then get ourselves together and start out.

What I have been describing is essentially what I did for months. We moved almost every day. Even when we got to where we were going, we were constantly on the move. I'll explain a little bit about that. It was not uncommon to have 180, 190, 200 coolies—whatever the response was—pick up those loads that I described and get into that shuffle, as they do with a yo-yo stick, single file on some path, rarely anything that would resemble a road. Uphill, downhill, whatever, and go as much as 25 to 30 miles in a day. After we got to our destination, one of the other things that the advance party arranged was food for those who arrived. So the only thing they got out of it was a meal on the end of their trip. More often than not, just to give you a gee-whiz piece of information, they would turn around—obviously without their load or with their yo-yo poles, because they all carried their own—and go back to where they came from. So they might very well do 30 miles, eat a meal, rest a little bit, and return 30 miles.

**Simmons:** And that was all that was demanded of them, really, was one day's journey?

**Barrow:** One day's journey. We never carried any beyond that. You must remember that this is a heavily populated area, lots of people to do this job. We had no problem in getting them, and they were all fit to do the job.

As we moved to achieve this penetration of the corridor, we took various routes and made rest stops for a couple of days here and there while we got better intelligence. We found that on one occasion, traveling in sampans [wooden boat] on the river that did, in fact, have some Japanese patrol boats on it. I'll look up the river for you, Yuan River. We had to hide out in the sampans. We did this once. I've forgotten the exact time, something like 9 or 10 days, a little flotilla of sampans loaded with the same gear, the same kind of little bamboo woven, approximately 20 inches cubed. That was interesting, because on a typical sampan was a man and a wife and a couple of babies. They actually cooked on there and moved and tied up at night. We moved as surreptitiously as we could.

The actual getting across the most "heavily patrolled part of the Japanese corridor" was



where Japanese activity primarily related to protection of the railroad. So we first crossed a river and then one night made the “more hazardous crossing” with this long column of coolies, across the railroad, which in fact had Japanese patrols. I well remember that ahead of the coolie train, a handful of us went up quietly during the darkness to the railroad, and we actually heard a Japanese patrol go by. They were inspecting the tracks, because there was some sabotage of the tracks in that area. They were keeping saboteurs from doing things to the track. We were assured by the locals—we always had local guides—that after a given period of time, they would be well away and would not return for some time. We then crossed the railroad.

We came to what is western Changsha Province, near the town of Liling. This was far and away my most interesting experience, and it lasted from early 1945, I’m going to say February—I wish I had the date in my head, but I don’t—until the war ended. I don’t think it was intended to be that way, but it ended up that we were left out there. It may have been that someone somewhere forecasted that the war was going to end, and therefore we would be able to endure staying there until that time came.

**Simmons:** How many other Americans were in this?

**Barrow:** I was in charge. I had four Americans, all Navy. I had a Navy chief who was brought into the Navy as a chief; [I] had two other chiefs who were Seabees [members of Navy mobile construction battalions]. One was a construction worker, whose experience was demolition, from Chicago. His name was CSF [Chief Shipfitter] C. L. Kush. Another was named GM3c [Gunner’s Mate Third Class] Ray E. Gats [?], from Texas, who had been an oil field worker, in explosives. I had a son of a carpenter, from Joplin, Missouri, named RM2c [Radioman, Second Class] Joe Hester, who was a radio operator. But we had problems. He did not have a radio. We had no communications from the time we left Camp 2. The fourth member was a schoolteacher from Pennsylvania, named PhM1c [Pharmacist’s Mate First Class] J. C. Barney Weaver, who was a corpsman. Several of these baskets, six or eight of them, were in fact medical supplies for his use and to share when he thought he could do it in a way that they would be legitimately used.

After we got to where we were going . . .

**Simmons:** And that represented a march of how many miles?

**Barrow:** Ed, I don’t know. I’ll try to compute it for you. Substantial. Substantial. We found ourselves in a rugged, mountainous area, where there were no other occidentals, no missionaries,

though there had been some. And the Chinese we worked with consisted of a headquarters and some associated troops that would be more combat than support and a mass scattering of small groups [of] 30, 40, 50 over a large area. It would be like having 40 people here in Washington and another 35 in [MCB] Quantico and 32 at Fredericksburg [Virginia], and somewhere over around Charlottesville, we'd have 50, and so it went. A large area. All of them were in the near vicinity of some sort of Japanese troop arrangement, not position, but where Japanese were present in some area or near this railroad that I spoke of.

The primary mission was to just do as much harm to the Japanese as possible. Again, going back to an earlier comment, the food drive, again working against puppets, and attacking the railroad, which was of great importance to the Japanese. We found as we went from group to group, and sometimes we'd consolidate two or three groups for a particular mission, this meant an awful lot of traveling. As I reflect on it, I don't think there are many Marines or members of any other Service that walked more than my little group did in World War II. We really did a lot of walking. Rarely would we stay someplace three or four days.

**Simmons:** This little group of four Americans, a larger group of Chinese irregulars.

**Barrow:** Once we got there, the supplies got issued. So what we would usually carry with us was medical supplies, maybe some resupply for the unit we were going to meet, but it was not the 200-man . . .

**Simmons:** Not the coolies. There was still a group of irregulars with you.

**Barrow:** Yes. We would enlist coolies for this, too, to carry the things.

**Simmons:** About how many Chinese irregulars?

**Barrow:** Well, we probably had about 100, and then we would go somewhere, and that would mean that it would become 150, or we may pick them up and go to the next little contingent, and it might be 50. We'd usually have maybe 200.

**Simmons:** Did you ever get the feeling that you were completely at the mercy or the forbearance of those Chinese?

**Barrow:** Yes, but it wasn't an uncomfortable feeling. They were somewhat deferential to us. The manner of the Chinese would be this way, anyway. They listened to me, but didn't always do what I suggested or asked or recommended that they do. They never were in any way ugly or threatening or contentious or anything that would cause me to feel unpleasant or unwanted or not pleased at being there.

**Simmons:** You always felt quite secure with the situation?

**Barrow:** We moved, I don't know, maybe during the several months—and I have to compute this—six, seven, eight months. Do you have any dates of when I went to this?

**Simmons:** I have a couple of events here. [Referring to notes] In your file there's a commendation dated 17 May 1945, from [U.S. Navy] Admiral [then-Commander] [Milton E.] Miles. In it, he says that you "served with the 4th Column of the Chinese Commando Army during an operation in enemy territory, 11–16 February 1945, against the Japanese garrisons in the cities of Ningshan and Singtan [?], Hunan Province [in China]. During this operation, it was necessary to walk a distance of approximately 125 miles in heavy snowfall, severe cold, and under road conditions which had brought civilian activity to a standstill. The action, which the 4th Column fought against the Japanese in Singtan City [?] on 13 February and against the Ningshan garrison on 14 February, resulted in loss by the enemy of 100 officers and men killed in action and a considerable number of wounded. Your efforts in training the 4th Column were instrumental in bringing these severe losses on the enemy, without loss to your own forces."

**Barrow:** Then that clears it up. The earlier thing I described. Now we must go back and add another—that was February. We have to add another 60 days, almost. That was about 30 days in Nanning, almost a week in the hospital in Kweilin, and time in Camp 2 after the Column 4 operation, before I launched off on this thing that I'm describing now. So we're talking about April, not February. We're talking about maybe the last five months of the war.

**Simmons:** I have another reference to this. You received a Bronze Star on the 23d of April 1948, several years later, for "heroic action in China from 3 April to 15 September 1945." That's the period of which we're speaking.

**Barrow:** That's it.

**Simmons:** I don't believe I've seen a citation for that award.

**Barrow:** That's it. That's the one, 3 April. Okay. So I've finally got my dates right. I said it was sometime in April. So that's about five months, April to September. Then the war was over quite a while before I knew it.

**Simmons:** Let me go back to that commendation from the first action and take it apart a bit, look at it piece by piece. What was the Chinese Commando Army? Was that a familiar term to you?

**Barrow:** We called it the column; we didn't call it the commando army.

**Simmons:** This was the 4th Column. You talked about the column before, and the column that you were with varied from 100 to 150 irregulars or more.

**Barrow:** That's headquarters.

**Simmons:** Would this column be comparable to a regiment?

**Barrow:** In the last instance that we've been talking about, before you said to go back, we are talking about 1,500 irregulars in these cells scattered over a large area, with the command group that I traveled with all the time, of approximately 100 people. So the entire group was called the column. That's typical of Chinese terminology.

**Simmons:** Then you had headquarters group of 100, 150, and this included, in the first case, Colonel Wong.

**Barrow:** I don't recall how many other irregulars we picked up in that group, but it probably numbered somewhere close to 200. That first operation citation was about that. Where are we?

**Simmons:** Now we're into the summer in this long, long march.

**Barrow:** Let me describe how we lived. We lived very austere. During that period I went out, 3 April, no radio communications, no mail. We had nothing in the way of airdrop either. I had the feeling that the people in my base camp and the people in Chungking [China] really had no idea where I was. I had sort of open-ended orders. It doesn't matter, in the sense that we were engaged in fierce fighting all the time; we certainly weren't. But as I reflect, what a great experience for a young lieutenant to have, the kind of freedom of movement, because the Chinese were to some extent responsive to suggestions. We would consult, and I made suggestions, and they would agree to do certain things.

I was about to describe the daily living conditions. We ate two meals a day. No food, as you can imagine, was American-type food. Off of the land, provided by the locals, mostly rice flavored by two or three ounces of meat. The Chinese are masters. They use a little bit of meat to create a lot of flavor to put over your rice. Vegetables, like Chinese cabbage, bamboo shoots. And I thrived on it. Maybe I was hungry. In any case, those two meals never were turned down. It consisted of taking your rice bowl and sticking it in a wooden bucket full of just-cooked steaming rice, putting a little flavoring on it, and getting with it. I could eat two, sometimes three, bowls. But I'm telling you, we had some Chinese that would eat seven or eight bowls.

**Simmons:** A lot of garlic?

**Barrow:** Some, not a lot of garlic. Barney Weaver was tasked by me that none of us would ever put water to our lips that he had not validated as having been boiled. That was an absolute, and he was very conscientious. Sometimes it was not easy to do. He had to talk somebody into letting him boil water someplace, and we would fill canteens. We usually wore two. Many a time, I took off with a hot canteen on my hip, to the point where you felt you were going to get a blister from the heat from the hot water in the canteen. But none of us—and God knows what we would have done in this last experience from 3 April on—had any serious illness. I shouldn't say that. The fellow from Texas, Gats, was ill, and I watched over him and worried about him. He pulled through, and I don't know what he had. It wasn't anything that was lasting, however. But we didn't have dysentery; that's the main thing. Some of my cohorts in other camps, maybe a little less careless or whatever reason, they got amebic dysentery, bacillary dysentery, and many of them were quite sick. I'm sure it maybe created problems that's maybe still with them.

We won a lot of friends among the people we stayed with for one, two, three, sometimes a little longer, nights, by Barney Weaver and his medical supplies, because there just weren't any. I remember, just to give you an example, a small village where we stayed—one in which virtually all of the children had their eyes closed. They were suffering from trachoma, very contagious and running rampant. If it's not treated, it can ultimately cause an eyesight problem, I'm told. We had the miracle cure. Barney Weaver, in his supplies, had something called sulfanilamide [antibiotic] on him, and so he would just line these children up, and with something like a toothpick dip it in the ointment and drag it through the lid that was closed, and then the next day they'd be better. I assume that a day or two later, they were all right. We would sometimes go back to where we'd done this. He did this in several places, as a matter of fact.

So that kind of thing, the fact that we could treat people, earned for us a real affection. So we were not always just asking for things and demanding a living off of them; we'd bring something to them. Like the things we did later in Vietnam, specific action on a very small scale.

Our bed usually was a door off the hinges. The doors were hinged with wooden hinges. You'd open them and you could lift them up. The wooden pin fit into a round wooden base. You'd put that across two sawhorses. Every Chinese farmhouse I lived in, they didn't, for the

most part, sit in anything like chairs. They sat around tables on sawhorses, just almost exactly like our own sawhorses, the top board being about four inches wide. They'd sit on that to eat their meals. So it was natural to put the table across that. We carried a very thin blanket roll, put that down, and would sleep on it.

The experience that really I will never, never forget, as I'm talking about it now, it brings back for the most part good memories of the hospitable, good-humored people willing to share. I never saw them coerced into it. There may have been some of that. I thought that the things we did in an operational sense were productive.

I wasn't sure when the war ended. I had seen a Japanese in the town of Yo-yang [China] who was in charge of the garrison there, and I asked him about the conditions of the railroad south, because the 94th Chinese Army was supposed to come up that railroad. He said it was in pretty good condition except the area—and he described it—that our forces had been conducting sabotage against. This experience was in a very rugged, mountainous, typical of some of the scenes you'd see in *National Geographic* of various rice paddies going up the mountain, giant bamboo growing, fast-running mountain streams, [and] little clusters of villages which would usually be one or two families composing a village. We'd go around it, outside of it. The village was the place where they lived.

I had nothing in the way of any experience that was unpleasant. Being young and full of adventure, anyway, the fact that I didn't get mail or didn't know what was going on anywhere else in the world didn't really bother me.

**Simmons:** Let me interrupt with a couple of questions, going back a little bit. You were promoted to first lieutenant in December 1944. I haven't the slightest notion when your promotion might have caught up with you or how you might have observed it. Do you have any recollection of that?

**Barrow:** I was probably at Nanning or at Camp 2 before I went down to Nanning. I remember that, yes.

**Simmons:** Any problem getting an insignia or anything?

**Barrow:** No. I think maybe someone in the unit had some, or some lieutenant had been promoted to captain. I don't recall the details of it.

**Simmons:** On this lengthy march or expedition from April to September, you were so much on

your own. Were there any rendezvous points or times when you did recontact, in a physical sense, [with] your parent unit?

**Barrow:** Not at all.

**Simmons:** Not at all. You were completely divorced from April to September?

**Barrow:** That's right. No radios to get even regular broadcasts, to say nothing of radios to have contact. Okinawa, [Japan] I never heard of it until after the war. Didn't know about it.

**Simmons:** Not to make any invidious comparisons, but we were so dependent upon radio contact in Vietnam. For example, that something that might be comparable, one of our reconnaissance teams of fortified persons if you didn't hear from them every 15 minutes, you were antsy that they weren't within the artillery fan.

**Barrow:** I never had anyone that I saw later on from either Chungking or Cantou [?] who said, "Boy, we were really worried about you out there." Never. [Laughs] I never had, "Gosh, we didn't know what to do. We were going to get some sort of courier to get out there or what." No contact.

**Simmons:** Do you have any notion how many comparable or similar groups might have been crisscrossing China at this time?

**Barrow:** None in our area, except there was an OSS [Office of Strategic Services] group that dropped in that we really didn't see until we were on our way out. I knew they had landed a couple of two, three weeks earlier. Their approach was totally different. They had dropped in by airplane, they had all kinds of radios, and they gave me the first outside news I had. This was late August or early September. They were eating American rations and did not have a very good rapport with the Chinese. There's one thing you can say about our relation: we were sharing their food, their everything. We didn't try to set ourselves apart. We were totally integrated, and therefore there was a good spirit, a good feeling about that. There was none of this "we" and "they" kind of thing.

**Simmons:** You said you had relatively no contact with the OSS yourself. Elsewhere, I have read and heard that there was considerable conflict, if you will, between OSS activities and SACO activities.

**Barrow:** That is correct. I never knew about it, but I've heard that was true. Had the war continued, we may have had the same problem now. They hadn't been there very long at all; I'd

say a couple of weeks, maybe. Interestingly enough, we began to get rumors that the war . . .

[Interruption as tape is changed]

The Chinese sort of sent out their feelers, I guess, to some of the more likely places where you could confirm the rumors, and it came back that, yes, it was. As a matter of fact, when we got confirmation, it was about nine days after the war was actually over. We had no plans for that eventuality, and so we decided, the Chinese and myself, that we would go to a major railhead called Yueyang, and we started walking and gathering up these little cells that happened to be more or less along the route of our march to Yueyang. In the process, we'd pass little Japanese installations, and not knowing whether they knew the war was over or not, we never attempted contact. Several times I remember looking with my binoculars at them looking at us with their binoculars in the distance as we'd go by.

We got to Yueyang, this now being about 18 days after the war was over. It was under flood. Yueyang is on the railroad between Hankou and Canton, more narrowly between Hankou and Changsha. It is also on the westernmost of the two large lakes that you see in central China. When you look at most any scale map, those lakes will be shown. Tungting Lake is the westernmost lake. The Yangtze River flows into it and out of it, and it's not uncommon to have flooding. This was a major flood, like a once-in-20-years kind of flooding. While the town of Yueyang itself was pretty much on high ground, the surrounding area was subject to overflow. So we arrived at Yueyang with about 450 of these cells to be gathered up, 450 irregulars. We encountered this problem: how do you get into the city? We also assumed another problem: would we, in fact, be welcomed by the Japanese? They clearly outnumbered us. Later we found they really outnumbered us. The estimated 1,500-or-so garrison Japanese troops in Yueyang, but we could see from where we were on the outskirts, that there were a lot more than that, because there were numerous encampments visible from where we were that would suggest they were transit people and not a garrison. Apparently the Japanese had their offensive in '44 to create the corridor. The Chinese started a counteroffensive in '45 to try to roll it back up, and that, coupled with some of our work, had caused a lot of the transportation of people south to be backlogged.

When we got to Yueyang, the 1,500-man garrison also had 15,000 Japanese soldiers who were there because they couldn't move farther south, and this was a logical place to be, a major city of some size and major garrison. So emissaries were sent into the town by boat and came back with, "Come on in."



Let me pause to tell you about an incident. We had a member of the group who was a common soldier, irregular, who was accused, during our wait, of having taken money from another person in the group. We had a couple of different kinds of money, including puppet money. The colonel that I worked with was satisfied, after he was searched, that that in fact was the case. The “office hours,” if you want to call it that, was pretty summary. It went something like this—and I happened to be present—“You’ve been accused of stealing money. We don’t pay you anything, because you don’t have any money.” His money had belonged to someone perhaps who had it. “Therefore, you’re guilty when we found it on you. Therefore, you are to be shot for stealing.” The expression on that soldier’s face didn’t change one iota, and I tried to reconstruct, think through, why he didn’t plead for mercy or show any emotion. The only answer I can come up with is that it relates to Chinese face, that he’d been accused in their eyes of a serious crime, because there was very little crime in the interior of China to speak of. And this loss of face was so great that he might as well lose his life.

In any case, two of his comrades, one on each side of him, who stood there when he was brought in, walked him right out, right then. I did not witness it but heard the gunfire, and they shot him. So it was sort of a tough crowd, never revealed to me personally, but I mean they were capable of doing things like that.

Anyway, we arrived in Yueyang. A few other Chinese had come in there as an advance group, I guess from the 94th Army, but in any case, we began to get news, and the news was that the 94th Chinese was going to get there any day. Now that the war was over, they were going to use the railroads and move on up and would, in fact, effect the surrender of the people in Yueyang. Therefore, we, a very small group, wouldn’t try to do it on our own. We’d just wait there until they came.

I remember the first day calling—if you want to call it calling—on the commander of the garrison, a Japanese colonel.

**Simmons:** Would this be the first . . .

**Barrow:** First day that we arrived in Yueyang.

**Simmons:** And this was the first Japanese official that you had dealt with?

**Barrow:** That’s right. In a stone building inside a high brick wall compound, that had what

amounted to a courtyard some distance of 50 yards or so between the wall perimeter, the gate I entered, and the building that he was in. Parked there was about a 1940 black four-door sedan Buick. I went in. He was very deferential, bowed, did all the things. Here I am a first lieutenant, and he was a colonel. We exchanged news more than anything else. I was telling him who we were, and he knew something about who we were. He exchanged information as to what was going on in the railroad, the large backed-up number of troops, and so forth. He said to me, "Is there anything that I can do for you? You have but to ask." [Laughs] Forgive me. I said, "I would like to have that 1940 Buick you have parked outside." This is almost a piece of comedy as I think about it. It makes me blush to tell it. He said, "It is yours." So we got in the Buick and drove. It's not a terribly big place and it's surrounded by water, so you didn't have much in the way of roads or any streets anyway, but you could move around some. So one of my great pleasures was putting my four American assistants in my Buick and driving slowly around the town of Yueyang on Tungting Lake.

The Japanese, because they were not disarmed, provided us with an interesting circumstance. They moved about carrying their weapons. Of course, the NCOs carried swords, and the officers. You could hear the clackety-clack of the swords clanging and the hobnailed kind of boots that they wore hitting the cobblestone pavement. Sometimes they were in formation, sometimes just like liberty parties, but they all had weapons, all sort of in it together. And expecting the 94th Chinese unit to come up any day gave way to almost a month. So we were under those circumstances for almost a month. Nothing of any consequence occurred. We weren't doing anything but just sitting there.

**Simmons:** What were you doing for amenities during this long period? What were you doing for such things as razor blades, toothpaste, change of clothes?

**Barrow:** We carried razor blades. I think, as I recall, I had one of these British razors that made a lot of noise, clacked back and forth. You could get something in the way of soap that was made locally. It might have been perfumed. Clothes, we had about three changes of clothes, and if we needed to repair them, it was easily done. I wore out shoes. I found myself wearing sometimes a Japanese kind of shoe, including straw sandals. I'll tell you this. Before I went over there, I had a very high arch in my foot, both feet. I'm one of the most flat-footed people you ever saw now. I won't say it's all due to that experience, but it's certainly something that came about, about that

time. We didn't have much to do in the way of fun and games. There was conversation.

**Simmons:** Played cards?

**Barrow:** Cards. We had some cards. I found that where we stayed, since we moved so much, it was kind of a new experience if you could talk to a new host and hostess, a farmer and his wife wherever we happened to be staying, and play with the children. The children were always appealing.

Anyway, when the 94th Chinese arrived, we had communications. We had some communications—messenger, courier. We were to go to Hankou. The Chinese got this; I didn't. So we loaded aboard boxcars and rode from Yueyang to Hankou. We had to go across the river to this town of Hankou. There we found that they'd been there for several weeks. While we were in Yueyang, they were getting set up there, a pretty sizable group of SACO people who had come from the north, and some few from Chungking. They were staying in the Lutheran mission—[it] had been a large missionary complex, maybe a hospital, school, etc. [Captain Donald] "Don" B. Otterson was one of those who was there. As a matter of fact, he was in charge of it.

**Simmons:** He would have been a major?

**Barrow:** He was then a major. We didn't have much to do in Hankou, and stayed there for . . . I don't recall how many days, but then we were directed to move on by air to Shanghai [China]. We got to Shanghai. I'm going to say it was maybe November.

**Simmons:** In mid-November, you were transferred from Hankou to Shanghai.

**Barrow:** I remember the Marine Corps birthday was in Hankou, and we had a simple service for that. Went to Shanghai and reported to Naval Group China. They took one look at me, who was, one, a Marine [and] two, a regular officer. I'm not sure that anything was working then with respect to Reserve being released from active duty, but they looked upon me as fair game to do whatever they wanted me to do. I wasn't there to get transportation and go home, although a lot of other folks were doing that, going back. They said, "You are now part of the Shanghai Shore Patrol." I had the duty every third day and night. So my duties consisted of execution of that responsibility for one 24-hour period, writing up the voluminous reports the next 24 hours, and getting a little bit of rest and getting a little bit more rest the next day and getting ready to go back to it. I did this until, I think, about April 1946.

**Simmons:** Before we get into that, let's talk about your shore patrol duties a little bit. I will surmise that by this time you were regarded as a great expert on China. I would surmise that you had picked up a little Chinese and were able to speak. Therefore, for a person who had just arrived, or who had been in an insulated situation, you were "Mr. China" himself as far as many people you were working with.

**Barrow:** To a large extent, true. I didn't think too much about it at the time. I guess they thought I was kind of a unique character. I'd been inside China, and there I was. What they didn't realize was that Shanghai . . .

**Simmons:** Was very different from rural China.

**Barrow:** Yes. It was a new experience for me, too.

**Simmons:** That was the point I was going to make. What were your living arrangements in Shanghai in contrast to your living arrangements in rural China?

**Barrow:** Like the difference between daylight and dark. I remember weighing on a pair of scales at the Lutheran mission in Hankou, and I weighed 155 pounds. I was usually in the 185–195-pound range, so I had lost a lot of weight, not through restrictions, but probably diet and a lot of walking. But I surely started putting it back on. The food, everything sort of got reactivated in Shanghai when the war ended. All of what which was in a state of limbo, much of it that had been there in pre-Shanghai was still there but just needed to be watered and cared for, and there it was. It came back to life. Restaurants opened. I personally stayed in a place called the Pacific Hotel. It was an older hotel, just before the war, built multistory, like the 20-story Hyde Park Hotel overlooking the racecourse about a block away with the Pacific Hotel. I stayed in there and had a room of my own and bath, a regular hotel room, very pleasant. I had my own transportation, a jeep. I was in a place that was pretty interesting and exciting. When I wasn't on duty and fooling around writing reports and had my day of what you might call rest and relaxation, I could move around unrestricted. I didn't have a curfew. No one was going to ask me why I was around town at two o'clock in the afternoon or ten o'clock in the morning, or even after midnight, whenever the curfew would apply. So I saw a lot of Shanghai, and I had my share of fun. I knew all the places from the combination of shore patrol duty and my own whims and desires to explore it and see it.

This was another one of my many experiences in my career that was kind of different, but

I enjoyed it in the same sort of way. [Pauses because of ambulance driving past window] Sounds as if the shore patrol might be coming to pick me up now—the ghosts of yesteryear.

Let me just describe some of this. The [U.S. Navy] Seventh Fleet came into the Whangpoo [Huangpu] River. Mindful that this was a fleet that had been at sea for years really, and that it was composed of sailors who had been at sea for years—no liberty ports, who had pent-up desires to have a lot of fun. They had the money, back pay, and everything, pay on the books, to help pay for whatever pleasures they wanted. They were in a town noted for its good times and variety of kinds of things one could do after dark. So it was one hellacious experience. The discipline wasn't what it should have been. Long-haired sailors off of some of these smaller ships that pulled in there, you almost couldn't tell the commanding officer from his crew. They were all a mishmash of kind of seedy-looking characters. They proceeded to add to that by coming ashore and getting dragons sewed on the cuffs of their blue jackets and underneath the flap.

We had a permanent cadre of shore patrol people for these three ships. I would say each ship maybe had about 12, of Marine staff NCOs, some of whom had come out of the interior as well, and Navy petty officers, most of whom were boatswain's mates. We were the nucleus of law and order in Shanghai for Americans. The Seventh Fleet put ashore between 3,000 and 7,000 sailors a night, of the kind I just described. The shore patrol, which would blanket the city, was walking patrols, and vehicle patrols were drawn from the same population, so that we only had a cadre of anything resembling squared-away professional. Every day at 2:30, they would come into that shore patrol office about three blocks from the Whangpoo River, not too far from the Cathay Hotel, and they would straggle in there in onesies and twosies, and fours and fives from various ships, reporting for their day of temporary duty as shore patrol. Depending on how many were going on liberty, there were always close to 200 or 300. When I had my shift, I remember I used to mount up a big, tall counter-like arrangement there and talk to them, try in my remarks to make shore patrol personnel out of them for the duties they were going to perform in the next 10 or 12 hours. Often, as I looked down at them, I could see faces that I had had before me charged with all kinds of misbehavior a few nights before. [Laughs] But we did the job, and I think we did it quite well, considering what we had to work with. Thank goodness for those boatswain's mates and Marine staff NCOs.

**Simmons:** You didn't run across Major Houston Staff [?], did you? He was with [Navy] Admiral [Charles T.] Joy.

**Barrow:** That's right. I did, indeed, run across him. We gained a pretty good reputation. He came over to tell me about the shore patrol. We were well thought of, considering our size and numbers, and even got the approval for something I did which probably was a little wrong thing to do, but I did it. The idea occurred to me one night that I would go out sometimes into the city. And mind you, we had something like 400 establishments that were either in or out of bounds, but 400 establishments that a man on liberty could go to, to either have something to drink or to dance or eat or what have you. So we had to know where most of those were. I had to go out and look at what this motley crew that I got as shore patrolmen were, in fact, doing. Sometimes I'd find they were sitting around drinking and having fun, too. So you look a mess, but we carried it off. Sometime early on, I was back at the shore patrol headquarters where they would start bringing them back, bringing them back all messed up, drunk, bloodied [and] doing all kinds of things, having done all kinds of things.

This one night, I remember—and this is just the beginning, because I did it routinely thereafter—this sailor would drag up there in front of the counter. I was off to one side; I never tried to be involved, because you were just asking for it. I let another sailor talk to him. But he spotted me, and he had a few words to say about the Marine Corps. That probably prompted me to take a little counteraction. In any case, I said to the man on duty, “We shouldn't even talk to him until he gets a haircut.” And that became routine thereafter. Usually a couple of permanent personnel would take over by then, usually a couple of boatswain's mates or Marine staff NCOs. That was the signal to pick him up, one under each arm, and take him to a little back room and get a pair of old dull, rusty hand clippers out and proceed to whack away at his hair, which, when they finished, looked like the moths had been in it. There was only one thing for him to do, and that's to get it all off. Well, I thought about that, that somebody would say something about it. But the word got around, “If you want to keep your hair, stay out of trouble, because there's a Marine lieutenant down there that orders them to cut your hair, and it isn't a very nice haircut.” It was not America at its best. Sailors would often pay the pedicab driver with a punch in the face and run, that sort of thing, getting in fights. We were not at our best. We had to do things like a merchant ship that was tied up to a wharf that the Navy wanted to occupy, and he refused to

move. They gave him several ultimatums and told the troops to move, so the Navy forces ashore working with those on the river agreed that they were going to have a boarding party. They'd take aboard people who would go down and get the engine room cranked up, people would go to the bridge, and a Marine party would go aboard to be sure that nobody resisted all this that was going to take place.

**Simmons:** American ship?

**Barrow:** American ship. So we laid all this on and went out aboard a small U.S. ship that would be like a destroyer escort, a small ship. We were going to be a boarding party. We went up just off the tied-up ship and got on loudspeakers [and] gave them the word, "You have a certain amount of time, a half hour, to get this ship under way, or we're coming aboard to take it over." We waited, and in a short time, a few puffs of smoke started coming out of the stacks, some activity running around the deck. Pretty soon some line handlers came out, and they got under way.

Another occasion. We had a couple of sailors who were off of a small Navy ship that was tied up to a pier. I'm trying to think what ship it was. Anyway, I remember the commanding officer of that ship was drunk, and I didn't want to throw him in the pokey with the rest of them. So I decided to take him back to his ship. I had another fellow with me, an ensign. He [the captain] was a lieutenant, and I was a first lieutenant. As we went up the gangway, he decided he wasn't going to go. So we had a scuffle. My ensign was a tough little guy, and between the two of us, we persuaded him otherwise, [we] took him aboard his ship, and as we did so, we found that the ship had a number of Chinese women embarked. Further "investigation" revealed that they had been living there for some days. So I say again, we were not putting our best foot forward. That was all duly reported and investigated.

**Simmons:** The skipper of the ship was a jg [junior grade] or senior?

**Barrow:** Senior lieutenant. Another time, we got worried that there was a U.S. tug or yard oiler or something that was on the other side of the river that we suspected had contraband. We went over with a party, a little boarding party, and found that the hold was full of all kinds of cigarettes, cases and cases of cigarettes, some black market. There were a lot of little sidebar incidents that kind of kept you busy.

**Simmons:** How much did you get mixed up in the suppression of the black market or the

investigation of the black market? Did that come within your shore patrol duties, or was that handled by Naval [Criminal] Investigation Service?

**Barrow:** Mostly by them. We would, obviously, report any evidence of it, but we didn't get involved in investigations or anything like that.

**Simmons:** Were you aware that there was a good deal of this going on?

**Barrow:** Oh, yes.

**Simmons:** Were you aware of the currency manipulations? You were speaking of certain kinds of currencies before. I remember something that was called a triangle. There was FRB, Federal Reserve Bank, money in the north; CRB, Central Reserve Bank, money in Shanghai; and CNC, Chinese National Currency, in Chungking. The aviators flew the triangle.

**Barrow:** And made money.

**Simmons:** Then converted it into gold bars.

**Barrow:** I was going to say that the other element of that was the gold bars.

**Simmons:** The liang bar—Chinese ounce—worth \$1,000 green.

**Barrow:** I never saw any of that, but I knew it did, in fact, happen.

**Simmons:** You had the same rampant inflation in Shanghai as elsewhere in China, where the prices on the menus were changed while you were having your meal.

**Barrow:** Not as bad.

**Simmons:** Not so bad?

**Barrow:** Not as bad. Clearly there was a difference in inflation and a difference in currency value from one part of China to the other, a function of the inaccessibility of the various areas, poor transportation. Air was the only way you got anywhere.

**Simmons:** What would you estimate your living costs in American dollars were at that time?

**Barrow:** Oh, golly, it was just so modest. I can't begin to tell you. I saved money while I was in Shanghai. It was very modest. That's about it. I didn't have anything else unusual, just typical big seaport, international city, shore patrol duty. The Navy finally got a dispatch from the Marine Corps that said I was to report to the III Marine Amphibious Corps in Tientsin, China.

**Simmons:** I have a little ambiguity in your record here on that. From what I can find in the chronological record, in January of 1946 you were detached to CG [commanding general], FMFPac for temporary duty. What was the purpose of that temporary duty?



**Barrow:** To stay right where I was.

**Simmons:** Still stay there?

**Barrow:** Yes.

**Simmons:** Okay.

**Barrow:** They finally caught up with me, but said, “Leave him where he is.” I don’t even think I knew that.

**Simmons:** Administrative bookkeeping tried to account for you someplace. Then in mid-March you were transferred from the U.S. Naval Group China to III Amphibious Force Corps, FMFPac. I suppose that this meant a move from Shanghai to Tientsin.

**Barrow:** Yes.

**Simmons:** How did you travel?

**Barrow:** I traveled by air. I never saw so many Marines in my life. It was a great, interesting experience to see all this activity in Tientsin coming and going, one thing and another. I reported to the headquarters, and I’m surprised that they knew who I was.

I was told that the G-1 [personnel] wanted to see me, Lieutenant Colonel Cornelius P. Van Ness. I walked in, and he was a stern-looking character with a swagger stick and very well-creased and tight skin around his face. I wouldn’t use the word “frightening,” but he kind of put you off. He didn’t greet me warmly, let’s put it that way. He said, “You settled?” I was settled some place not far from there. “You just hang around for a couple of days. We know how to get in touch with you. Go around there to the adjutant’s office until we call.” He already had something up his sleeve, and I didn’t know it.

So I was sent for a second time and went to him. He said, “Commanding general wants you to report to him.” This was kind of strange. I didn’t expect to see the commanding general. I thought, in fact, I was ordered there to get brought back into the Marine Corps and sent home. Really I was eligible to go home. So I remember going in to see [Major] General Keller E. Rockey. His interest in seeing me was to talk about my experience in China. He must have been curious. He probably didn’t know there were any Marines in China in World War II. He had just met, two weeks earlier, [Lieutenant] General Dai Li that I talked about the other day, and Dai Li had just been killed in a plane crash in Nanking [China] two days before. He asked me if I knew him. I said I didn’t; I knew who he was. He was mostly interested in what we had been doing and

who else was involved and so forth. He thanked me, and I backed out the door. Then I'm assuming that he thought I might, because of my China experience, be of some service to him, and that I didn't make any unfavorable impression. In any case, I went back and waited.

In about two days, I was sent for again. "The commanding general wants to see you again." I reported, and he said, "Well, let me come quickly to the point. How would you like to be my aide? I don't know how much longer I'm going to be here, but I was hoping that you'd accept it and be here until we return to the States. Let me put it this way. I've never kept an aide for longer than six months, because aides tend to get spoiled. So after six months, wherever we are, your service is terminated. I don't want you to get your feelings hurt. That's my policy." He probably said that after he said would I be his aide, and I said . . . quickly thinking, one, you wouldn't turn him down, [because] it wouldn't be right; [and] two, that that would probably be an interesting experience. So I said, "Yes, I would." Then he told me, "Don't get your feelings hurt after six months."

Ed, I'm off my story. I'm off my story, and I don't know how this could have happened.

The second time I came back, he asked me if I would accompany him on a trip he was to take. The trip consisted of going up to Chinwangtao [China] and meeting Admiral Lord [Sir Bruce] Fraser, who was the CinC [commander in chief] Far East British Fleet, who then together took a train trip down to Tientsin, ultimately to Peking [Beijing, China], as I recall. I was kind of aiding him on this trip. There were Chinese aboard, and I used a little of that and seemed to get along with them. I guess he may have been observing me during that period.

Then when we finally got back to Tientsin, he sent for me this next time. That's when the proposition was made about being his aide, which I accepted. I moved into his house, which was out near the racecourse in Tientsin, a magnificent home, modern style, probably built in the 1930s, sort of a square contemporary-looking building, two stories and a penthouse on the top, which is where I ended up staying, the likes of which I hadn't seen before. There were about three of these houses along there, and the senior generals lived each in one of those. Major General Louis E. Woods, the commanding general of 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, lived in one, and [Brigadier] General [William A.] Worton . . .

**Simmons:** Who was still chief of staff.

**Barrow:** Still chief of staff. He lived in the third one.

**Simmons:** General Worton didn't have anything to say about your selection as an aide?

**Barrow:** No, he didn't. I was there from April or late March, whatever it was, of '46, until late October of '46.

**Simmons:** September 1946, you accompanied General Rockey back home, including your visit back to Oklahoma City [Oklahoma].

**Barrow:** September?

**Simmons:** September of '46.

**Barrow:** You're right. Okay. September of '46. I was thinking of something else.

**Simmons:** Let's go back and talk a little bit. First, these other generals that you've named and their aides and their staffs, who were some of the other aides that were your contemporaries at this time?

**Barrow:** The fellow I relieved, I don't know whether he was moved out for cause or whether it was time for him to go, or whatever, he was actually a major. I was still a first lieutenant. Major Wallace E. Tow was senior aide of all aides, and he was General Rockey's aide. He was gone. I never saw him. He left, and I came in. I was the only aide to Rockey, except he had a pilot. He did a fair amount of traveling in a [C-]117. The pilot he treated like an aide, including wearing the aiguillette. That was First Lieutenant James H. ["Jimmy"] Williams, who was a super pilot. He had that sort of touch to be a pilot. Jimmy also lived in the house. He acted as an aide. I would call him pilot/aide. I was a senior aide. Both lieutenants. I was first lieutenant; he was junior first lieutenant.

I never had an awful lot to do with the other aides.

**Simmons:** Jeff Bindi [?] was probably . . .

**Barrow:** Yes. Why can't I remember that? Yes, he was there. He married a local girl, as I recall.

**Simmons:** Yes, he did. Jacqueline de St. Hubert.

**Barrow:** If you help me, I can remember all these things.

**Simmons:** Let's talk about Worton a bit. I had been on the III Phib [Amphibious] Corps staff a little bit earlier than that, and I had formed certain impressions. Did you ever hear anyone refer to General Rockey as "The Great Stone Face?" And you said sometime later, but you weren't quite sure how it originated. I have a clue. The first time I heard it, there were two middle-aged—that is, to say in their late 30s, early 40s—[Marine Corps] Reserve captains who were

public relations officers, and they were probably gone by the time you came along, John N. Popham III and Charles E. McVarish. They were tough old newspapermen of the 1930s, 1940s, that kind of thing. This was the kind of language that they used. They were disrespectful, cynical, and all the rest and always had a label. The label for General Rockey was The Great Stone Face, because when press conferences were held and so forth, General Rockey never had anything to say. General Worton would always do all the talking. If General Rockey did venture to say something, General Worton would always say, "What the General means to say . . ." or "Let me take it from there, general." I wonder if you saw that side of General Worton?

**Barrow:** Well, I would characterize General Worton as an irrepressible kind of personality who would be hard to cut out of any kind of thing like a press briefing. He didn't need much encouragement, and he had a boss who didn't like to speak or in any way manifest any discomfort or lack of knowledge or what have you. That was all Worton needed was to be in there. They seemed to hit it off well.

We did a fair amount of entertaining in this very attractive home and beautifully furnished, owned by the Jannings family, who was a very, very wealthy German industrialist in China and a brother of the famous German actor, Emil Jannings. His wife and three children, two daughters and a son, lived in this home. When the war ended and Americans came and the Chinese got their act together, they declared all German property to be up for grabs. They didn't do any screening as to whether someone was a Nazi or not; they just took his property. So the homes out there on the racecourse were taken away from Germans. So the old man and his wife went up to Shansi Province, and he became an advisor to one of those warlord types up there. I never saw him, but I used to see Gisela and G [inaudible] Mucky, the boy's name, and they lived in three different locations in Tientsin. Gisela was the oldest, and once every couple of months he came to see how the house was doing, always pleasant but clearly upset by having been displaced. They all went their separate ways, in some way kind of a tragedy. If one can assume that they were not active Nazi supporters, but just Germans who lived for I think 40 years he lived in China. They grew up there, so they were gone to the wind. Mucky, as I recall, went to Australia with nothing but the clothes on his back. Goodness knows what happened to him. Gisela married a Marine captain that she had known before as a civilian in Tientsin, whose name was Brown. Last I heard, they were living somewhere in Canada. I don't know what happened to [inaudible]. I think she was already married to someone, a German.

Anyway, that's the house where we lived, and we entertained at garden parties and dinners. The thing was staffed with about 11 Chinese servants, all of whom were quite good and knew their job—the gardener, the drivers, the [inaudible], and the number one cook and number two and three, [and] then the overall ones who made all of that work, who spoke English better than the rest. So it was life at its best in terms of the pleasantness of it. Food was good, beautifully prepared and served in a beautiful home, a lot of pretty paintings and furnishings. He was an enormous collector. He collected some of the finest bronzes in China. Some of them were there. Most of them he had stored and he gave them to the Chinese government, I think in part to curry favor. But the whole environment, for a fellow who had been in the interior of China—two meals a day, mostly rice, then putting up with all that nonsense in Shanghai, then go up there and be the aide to the commanding general of all the Marines in north China at the height of their presence, numbering something like 66,000—was very pleasant.

But then there was another side to it, too. Obviously as an aide, I accompanied the general on trips, and we'd go to Tsingtao and Peking, and we went up the river where we had barges, key bridges, and other vulnerable spots. That's the first time I met [First Lieutenant William L.] "Bill" McCulloch, the now retired brigadier general. He was a lieutenant at one of these outposts at a bridge, 5th Marines, as I recall. He had a cottage provided by the Chinese; they ate enough, and we spent some time up there, almost a week with them.

My duties, among other things, consisted of letter writing for him. I did a fair amount of that. Social aide, traveling aide with him. In all of this, we met with the Chinese from time to time, various officials. A lot of visitors, not anything like the number of visitors you get today, but various U.S. officials came out to see what the Marines were doing and what the situation was, and sometimes we entertained them. It gave me a great insight into another level of life in the Marine Corps, at the very top at the time. The traveling enabled me to see something other than the hinterlands of a country where I had served in World War II.

So put all this together, I had an altogether interesting China experience inside, in Shanghai, [and] then up there for approximately six months. The III Marine Amphibious Force gave way and Keller Rockey became for a brief period, CG of the 1st Marine Division.

**Simmons:** Before that, you had [Major] General [DeWitt] Peck and [Major] General [Samuel L.] Howard.

**Barrow:** That's right.

**Simmons:** What are your recollections of them?

**Barrow:** General Peck was a very taciturn, formal, unsmiling, slight-of-build fellow, who didn't have much to say to aides. General Sam Howard, I will always remember his gracious, personable, pleasant, out and out gentleness. White hair. Just a nice man. Of course, he had been a POW [prisoner of war].

**Simmons:** Did you attach any particular significance to the fact that he, as the former commanding officer of the 4th [Marine] Regiment, then became a prisoner of war as a result of a regiment being surrendered in the Philippines, being brought back? Do you think that there was a conscious effort to bring him back to China in a triumphant position?

**Barrow:** A little bit, and it certainly gave him a responsible job in times of war. Here's a guy who served us well, suffered a long time, and he should have his turn. He certainly was highly thought of. I had the impression that Keller Rockey liked him.

**Simmons:** Did you see any abuse of privilege at those elevated levels?

**Barrow:** I will be perfectly candid with you. I didn't. I had some subsequent experiences, which annoyed me very much, that related to charges that General Rockey left China with a vast array of artifacts, etc. I can almost tell you what he left China with, because when it came time to pack up, I had participated in packing; not packing, but being around while it was being done. Then it really didn't finally get unpacked until we were in Norfolk [Virginia], and I violated this business about "No longer than six months will I keep an aide." I was with him for two and a half years, just about, over two years. I unpacked him in Norfolk. To the extent that his goods were kept in a Marine warehouse down there, and he wanted to see how it all survived, I remember breaking most of it out in a kind of warehouse scene—here it all is. Then they repacked it. When he finally remarried, it was unpacked again, and after that it went to Michigan House down in Norfolk.

The kind of things that he took out of China, I can relate to you very clearly. He had, as I recall, two fine rugs that had been given to him by the Chinese government, some part of it like the mayor of Tientsin or something like that. He admired a painting in the Jannings' house that measured maybe 16-by-20 [feet], of what appeared to be a Japanese girl, a bust painting, oil,

obviously a good artist. It was an attractive-looking picture. Gisela Jannings, as a gesture of his hospitality, had come back to check things out and hoped some day they would be able to get their furniture and things returned to them, gave it to him. He also brought back a very handsome screen, a typical—typical in the sense that there are a lot of others just as handsome—six-panel fold-up kind of screen. I remember that screen so well that I can almost recount all the pieces that were in it, because he had it in his office in Norfolk. The then-senior aide, they moved a major in over me—for one thing, I was about to leave—opened the door on it and knocked it down, and the pieces in it all popped out. I’ve never seen someone so angry, but concealed anger, as General Rockey. He loved that screen, and he would spend hours trying to fit the pieces back in like a jigsaw puzzle.

In all honesty, that is about the ext . . . I’ve forgotten who gave him that. Someone gave it to him. I don’t think he bought anything. Certainly not, in my recollection, and lack of evidence in any of these things, did he ever go someplace and say, “I want that. Take it out of there and give it to me.” I just dispute the claim that he left China loaded with all kinds of artifacts. If he did, I must have been pretty naive, or he did some things that I didn’t know about.

We know that there was some of that going on, and there was a senior Supply Corps colonel, whose name starts with an N.

**Simmons:** Leslie [F.] Narum.

**Barrow:** He shipped apparently a heck of a lot of things home. Maybe he acquired them legitimately, but in any case, there was a lot to say about how he got them. That’s about all I can tell you about that, Ed. I never saw any abuse or anything that suggests abuse. I’m using my mind trying to think about it. He had a lot of amenities that the average person didn’t have. He had a couple of sedans—one with a Chinese driver, one with a Marine driver. He lived in that big house that was beautifully furnished. He had 11 servants, He had an airplane that he could travel around in. He was “Mr. Big” in China.

**Simmons:** He was a widower, or unmarried, at this time?

**Barrow:** He was married but had been some time separated. He had a son, William K. [“Bill”] Rockey, who was a [U.S.] Naval Academy graduate, graduated from the Naval Academy, I’m going to say about 1948, and went into the Marine Corps [and] retired as a colonel a few years ago. He had a daughter named Barbara that was, I think, older than Bill Rockey. Mrs. Rockey

was originally, I think, from Virginia Beach. If I'm not mistaken, she was a Weir. Colonel Kenneth H. Weir is in the Marine Corps today. Some relationship, I'm not sure what. I suppose the word would be that they were separated; apparently not a happy marriage in later years after the children grew up. In that connection, he entertained and had lunch with a couple of ladies around, and he acted like an unmarried person, which for all intents and purposes he was.

**Simmons:** I remember an Italian woman.

**Barrow:** Yes, yes. Do you want all this on there? [Laughs]

**Simmons:** As you said earlier, you did accompany General Rockey when he went home, and this was in September of 1946. This included a trip with him to Oklahoma City, which I presume was his hometown or close to it. Is that correct? Or was there some other reason for him going to Oklahoma City?

**Barrow:** No.

**Simmons:** Do you have any recollections of that trip?

**Barrow:** Yes, I remember going to Oklahoma City. He gave a talk there, as I recall. This was a visit.

Before we get to that, General [Roy S.] Geiger had come out on a trip. I met him and had an opportunity, as a young officer, to visit with him. I had the impression that General Geiger was also interested in my World War II experiences. He more than tolerated me; he was very nice to me. When we went back, we left China in a four-engine [Douglas] C-54 [Skymaster] or [Douglas] DC-6, whatever we called it, C-118 [Liftmaster] I guess it would be. We had engine trouble en route to China. First of all, we were routed north, and we had planned to go south in a more northerly direction. We ended up with a Navy fellow who had to land at Iwo Jima [Japan], of all places. Hydraulic problems. According to the pilot, it was clearly the thing to have done.

That was a very touching experience to go back to Iwo Jima with the former commanding general of the 5th [Marine] Division. We were there overnight. We arrived in sufficient daylight hours to get a jeep from a little [U.S.] Army detachment that was there, clearly in the backwater of the Army commitment to the Pacific, and they were a pretty raunchy-looking group stuck out there. I remember that, too. Probably Army Air Corps, but Army nevertheless, engineers keeping the airfield operating. No Japanese. We borrowed a jeep and toured around to the extent we could, including going all the way up to [Mount] Suribachi, which



you could do in a jeep. We did visit graves. This is before they had been brought back. The graves were still there. He was obviously very moved by going back and being able to see it like that. Then we stopped in Hawaii for two or three days, and I stayed with General Geiger who insisted I stay with General Rockey in his quarters. He treated me very kindly. I have fond thoughts, good thoughts, about General Geiger.

General Rockey's orders were to be commanding general for the Department of the Pacific in San Francisco. Although it was still a viable command, it wasn't one at that time, late 1946, that one would think was a plum. Even at my level, I had the feeling that this was not the greatest job in the world for a general officer who had had a division in combat, who had all the Marines in north China, to then take what looked like a step down in his next assignment. But we arrived there, and we stayed in the Marine Memorial Club, which had been in being for some months but not too many. That, too, was kind of a pleasant experience. We stayed there from October, November, and left there in December.

He had orders—again, what I would have thought he probably should have gotten because of his previous assignments moving along—as commanding general, Fleet Marine Force Atlantic.

**Simmons:** Did he have any other personal staff that was accompanying him on these changing assignments other than yourself?

**Barrow:** No, no. I was the only one. I guess that each time I was kept related in part to the fact that he wanted somebody who had continuity, who knew him well enough to know to settle him in and that sort of thing. So by the time we left there, my six months was up, and I was on my way to start another tour with him as Fleet Marine Force Atlantic, where we arrived right off the bat on the first or second day of January, the day after New Year's or somewhere like that. It was early January 1947.

**Simmons:** I don't have that precise date here.

**Barrow:** You see, FMFLant [Fleet Marine Force Atlantic] had been created kind of on paper, and [Major] General [Thomas E.] Watson, commanding general, 2d Marine Division, was still CG, FMFLant starting along about October or November of 1946. But he didn't have an FMFLant staff, and he didn't have anything but the title. That would be at Camp Lejeune.

We arrived in Norfolk. I was able to witness and be a participant in the formulation of the

force headquarters. Because the driver had been with us in the Department of the Pacific, we brought him along. The driver, General Rockey, and myself were a party of three composing FMFLant; [we] checked into the old troop training unit, now Landing Force Training Command, at [Naval Amphibious Base] Little Creek, Virginia. There were military people there in that headquarters that took orders and travel claims and all these sorts of things and processed them. We were sort of superimposed, this modest three-man group, on the little headquarters there for a few days, until they assigned a wing of the old Fifth Naval District Headquarters building under a naval operating base in Norfolk to FMFLant. So we moved over there. General Rockey moved, as a bachelor, to the Rhode Island House, which is still down there. Now it's a headquarters for . . . BOQ [bachelor officers quarters] for senior officers; he had a suite of rooms. I lived in the BOQ, second one farther down the street at the end of [inaudible] Boulevard.

FMFLant was created out of whole cloth. A brand-new Brigadier General Vernon E. Megee arrived, the deputy vice chief of staff.

**Simmons:** How did you find working with him?

**Barrow:** With General Megee?

**Simmons:** Yes.

**Barrow:** All business; very conscious of being a perfectionist; strait-laced, by the book; [and] a man of no nonsense. I thought he was a pretty reasonable, bright fellow. As I look back on it now, I see it was quite a step for him. He'd made general and was assigned to General Rockey, whom I got the impression he didn't really know, and they seemed to hit it off all right. We subsequently, within a short period of time, picked up a G-3 [operations] by the name of [Colonel] Alan Shapley. A fellow named K [inaudible] was the G-4 [logistics]. The headquarters began to take on the trappings of a headquarters. General Rockey seemed to decide to carve out for himself a role that, as I reflect on it, maybe wasn't a bad one. It was a somewhat new experience for the Atlantic Fleet to have a Fleet Marine Force as one of its components as commander. When we first arrived, very briefly [Navy] Admiral [Marc A.] Mitscher was CinCLant [commander in chief, Atlantic], and his chief staff officer was commodore (the rank of commodore) Arleigh [A.] Burke. They were on the . . . I'm going to say the [inaudible]; I think I'm right about that. We made one rather suddenly early on sailing with him. We went somewhere together, down to the Caribbean, I guess it was, somewhere.

But [Admiral William H. P.] “W. H. P.” (am I right?) Blandy, three initials, he took over as CinCLantFlt, and the role that General Rockey sort of carved out for himself to get close to him with operational command that he had, and he did that successfully. I got the very distinct impression that Admiral Blandy liked him—played bridge with him, included him in a lot of social things, and we went on trips with Admiral Blandy on the [USS] *Pocono* [AGC 16] and a couple of times by air. We went to Bermuda on one sailing. We went to Newfoundland and Greenland by air, and we made a couple of trips down into the Caribbean.

**Simmons:** There were maneuvers in Vieques [Puerto Rico] in February and March 1948.

**Barrow:** Yes, 1948. That’s a year later. In 1947, we had an operation in Culebra [Puerto Rico], the 2d Marine Division. We went down and observed that. Flamingo Bay is one of the prettiest spots I’ve ever seen on the island of Culebra. A very limited area for any kind of maneuver, primarily a bombardment, so the forces had a ship-to-shore movement. They didn’t have much in the way of maneuver after they got ashore. That was in ’47.

In ’48 we had the first what I would characterize as a large-scale operation on Vieques, to include an advance party to arrange to have Vieques available for U.S. Navy property, for the most part. Except for Isabel Segunda [Puerto Rico] and a wedge of land in the middle, the extremities were U.S. Navy property, again a range and a place where Marines could land and many times have since. The other end of the naval ammunition depot is still a very active one.

Preliminary to those maneuvers in February 1948, I remember attending a staff conference, which I often did, and I might digress and say that on occasion, General Rockey would go away on leave for a week or two, and he would not leave me behind just to sit at the aide’s desk; he’d farm me out to some staff for training. On one occasion, I went to the Amphibious Intelligence School for two weeks out at Little Creek. [First Lieutenant] Stone [W.] Quillian was one of the instructors there. Anyway, I attended conferences. It was part of my training. By this time he was treating me as much like a son as an aide, and he felt like, as a young officer, I should have the experience of listening to conferences and so forth. So I went to conferences, which is not very commonplace for aides. They’re usually inexperienced in that sort of thing.

I was sitting there, sort of minding my own business, when the discussion of a contingent to go down to Vieques came up, to contact the Navy to get their cattle out of the maneuvering

area, sort of reestablish our presence down there preliminary to the exercises. The conversation went along the lines of, “Colonel Shapley, you’ll be in charge of this party and you’ll want someone out of G-4, and that’s going to be Lieutenant Colonel Riddell.” Robert S. Riddell. Do you know him?

**Simmons:** I don’t know him.

**Barrow:** A big, rough fellow. I think he’s from North Dakota. He said, “Is there anybody else you’d like to take along?” And he was presumptuous enough to say to the commanding general, “I’d like to take your aide.” He had sort of also taken a liking to me. I don’t know what he thought I could contribute, but I guess he figured I was going to aid him, in a sense. That’s a little bit strange. The general, by then, had acquired another aide, Hugh—I’ll think of his name in a minute.

So Riddell and Colonel Shapley and myself, we flew down to Puerto Rico, Naval Air Station (at) San Juan, not Roosevelt Roads, and eventually went over to Vieques and stayed at the naval ammunition depot and had a set of rooms there. We were there for several weeks, and met with all the million people on the island of Vieques, reasserting ourselves, stirring things up.

We came back, and then I went back with the general as an observer as the 2d Marine Division conducted its landings there. I remember by then [Major] General [Franklin A.] Hart, the CG, 2d Marine Division, he had an aide named First Lieutenant James C. Orr [?]. [Laughs] My FMFLant experience lasted from early January 1947 until the late summer of 1948.

Mrs. Rockey had passed away early in the general’s tour down there, so he really was then free. He had known and been acquainted with a widow, Miss Susan McGee . . . I knew this would happen. My memory sometimes isn’t nearly as good as it ought to be, as well as I know her—a charming, attractive, very fine family from Kansas City, Missouri. He corresponded with her, and I think he’d take trips to see her when he could. In August of 1948, he informed me that they were going to be married. He asked me if I would accompany him. He was a kind of shy man in many ways. He was something of an enigma. He did have a kind of stone face that you referred to earlier, countenance about him, but that was a kind of veneer. Underneath that, he was a lot smarter than his appearance gave him to be. He, in many ways, was a kind of shy man. But he asked me if I’d be best man in his wedding. We had made other trips north to Washington, more often driving up, and the two of us would drive up. We stayed at the Army [and] Navy

Club. He would, again, treat me more like a son than an aide. Or if we made trips someplace, the host where we were going would typically sort of make over him, “General, we have your room,” and so forth. He’d always say, “Where’s my aide staying? Do you have a nice place for him?” He’d sort of look after me. In a sense, I used to say he aided me as much as I aided him.

One of those trips, incidentally during that tour, we went down to Trinidad. The [USS] *Missouri* [BB 63] was in Trinidad. We were in the *Pocono* I think it was. The *Missouri* had a big dance on the deck of the ship, all the lights on, a colorful, beautiful affair, and all the proper young ladies were invited. It was kind of a special thing. We spent several days in Trinidad.

Back to his getting married in August. We drove up and went down to La Plata, Maryland, and [Navy] Admiral [Frank J.] “Jack” Fletcher—what the friendship had been, I’m not sure, but I had the impression that his wife-to-be also knew him—so we had a very simple ceremony, in which her daughter and son-in-law from Boston [Massachusetts] were present. I was best man. They got married, went on a short honeymoon, [and] came back.

He had the Michigan House assigned to him by that time, and I participated in moving him in, getting his two stewards lined up, and I went to him. He didn’t come to me; I went to him and said, “General . . .” I didn’t mean to suggest that Miss Susan was my replacement, but he was going to be leading a different life with me as aide to accompany him on things not of an official nature, like going to Washington more as a companion than anything else. I said, “I think it’s time I move on.”

He said, “Where would you like to go?” I was reasonably confident that he could send me most anywhere that I wanted to go. That’s the way things were done in those days. He could call Washington for them to send me to some exotic place, is probably all it would have taken. But I said, “I would like to go down to Amphibious Warfare School.” He smiled and said, “You’ve made a good choice. You’ve been out of touch with a lot of the things that that school can give you.” This was to be a nine-month course in the second class, in that you had an earlier class, a shorter one.

So I left him in August and went to Quantico for the 1948–1949 amphibious warfare class, a junior school, it was called.

**Simmons:** I think that's a good place to end it for this evening.

**Barrow:** Yes

End of SESSION II

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION  
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Interviewee: General Robert H. Barrow, USMC (Ret)

Interviewer: Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons, USMC (Ret)

Date of Interview: 7 May 1986

SESSION III

**Simmons:** It's Wednesday, the seventh of May, this is my third session of the interview with General Barrow, and again we're at the visitor officers' quarters at the [Washington] Navy Yard. General, we ended the last session as of 1 September 1948 when you were transferred to Marine Corps Schools, [MCB] Quantico [Virginia]. You were assigned as a student at the Amphibious Warfare School Junior Course. Whom do you remember from the staff?

**Barrow:** Well, people like [Major Henry N.] "Hank" Reichner [Jr.], and [Lieutenant Colonel Ronald B.] "Ronnie" Wilde, and . . . that's a surprise question, Ed. If I could think a little more about it I could come up with probably a pretty sizeable list. [Captain Wesley C.] "Wes" Noren. I probably remember these people, in large part, because I remember them from other times.

I thought this was a good group of instructors. And I regret to say that names just don't roll out, but they don't.

**Simmons:** Wasn't [Major Donald B.] "Don" Otterson the skipper of Operations, Plans, and Orders?

**Barrow:** Yes, he was. Right.

**Simmons:** And [Major Donald B.] "Don" Hubbard, I think, was . . .

**Barrow:** Don Hubbard, yep. This was the first nine-month course, and the second one in the new building, so the facilities were outstanding. The stretched-out course, to a full nine months, made it very complete in the coverage of subject matter.

Most of the students were . . . well, I think all of the students, not most, all of the students were veterans of World War II with a wide variety of experience. And so, unlike many peacetime schools where students often don't have that advantage, which is one of being able to contribute to the instruction—challenging it, contributing to it—this group did that; and I thought

a good group of students. They ranged from captains, I think there were one or two first lieutenants, as a matter of fact, to majors, some of them fairly senior.

And these were interesting times and for me, personally; mindful, now, that I had served in China during the latter part of World War II and, therefore, very isolated from many Marines and the experiences of World War II, which my classmates all had in common at this school. And I'd been an aide for two years, a year of which was in China, well, almost that long. So this was a great experience for me to be with a large assortment of officers with a variety of experience.

Plus, I stayed at Harry Lee Hall. As I recall, at that time there were 28 quarters at Harry Lee Hall. And, you know, we lived in an era at that time in which people didn't rush into marriage. Not that there's anything wrong with marrying early, but I think one could say that there were, perhaps, more bachelors around with some age on them than you'd find today. And they were congregated in Harry Lee Hall, ranging all the way from two or three colonels, several lieutenant colonels, quite a large number of majors, and a few captains—I think 28 in all. And they were interesting personalities.

**Simmons:** I'm interested that you would mention Harry Lee Hall. You came along in September of '48. I left Harry Lee Hall in May of '48 when I got married, but I had a wonderful year or so at Harry Lee Hall. It was the closest thing to a real regimental mess that I ever belonged to. And persons like [Captain] Harold Stanley Hill was the senior Marine. He may still have been there. Colonel Harry Reeves [?], [Lieutenant Colonel Donald M.] "Buck" Schmuck was there, [Major Walter C.] "Waldo" Wells, "Full Steel" Walker [?].

**Barrow:** [Inaudible]

**Simmons:** Right. They're all persons I remember.

**Barrow:** Ronnie Wilde.

**Simmons:** Right. Uh-huh.

**Barrow:** Again, Hank Reichner, Jack McLaughlin [?], etc. . . .

**Simmons:** [Major Edward G.] "Ed" Kurdziel was one of them.

**Barrow:** That's right, Ed Kurdziel. A very interesting group. In all candor, we had a good time. We all did our duties but we also had a lot of fun.

**Simmons:** Did you know Patty at this time?

**Barrow:** Did not know Patty at that time.



**Simmons:** Getting back to the school, itself, you've already indicated this to some extent, but what was your opinion of the school? Do you think it prepared you to be a company commander in the [inaudible] course?

**Barrow:** I think it helped me. I believe so much of the benefit of the school comes into the area of practical application, drawing on the knowledge and experience of your fellow officers in those kinds of circumstances when you work a problem together.

I would add, also, that usually you were compelled in a more structured way to have a . . . get a better handle on all the things like supporting arms and communications and so-called, one could call technical sides of the Marine Corps, which is equivocal to making everything else work. Learning more about those things and how to employ them. I thought it was a good school.

**Simmons:** I went the following year. I went to the '49-'50 course. We had a lot of aviators and, for many of them, it was their first exposure to the Marine Corps, per se. They didn't know a squad from a squadron when they first arrived. It was a very good thing from that point of view.

**Barrow:** Yeah. I've never fancied myself as being a star student, and you can attribute that to either lack of ability to be a good student or laziness or maybe a combination. But I've done well in all the schools I've gone to.

But I just happened to, preliminary to meeting with you, Ed, pulled out last night at home my file, which was sent to me several months ago when they finished microfilming . . . putting it on microfiche. I guess retired Commandants and other people too, for that matter, they bundle all this thing up and . . . I have my original fitness reports.

**Simmons:** Marvelous. I wish I had mine.

**Barrow:** You don't?

**Simmons:** I don't. I'll have to inquire about that.

**Barrow:** You have to inquire.

And it says much more about the conditions of things like fitness report markings than it does about Bob Barrow. And I'm getting off the track but I'm coming back to it in a minute.

These young officers today, who get upset and think their career is already ended before it began because they got something less than outstanding, ought to see this old Marine's early fitness reports. In where that section is that one can make written comment, more often than not it included one or two sentences, characteristically, "He appears to be a good officer." [Laughter]

And, incidentally, in the doing of this, the reason why I brought them was to help me

recollect times and events and people. If that's an admission that my memory isn't very good, so be it.

But I notice in my student performance report that, academically, I was in the middle third. In the practical, I was in the top third. I suppose it puts what I said earlier, about getting the most out of the practical is reflected in whether you're interested in it you would like to do better in than not. So that's of some interest.

But even there, having finished in the top third and the middle third, the fitness report is not what I would call glowing by any means. And I hope that the future readers of this oral history transcript take all this into account. There's some lessons to be drawn. And you ought to go back—and not just Bob Barrow, but some of the other senior officers of the same era—and look at that fitness report, particularly when they were junior officers. And there you are. I've got lots of both kinds.

**Simmons:** Well, I remember, even in those days, they were striving for a better fitness report form. And you may recall that one of our instructors was Grant [S.] Baze. And Grant Baze was one of the architects who made that form. That one right there is a wonderful item there. Makes no mistakes, you know. Way over on the right. [Laughter]

Well, anyway, did you have a Packard landing exercise troop?

**Barrow:** We did. And it was one of the things I particularly enjoyed. And Inchon [Korea], which followed a year after graduation, a year plus, was not, by any means, a by-the-book amphibious operation. No rehearsal, for example. Nevertheless, Amphibious Warfare School did, I think, help all of us . . .

**Simmons:** Uh-huh.

**Barrow:** . . . in that operation.

**Simmons:** For the benefit of readers of this interview who might not be familiar with the Packard series, this was an exercise that combined all the schools. We were married up with the Senior Course and the communicators. It was a giant CPX [command post exercise] where we went by amphibious shipping down to [MCB] Camp Lejeune [North Carolina] and made a landing. And in my year we even had a little play of helicopters. I don't know whether you had. . . .

**Barrow:** We didn't.

**Simmons:** I think ours was the first year in which there was a little play of helicopters.

Kind of summing up your nine months in the junior course, what were some of the high points or, perhaps, low points of the course?

**Barrow:** No low points. High point would be the close ages. I know that's become almost a cliché, saying that one gets the most out of going to school with the close age of your fellow students, but there's a lot of truth in it. And a great many of those fellows were in Korea with me a year plus later.

And in junior school, junior course, I developed a friendship with a fellow who I could have said was probably one of a handful of truly best friends that I ever had in the Marine Corps. His name was [Captain Charles M.] "Charlie" Cable from Senath, Missouri, and a very brainy fellow but also a very feet-on-the-ground kind of fellow, great sense of humor.

And we left the junior school, junior course, and went to Camp Lejeune. And he had a battery and I had a rifle company. He was in artillery. And his battalion supported my regiment, so the relationship continued. And, once we went to Korea, he was severely wounded in the Seoul part of the Inchon-Seoul Operation and had to be subsequently medically retired. He became a brilliant lawyer and judge in Missouri and all done with a great deal of physical handicap. He went to Georgetown Law School [and] was editor of the *Law Review* [and] president of his class. He was just an extraordinarily fine fellow, a capable person.

I'm saying all this in a nostalgic sort of way because that is the day he passed away, about five years ago. He was a dear friend. And he stood out as that kind of relationship, but I had other friendships that I formed there and carried forth into my career.

**Simmons:** I think that might have been particularly true at that time because the Marine Corps was so small. And the regular officer corps was so small, that when the 1st Marine Division did go to Korea, you almost inevitably found yourself with the same persons . . .

**Barrow:** Yeah.

**Simmons:** . . . either on the staff or fellow students.

In July of 1949, you were assigned to the 2d Marine Division at Camp Lejeune and given command of Company A, 1st Battalion, 2d Marines. Who were some of your officers at that time, both in the company and in the battalion?

**Barrow:** Well, I reported in down there and the executive officer was a fellow named Rightly. The commanding officer was an officer named Granger, kindly known as "Rough-cut" Granger.

**Simmons:** Was this [Lieutenant Colonel] Harold Granger?

**Barrow:** Harold Granger.

**Simmons:** Harold Granger.

**Barrow:** The battalion operations officer was [Major] Raymond C. “Chief” Portillo, Chief Portillo from Oklahoma. I think a combination of Comanche, Cherokee, and Irish. But in any case, he looked very Indian and hence the name Chief—a fine athlete at Oklahoma A&M, now Oklahoma State [University].

In my company I had at one time, very briefly, General [Edwin A.] “Al” Pollock’s son, young Al Pollock. And he went off to air observers’ school. This was a [inaudible] [and] didn’t last too long.

I joined several officers from that Basic School class that graduated in ’49 but, as to what time, I’m not sure or what numbered class it was. But [Second Lieutenant Donald R.] “Don” Jones and [Second Lieutenant John J.] “Jack” Swords were two platoon leaders that joined A Company at that time. Or not when I was there. I mean, I didn’t join and they were there. They joined after I had been in the company awhile.

These were lean years, as one who lived through them, as you did, Ed, will remember. This was the pre-Korean reduction of the Marine Corps in terms of size and, therefore, capability. There was a paucity of just about everything except will, determination to do with whatever we had, however little that may be. My rifle company probably never got above 110 in strength, and the grades were less than that which would have been authorized even for 110.

The quality of young men we had would be, for the most part, good enough to do the job in Korea—and one has to remember that, with special recognition of that—but probably not what they are today in terms of educational level. But they had some things that were pluses that they don’t have today. Now I guess this could be said about the earlier generation, if you can call it a generation, of World War II. For the most part, young people coming in the Service in those days were reasonably well disciplined in the homes and communities and schools from which they’d come. And, therefore, the job of improving upon that and maintaining it was easier. I don’t recall having many problems, though some of the people we had would have been today problems because they had been lacking in some of that earlier training.

And let me qualify that by saying that that’s less so today than it was a few years ago. I shouldn’t have said today because I’m impressed with today’s 1986 Marine Corps in terms of people. Almost absolutely just outstanding.

**Simmons:** I think you might describe your company a little bit more fully. You were on peacetime tables, which were just about half of what the wartime tables were, and instead of having three of everything, you had two of everything. You might just describe a little bit what your weapons were.

**Barrow:** Well, we had 60[mm] mortars. We had 2.36 rocket launchers. We had our light .30-caliber machine guns. The weapons company had the heavies, water-cooled [machine guns], and we had the M1 rifles. We were just spread thin, but we got in the field a lot. We trained a lot with what we had.

And one of the things I think that we were . . . maybe this is a consequence of a lack of funds to affect a lot of PCS [permanent change of station] orders on people, we had a lot of stability. At least, I think we had a lot of stability. There were less schools for people to go to. There were less demands for things like quotas for embassy guards and the Marines in posts and stations, Marine barracks, of which there were a great many in those days, more than there are now. They tended to remain stabilized in those places. So we had a lot of stability of people in our FMF unit at Camp Lejeune at that time.

The biggest problem was that we were just thin, and there was nothing in our company that I would characterize as a modernization over what we had in World War II, although there may have been. I just can't recollect it.

But when I joined the company and reported in to Colonel Granger, I remember that I did it by the book. After checking in and going through the executive officer kind of lightly, I went in to see Colonel Granger and presented myself in full uniform and stood at attention, handed him my orders. And I don't recollect his saying more than about six or eight words. While I stood at attention, he went through my orders looking for who else was being transferred on the same orders. Because, as you remember in those days, they had many names and yours was just one of them. They had a little arrow that they'd put out with your name and that was sort of the fundamentals of how you got your replicate endorsement on the orders. So you could look through several pages and see other people who were going places. He seemed to be busy doing that. And why I can remember a detail like that, I don't know, unless it relates to the fact that that ain't the way it ought to be done. I was in there less than five minutes.

I'm dwelling on this a little bit because it's sort of amusing. He thought it was sufficient to render a fitness report on me, though he left, himself, 10 days later and never saw me again,

because I left the next day to go to Little Creek, where my company was. So Colonel Granger's fitness report is one of those that cause the current crop of young officers to be very long. He says, under remarks, "Professional ability appears average. Brief period of observation precludes more complete markings." [Laughter] His personal observation was about five minutes, and he had no way of knowing what I did in the remaining nine days before he, himself, was transferred.

**Simmons:** I worked for him later. When I came back from Korea, he was commanding the Staging Regiment at [MCB] Camp Pendleton [California], and I was an S-3. A very strange man; he well deserved the name "Rough Cut." He died a year or so ago, you know.

**Barrow:** And the mean irony is that . . . maybe nemesis isn't the word, but that'll do. He was Chief Portillo's nemesis. And would you know that it started in China at the end of World War II up in Tientsin area, 1st Marine Division. Portillo worked for him. I've always thought Portillo was a fine officer and certainly a very, very warm, outgoing personality; in marked contrast to Granger, who was sort of taciturn, severe-looking person, and they just didn't hit it off. Well, when the juniors and seniors don't hit it off, the one who suffers is the junior. And so Chief had him in China and didn't get rave notices from Rough Cut. And then, here, I didn't know Granger at that time, but I knew Chief then. He served with him in the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines. And would you know that Chief did another tour through someplace, and he worked for him again. I think it was in something like the Infantry Training Regiment kind of thing that we had. So three tours. Small wonder that Portillo, you know, ultimately didn't get the promotion he might have gotten had he not had those tours.

When I left my meeting with Granger, as I said, the next day I was on my way to Little Creek, where A Company, 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, was involved (I relieved a fellow named Scarborough) involved in the troop-carry evaluation of the USS *Sealion* [SS 315]. We had two such submarines. The USS *Perch* [SS 176] was on the West Coast. The *Sealion* was on the East Coast, and they took just plain old ordinary rifle companies. And I think [Kenneth J.] "Kenny" Houghton had a similar experience on the West Coast with a company in the 1st Division; I could be wrong on that.

In any case, we were involved in it and had been before I got there and continued to be for a number of weeks. And it consisted of embarking on submarines with cargo especially packed to fit in the hatches of the submarine, embracing all the things one needs—ammunition, medical supplies, rations, water, etc. And we did exercises very rigidly described and evaluated

in terms of how long it would take to disgorge 80-some people out of a troop-carrier submarine. It was pretty crowded. I say 80-some but that's sort of the number I remember. The whole company wasn't on there, by any name.

This was an odd looking submarine because right aft of the conning tower, on that little bit of flat space that's there—the plane, I guess it's called—was a capsule that had doors, watertight doors, that opened up to the stern and it housed one LVT [landing vehicle, tracked], or amphibious tractor.

**Simmons:** Uh-huh.

**Barrow:** Now one LVT is not going to do you a lot of good, and if the submarine's value is largely in its stealth and silence, going somewhere and employing an LVT as a ship-to-shore movement is the antithesis of what the value of the submarine is all about. But that, too, is one of the things we did.

It would not completely surface. It would surface just enough that critical area where the LVT could sort of float out. And then it would be also loaded with supplies, etc. Most of our work was in rubber boats, and a fair amount of it was done at night. Even in Chesapeake Bay, where much of it was done in and around Little Creek, you could expect a few thrills in jumping off the deck of a surface submarine into a rubber boat that was not in the calmest of waters. And that was the only way to do it; there was no rope ladder. It isn't a very great distance, but you had to sort of jump over into it. It was a question as to which was the best position to be in—be one of the early jumpers and have others jump on top of you or be a late jumper and jump on top of a guy with his rifle pointed up in your direction. All of this being in the dark. But that was of some value, I suppose, to the Marine Corps to have it evaluated. It would have been something that the recon [reconnaissance] people might have learned something from it. They used submarines later on.

We didn't stay there very long. We returned to Camp Lejeune and back into sort of the routine we had down there. The big event, in terms of exercises was Operation Crossover. Do you remember that or were you there in Lejeune at that time?

**Simmons:** I came the next year, but I don't recall it.

**Barrow:** Well, it was in the winter of '49-'50. It would have been, probably, January. And we had everything in the 2d Marine Division scheduled for that exercise to be held at Camp Lejeune. And the reason the name Crossover [was] because it involved crossing over the inland waterway.

No one could recollect having done one exactly like we were going to do it, and the inland waterway was a major obstacle, particularly if the beach was defended between it and the sea, itself, which it was. So you had to land and overcome the resistance at the water line and just inland, and then you had to go on across the inland waterway, which is just a few hundred yards for the most part from your landing beach if you were in a boat.

A Company was selected as the separate maneuver element in my regiment, 2d Marines, so we were acting as a battalion. I had to report to the regimental commander, who was a colonel—Hayden was his first name, what was his last? Married Edie Munson, Steve Munson's widow. I know his name as well as I know my own; I can't think of it.

Anyway, we had to produce our own operation order. We sat in on the regimental meetings and did the things that a battalion would do in that sense. I particularly enjoyed that, and that's probably one occasion when I drew on my Amphibious Warfare School Junior Course experience. We had a complete, well-done op [operations] order. And this company scheduled the crossing of LVTs of the inland water.

(The hammering you hear in the background makes me feel at home, because all of the time I was at Headquarters Marine Corps you would hear somebody next door with a hammer.)

I remember the critique of Operation Crossover because Colonel Wilburt [S.] "Bigfoot" Brown had the artillery regiment. Colonel Homer [L.] Litzenberg [Jr.] had the 5th Marines. And I remember the critique for young officers with one another in that observation-type exercise.

**Simmons:** And you were with the 2d Marines at that time?

**Barrow:** That's a name I can't reach right now. A tall fellow, he and his wife were without children, but they had a Great Dane dog. And years later, not too many years ago, she passed away. Steve Munson passed away, and he married Steve's widow, Edie Munson. "Red" Hayden. His last name was Hayden. What am I thinking of, [Reynolds H.] Red Hayden.

**Simmons:** All right.

**Barrow:** I was thinking of someone else whose first name was Haven. But his name was Red Haven.

**Simmons:** [Major General] Franklin [A.] Hart was the CG of the division.

**Barrow:** Yes.

**Simmons:** Did you have any contact with him?



**Barrow:** Interestingly enough, yes. I was one of only a few bachelors at Camp Lejeune. In contrast to what I had at Quantico, where there were a great many concentrated in Harry Lee Hall, there weren't that many at Camp Lejeune. And so that status, "captain bachelor," made me somewhat qualified to be available for social things, and the Harts included me in several of these events to squire someone or to accompany [inaudible].

In any case, going back to what we said earlier, Camp Lejeune at that time, there were very few people, if any, that I can think of that lived off base. We were so short in numbers of officers that those big quarters that one thinks of now as field grade only and more senior at that, colonels, often had first lieutenants living in them and captains. And we really were a close-knit group. This may not relate an awful lot to the military profession as we think of it in terms of weapons and equipment and training and one thing or the other. But it should be told that this period was . . . one could characterize it as a period of a paucity of everything that would make us stronger and more capable militarily, but no paucity of spirit and will and comradeship, camaraderie. And part of that comes from the fact that we didn't have a lot of the other things. We were drawn closer together. We were not well paid, paid adequately, and so there was no quest for material things. I can't think of anyone that had two cars or anyone that had a boat or anyone who took an annual vacation to go skiing in Aspen, Colorado. We tended to make our own amusement, our own fun, in that little close-knit community out at Paradise Point, Camp Lejeune. And the fun included everyone from the commanding general on down, and you knew just about everyone.

And you didn't have the competing distraction, such as television. There was no television. If it was, it was in its infancy. And as I said, you didn't have the cars that one would jump into to go off on a mad dash someplace. As a matter of fact, I didn't have a car. And I think, in the rifle company, there may have been about three or four automobiles, which is sharply contrasted with what you'd find in the rifle company today.

The troops, obviously, all lived in squad bays. They felt close together too. The advantage there is the obvious one of the strong being able to help those that are less strong and better controlled by their leaders, the platoon sergeants, the platoon leaders. Easily the whole school, particularly in inclement weather, got people together for the word, as the saying is.

Anyway, no one should ever feel sorry for us who served in that period, be it the earlier experience in Quantico that I alluded to in Harry Lee Hall or the one in Camp Lejeune where we

did the best we could militarily training. We weren't able to pick up and go to Norway or some distant place to do something unusual, unlimited funds, and that sort of thing. And our social life would seem to be slim, but I remember those days with great good feeling.

**Simmons:** At the bachelor officers' quarters, you were in those brick buildings right by the club?

**Barrow:** Right. Paradise Point. They don't qualify . . . I lost my quarters allowance and didn't know you . . . you know, those days, you didn't question those kinds of things. That's where you stayed, you see. I could have stayed off, because I still would have been allowed my quarters allowance. You stayed there and you lost your quarters allowance. Had I said, "No, I want to live in town," which wouldn't have been unheard of, you would have gotten your quarters allowance to permit you to live in town, and you couldn't have afforded it otherwise, unless you had some outside income. So all these were kind of compelling factors, but there they were. I lived in the southernmost building, on the end toward the river. And one room with a white basin in it and the head down the hall, a shower, john.

Back to the question you asked about General Hart. The command being small, he, I suppose, had an opportunity to know or know of people down to the company level. In any case, sometime during the spring of 1950 it had been determined by the Headquarters Marine Corps that rifle marksmanship was once again . . . I say "once again" because I think we go through these cycles separate for some reason, and more often than not, it has to do with whatever the qualifying, requalifying program is, highest runs, etc.

And it had been run at that time by units earmarking their own people in a unit to be coaches in the preliminary marksmanship training that one would do around the barracks area at Hadnot Point. It wasn't just a random selection. You picked people that had been maybe expert marksmen, would be good instructors, and they were the coaches. And then you moved out to the rifle range for the actual week of firing. And those were your range coaches, they just continued to be your coaches. There were enough permanent personnel out there to run the range [and be] the range NCO and range officer and maybe a few coaches that would have to cover X number [and] 8 or 10 other coaches who were unit coaches. Well, that's not geared to make for the highest requalification standards, by any means.

So, apparently, up at the 2d Marine Division Headquarters they said, "We're going to. . ." either they were directed to do it or they deduced for themselves that it needed to be done

differently. “We’re going to do it differently. We’re going to put out there at the rifle range a detachment of people who are going to be sufficient in numbers to provide coaches for every guy that comes out to requalify. And we’re going to have an officer in charge of that elite detail and it’s going to be done right.”

So they were going to go around and find the best in the entire 2d Marine Division to be coaches, and they cast about looking for the officer in charge. And I’m told that General Hart had been on a trip and came back to the CP [command post], and among his briefings he was told, “This is all set to go, and we have picked an officer down at 2d Marines.” And he said, “Who is he?” They said, “Captain Barrow, who we think would do a good job.”

And I will forever be grateful to General Hart. I’m not suggesting he knew me that well, but he knew something. He is supposed to have said, “No, you’re not. No, you’re not. And for two reasons. One, he’s a super company commander, doing a good job, and we should leave him there. But I’m going to tell you something else, I happen to know that he’s a bachelor. And being a bachelor at Camp Lejeune, at Paradise Point, is bad enough. But how would you like to be a bachelor out at the rifle range?” [Laughter] Well, I didn’t have a car in those days and being a bachelor at the rifle range would, indeed, have been absolutely deadly. That’s real isolation. So I didn’t get that assignment.

The third point that he couldn’t have predicted was that in taking that action of taking my name off I then kept my company and went to Korea with them. Otherwise, just that little piece of knowledge, I could have been kept there and then locked in, like for maybe two or three years. “Don’t move him because he knows the ropes and so forth, and so forth.” And I may have missed a career altogether.

**Simmons:** I’m pleased you mentioned that transport submarine episode. I think, probably, most people have forgotten that in that post-World War II period it was not all that clear the helicopter was going to be the vehicle for the ship-to-shore movement, and there was a good deal of experimentation with transport submarines and, on the drawing boards, the flying LST [landing ship, tank] concept, and so forth.

You didn’t get a Caribbean or Mediterranean cruise?

**Barrow:** Did not.

**Simmons:** Did not. Then along came the North Korean invasion of South Korea on 25 June 1950. And in late July, early August, the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, was sent to Camp Pendleton

to become the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines. Your battalion commander by this time was who?

**Barrow:** [Lieutenant Colonel] Jack Hawkins. Hawkins relieved Granger so I had Lieutenant Colonel Jack [B.] Hawkins for, oh, 10 months, I guess.

**Barrow:** What do you remember of him at this time, that is before you went to Korea?

**Barrow:** I liked Jack Hawkins. He was very much a gentleman. He was obviously very smart. He wrote well in those things I remember reading what he wrote. He expressed himself well. As you know, or maybe you don't, he was a [U.S.] Naval Academy graduate. He had been captured, as I recollect, on Corregidor [Island in the Philippines] as a member of the 4th Marine Regiment coming out of China and somehow escaped and involved himself with the Philippine guerrillas for some period of time. He never talked much about that so I don't know any of the details on it. And then he, subsequently, I think participated in the Okinawa operation in the 6th Marine Division. I may be wrong on that.

**Simmons:** I know about his service in the Philippines. I don't know about . . .

**Barrow:** Anyway, I would characterize him as a kind of scholarly fellow, certainly not an outgoing, hail fellow [with a] well-met personality, but I liked him. And he was battalion commander in the 2d Marines. When we moved from Camp Lejeune to Camp Pendleton, he continued to be and was until November 1950.

And as I look back on this experience of leaving Camp Lejeune to go to the West Coast, it's worthy of a few comments. Never before, never after, and never again will I see the magnitude of flurry and activity that took place in Camp Lejeune, centered almost exclusively on the 2d Marine Division. Having said earlier how short we were of people and things, when the whistle blew it appeared that none of that really changed, but things started coming out of boxes and made available. And while the numbers of people didn't grow there—that really took place on the West Coast—there was just a whole flurry of activity, and we appeared to be bigger than what we were, in fact.

I remember those train movements. It seemed to go on day and night. Somehow all of the rolling stock, the passenger train and rolling stock, whatever it was that was needed was made available, and it rolled in there, along with other kinds of rolling stock to carry the things of war. And to go down to the industrial area, as I say, it seems like it was a 24-hour-a-day, round-the-clock operation. Almost at any time you could see trains back in there with 8 or 10 or 12 passenger cars and other kinds of cars loading up Marines to make what surely must be the last transcontinental troop train movement that we'll ever have.

**Simmons:** Did you remember a division parade that we had when General Hart turned the division over to [Major] General [Ray A.] Robinson? It was right before we left.

**Barrow:** Yep. I do remember that. We took the whole division and stuck them on that grand parade ground out there in front of the CG of the base. Of course, the CG, as I remember, was double hatted in those days. If you proposed that now, any number of experts would tell you it couldn't be done, but it was done then. And it was impressive in some respects, but it [in] no way resembled what the 2d Marine Division would look like if it fell out today.

**Simmons:** Base and . . .

**Barrow:** CG, division, and CG base. If you proposed to do that now, any number of experts would tell you it couldn't be done, but it was done then. And it was impressive in some respects; it [in] no way resembled what the 2d Marine Division would look like if it fell out today.

**Simmons:** No. In fact, I remember our ranks were filled with post-exchange personnel and everything else to get numbers out there.

**Barrow:** Yeah.

**Simmons:** And there was some consternation as to whether the track vehicles would get by the . . .

**Barrow:** Reviewing stand.

**Simmons:** . . . review without breaking down.

**Barrow:** I remember that so well. Well, I take it back about double hatted because general . . . he had been double hatted. And then what was the general's name who was from Richmond [Virginia], Guadalcanal-type, big fellow? Always liked him. Oh, gosh, I wish my memory was better. He took a personal interest in being there as a base commander to see off all these units, along with people from 2d Division. But I remember so well the band playing martial music as the troop train pulled out.

**Simmons:** Uh-huh.

**Barrow:** And my wife-to-be was there.

**Simmons:** How did you and Patty meet?

**Barrow:** Well, I'll tell this story, it's kind of interesting, I guess. As I've already indicated, I was a bachelor there and kind of fair game for anybody who had a visiting sister, an old college roommate, cousin, friend, or what have you. And there was a couple there; he was a lieutenant

colonel whose name was [Lieutenant Colonel] Francis Xavier Beamer and his wife, Mickie Beamer. Mickie Beamer was a daughter of a Navy captain doctor who retired and lived in San Diego and was quite successful in civilian life. And my wife, Patty, then Patricia Collins, lived with them for a while. She was the same age, more or less, of Mickie Beamer; so they were good friends.

My wife married a West Pointer, class of 1939 in 1943. They were married in 1943. And after the war, he transferred to the [U.S.] Air Force, and they were stationed at Davis-Monthan Field [Air Force Base] out in Tucson, Arizona. He was in charge of the first round-the-world [Boeing] B-29 [Superfortress] flight with three B-29s. He was a pilot, but he went from one aircraft to the other. At each stop, he'd change aircraft. In any case, the aircraft he was in crashed in the Middle East, and he was killed. And my wife-to-be was left with a little boy and pregnant. And a little girl was born five months after her father was killed. Anyway, she . . . in 1950, this all happened in 1948, and in 1950 she was living in Washington with two little children.

Mickie Beamer used to see me from time to time and would say, "Wait until I get my friend, Patty, down here. You'll stop this running around and being a gay, young bachelor." Well, I'd heard that line so many times that I'd gotten accustomed to it. But, lo and behold, one Friday afternoon as I made a pass through the club—and I have never been one who stayed around the bars, happy hour, and these things, but I would often pass through—I saw X. Beamer. He says, "You're just the man I'm looking for, captain. Mickie's longtime friend is here on a visit. Why don't you come over and meet her? Maybe we can find something to do for the evening." Well, Patty likes to tell this story that I told X. "Well, I'd like very much to, but I can't stay," which was a way of, she says, an old line that one uses if you're looking for an easy out if things don't work out like they should.

So I went over there, maybe 5:30 or so, and there were a couple of other people there. They had invited some other people in. I was standing sort of in the living room of those two-story quarters looking through the open double doors at the staircase, and Patty came down. And I turned to Mickie Beamer and said, "Now that's my kind of girl." Only seeing her, of course, physically.

Well, she only stayed down there a few weeks, and I saw her every night. And I might say that, though her husband was killed in 1948 and this was 1950, long about April—we met in April—she had not for the two years been dating or anything, just taking care of these two little children.

It was my first experience at really being in love. I was then 28 years old. And I found myself going to Washington one period, and she came back. And she was there when we got the call to go.

The day before we actually left . . . you must be mindful, readiness is a lot of things. It includes one's personal readiness to get up and move without all the encumbrances of a personal life, and I was not alone in being able to do this. But I didn't have a wife; I didn't have a car; I didn't have a dog; I didn't have anything. So when they said we're going to the West Coast, it was a question of, "I'm ready, let's go." So I could spend all of my time looking out to the many, many problems that are associated with a move, even though as I said, most people had as much as I did. They didn't have to get rid of a lot of things, stereo gear and all the things you do today, but the usual personal problems that come up in a rifle company. And so I could devote full time to that.

When I left, I remember taking some old herringbone utilities—what dungarees are sometimes called—over to Patty, who was staying with the Beamers, and asking her if she'd run them through the laundry. I've forgotten, two or three sets. She not only did that, but she starched them and ironed them. Funny how you form a sentimental attachment to something. I kept those, one pair of those, and put them on as we landed at Inchon. My touch with my future wife.

Anyway, she was there, along with a lot of other dependents, people who were dependents, to see us off. And I remember it so well that that was . . . our train had trouble. What do they call it, a hot box or something? The bearing overheats. In Augusta, Georgia. And a father who lived in Augusta who had a son in my company somehow learned about the fact that his son was there, or he was maybe guessing at it, and showed up and found out he was there and came. And we were there several hours, several hours' delay. And this young fellow who was, I gather, quite an athlete in high school in Georgia, in Augusta, Georgia, and his very soft-spoken father, name of Carter. It's kind of strange, Ed, how you remember some things so much better than others. I haven't displayed the greatest memory in this interview you're having with me, but I remember these kinds of things. As we were getting ready to leave, Mr. Carter gripped me by my arm as I . . . and he said, "Captain, you take care of my son." To which I gave the usual reply, "I will, sir." I don't know whether I can say I took care of him or didn't, but he didn't make it back. He was killed in the battle of [Hill] 1081. But I remember that, vaguely.

Anyway, we left Lejeune and arrived at Camp Pendleton at night, which you'd say would be the usual way, and we were dispatched out to San Onofre [California], right?

**Simmons:** Yes.

**Barrow:** And we were joined by almost equal numbers—don't push me—maybe 45 of one and 50 of the other of Reserves and post and station Marines. A fair number of the post and station Marines had some World War II experience. They would be, typically, sergeants. The Reserves, a few were from Tulsa, Oklahoma; Tucson, Arizona; and Los Angeles [California] of what ended up in my company. Now the unit from Tucson, at least the numbers I got, was something like 19, most of whom were Mexican-Americans. The Reserve state of training and readiness was, by any measure, poor. We really got people, period—not trained people, people. If they had had some World War II experience in those kind of Reserves, you're lucky, maybe.

Worse than that, a lot of these youngsters—and, particularly, I'm speaking of the ones from Tucson—had not even been to boot camp. This is surely not the way to go to war. But for those who complained about the inadequacies of training opportunities and getting yourself fully ready for the possible next conflict—we need to do more of this and more of that, etc.—all of which you can't quarrel with, should reflect on the fact that we have had Marine units that went off and acquitted themselves quite well who really weren't ready at all, seemingly. And how you account for that, that's just something I can't explain. I mean, their performance. But in any case, we had a number of these youngsters who really had never been to boot camp. This caused, when it finally came out that there were some people who they had signed up with the Reserve unit, and they were to go to boot camp when the money could be made available, etc.

Meanwhile, they're on the road. So when the units were called up, they got called up, and I'm sure they probably went on complaining, like, "You can't send me out; I haven't been to boot camp." They probably thought it was a big lark. So they came along. No one raised a question, really, until you were there; find out, sort of at the eleventh hour, that they had not even had boot camp, to say nothing of any active duty training. So, as I've said so often, they got some very valuable OJT (on the job training) from Inchon to Seoul [South Korea]. And about the time we moved around from the west coast of Korea to the east coast, you'd have a hard time distinguishing the fact that they hadn't been to boot camp or done these things.

Now the other problem that sort of complicated things was that these were Mexican-



American boys that I had. You could detect a certain eagerness about them, but a lot of them didn't speak very good English. So I had to make a decision. What do I do? Break them up and put six here and six there and six there? There were about 19 of them, 18 or 19. And I said, "You know, if we do that and you're in combat, they'll always be visiting one another or worrying about their friends who were in another platoon." I said, "Why don't we keep them all together?" And so they were kept together and put in the 3d Platoon, which was really forming, itself. And so Jack Swords had the 3d Platoon. He ended up with these fellows. And, I will tell you, they were good Marines and they did a good job, even though some of them had not been through boot camp.

We were there long enough to zero our weapons. Each gunner had a 3.5[-inch] newly issued rocket launcher, fired one round for familiarization. We spent a lot of time on administration, sorting out people who had terrible records, emergency data forms, and the insurance and 101 things and little time to think about where are we going and what are we going to do when we get there; even little time to think too much about who is the regimental commander. I'd heard of [Colonel Lewis B.] "Chesty" Puller, but, quite frankly, a lot of what one knows today about Chesty Puller has emerged and grown after his death. In those days, I don't think any of us young officers who knew him had any sense of awe about him or had any great eagerness to meet him or anything else.

We not only joined these post and station Marines and Reserves, but out of all kinds of places we had staff NCOs. They began joining us at Camp Lejeune before we made the trip across. Some of them maybe pulled back from Fleet Assistance Program down at [inaudible] base.

But what I'm saying is, Ed, and I'm sure it was the experience in your battalion, as well, my company went from that tremendous shortage of people to an overage. I think our T/O [table of organization] was something like 210. I probably had about 220. And we had redundancies. We had backups in every staff NCO position. I had a first sergeant, and then I had another fellow who was a first sergeant who sort of backed him up. I had a company gunnery sergeant, and I had an assistant company gunnery sergeant. I had tech sergeants, as we called them then. Did you call them that then?

**Simmons:** Still, I think so.

**Barrow:** Which is one rank higher than required for a platoon sergeant. The platoon sergeant was a staff sergeant or assistant platoon sergeant. And you still had platoon guides. Well, that's

pretty good stuff. And they had this World War II experience so you had a real strong . . .

**Simmons:** I remember the NCOs as being very good quality.

**Barrow:** Yes.

**Simmons:** I think that was really . . .

**Barrow:** That's why we could get away with . . .

**Simmons:** That's right.

**Barrow:** . . . having not sent them to boot camp and add on, as well. And that probably wasn't more than a handful—8 or 10 or something—but they were there. So you had that strength and you had these officers—[Colonel Donald W.] “Don” Fuller, [Second Lieutenant Donald R.] “Don” Jones, Jack Swords, [Captain] John [C.] McClelland [Jr.], in my case, that were World War II types. [First Lieutenant] John [E.] Rich was my XO, had been at Camp Lejeune. One thing about the Lejeune group is that our numbers were doubled in Camp Pendleton, but the basic organization that we took to Camp Pendleton was made up of people who all knew one another very well—the officers and the staff NCOs that we had and the NCOs and the young Marines.

Well, anyway, we were there about a week, weren't we, Ed?

**Simmons:** About 10 days.

**Barrow:** And I remember more things to do with administration than I do anything else—conditioning hikes.

**Simmons:** Exactly.

**Barrow:** That sort of thing was done. But there was no training as such, other than getting a zero in on our weapons, some familiarization firing.

**Simmons:** I think the big point here is that we converted from peacetime tables of organization to wartime in about 10 days. And this, as you said, involved more than doubling the number of personnel and organizing those third elements—the third platoon, the third squad, the third section, and so on. It worked well.

The Reserves that I got in my company, I think, were perhaps a little better quality than you got. I got all from San Francisco. And they were, once they got their faces dirty, they were indistinguishable from the regular Marines. And the NCOs were superlative.

But the bottom-line question is do you favor or would you favor, based on this experience, the use of peacetime and wartime tables of organization as a structure or manning device?

**Barrow:** Oh, no. No. I'd rather see units, I think the times are different. I think that Korea . . . It depends on how far away you're going and what the circumstances are, but the general proposition, I think, there was a certain deliberateness in even getting there to make that critical deadline of 15 September 1950, so you could sort of flesh out these units and get yourself ready to do it.

But I think in future conflicts the time and space factors are going to be shortened. The means of transportation are different. You take these MPS [maritime prepositioning ships] concepts, the maritime prepositioned ship business, those units can be gone within 24 or 48 hours. There's no time to take some peacetime organization that you've just got the bones and start hanging the meat and muscle on them. There are, obviously, units that could be coming along in subsequent echelons that could be fleshed out. But to say that they would be acceptable for frontline combat . . . well, not just combat but those units that are going to go early, like the three brigades and the MPSs are going to be earmarked for amphibious lift early. I just don't think we could do that. Now the Army is doing it with the [inaudible] brigade. And I daresay, if you squeeze them hard enough, you'd find some of them willing to say that it's less than satisfactory.

**Simmons:** You've mentioned your battalion commander and you've mentioned your company officers. Who were some of the other officers who were in the battalion, the other company commanders?

**Barrow:** Well, [Major William L.] "Bill" Bates [Jr.] was the Weapons Company commander. Eric [inaudible], [Major David W.] "Bill" Bridges—some people called him Dave Bridges—a University of Florida graduate. I think Bill was Georgia or Georgia Tech. He was from down there somewhere in Atlanta, [Georgia,] Bill Bates. Bill Bridges was from Florida. He went to University of Florida. I think he was a contemporary of yours.

**Simmons:** Yes, both of them were.

**Barrow:** Very capable officer and a very pleasant individual. I don't think I ever saw him angry. I never saw him rude with anyone. I never saw him that he wasn't true, calm, and capable. [Major] John [F.] Coffey was the S-4. His assistant was a captain, the name of Hutchinson.

**Simmons:** [Captain Wesley C.] "Wes" Noren.

**Barrow:** Wes Noren was the H&S [Headquarters and Service] Company commander, and I'm

very fond of Wes Noren. He kind of got in there late and that's what he ended up getting. And he was, obviously, chomping at the bit to get a rifle company.

The rifle company commanders were a fellow named [Captain Richard L.] "Dick" Bland had Bravo Company. And I don't really . . . didn't know him before and never got to know him too well in the battalion, in Korea. And I don't know what happened to him. That's a fact. I don't put any meaning in that.

The C Company commander was [Captain Robert P.] "Bob" Wray. Do you know Bob Wray?

**Simmons:** Yes.

**Barrow:** He was a World War II aviator. A tall, straight, sort of slender, very slender fellow, good officer. We were together from then until the time I left Korea. He stayed on a little bit after I did.

**Simmons:** I always thought you had a fine group of officers in that battalion.

**Barrow:** Yes. And then, of course, the regimental commander was Chesty Puller, and the XO was a fellow named [Lieutenant Colonel Robert W.] "Bob" Rickert, who is now retired and lives down in Beaufort, South Carolina.

**Simmons:** Did you feel the impact of Chesty Puller's personality during this loading out and movement to Japan? Or even upon your arrival in Japan? What was your first exposure to Chesty Puller?

**Barrow:** To answer your first question, I didn't feel any impact, really. I think one of the values that one has as he becomes more senior, in having had junior command responsibility, is to reflect on it once in awhile and realize that that is their world, and they're not in your world. You've got to get in their world. You have to enter that group top down.

Come to commands, I was running around trying to get policy and what have you out of the regimental commander. They [company commanders] live in a world all of their own, their own people, their own . . . they become very, almost insulated, from influences beyond other than, perhaps, being very competitive with the other rifle companies and being, obviously, mindful that there's a battalion. But by the time it gets to be a regiment . . .

That changed after we got in Korea, my relationship, if you want to call it that, with Colonel Puller.

**Simmons:** We'll get to that later.

**Barrow:** But no, I didn't feel anything. The first time I saw him was aboard ship. He was on the same ship [as me]. It was only then that people sort of wanted to listen to him talk, reminisce, or tell sea stories late in the evening.

**Simmons:** I remember more trepidation than enthusiasm . . .

**Barrow:** Yes.

**Simmons:** . . . amongst many who'd tell you tales of Peleliu [Palau].

**Barrow:** Yes, exactly. There were people who said, "My God, this guy has never taken a unit to war or a situation where there [were] difficult situation with high casualties," and so forth, so those people who made studies about that . . .

**Simmons:** I think we were all on the same ship. I think we were all in the USNS [*General Simon B.*] *Buckner* [T-AP 123] on the way out there, that big 20,000-ton . . .

**Barrow:** No. Wait a minute, I was on the USS *Noble* [APA 218].

**Simmons:** *Noble*? Okay.

**Barrow:** Yeah.

**Simmons:** *Noble*. I was on the *Buckner*.

**Barrow:** Yeah. And Puller was on the *Noble*.

**Simmons:** *Noble*, okay. I'm mixed up on that. You arrived in Japan. What happened to your battalion and your company after you arrived in Japan?

**Barrow:** We were admin loaded out of San Diego, administratively loaded, which means do it the most economically; pile everything in there to make it fit there. And we weren't sure what we were going to do on the other end, anyway, or what mode of transportation we were going to do it in. We were going to Japan.

So we arrived at Kobe, Japan, in the USS *Noble*, and we unloaded all of this. And by then, sometime during this unloading process, we knew we were going to be going to Inchon on the *Noble*.

**Simmons:** Did you know it that soon?

**Barrow:** Well, I say it was that soon, sometime during this unloading process. It was all put on the dock, taken off the *Noble*. And while it's there, preliminary to then combat loading it back on the *Noble*, we had a typhoon. Were you there for the typhoon?

**Simmons:** Yes. We were up at Otsu [Japan], but I remember the typhoon.

**Barrow:** And the typhoon did tremendous water damage to the things, even though all kinds of

precautions had been taken because it had been taken out, put out on the dock, all spread out. The typhoon is not just a normal rainfall.

And I remember the USS *Noble* had not only the big tugs that were available to kind of hold it to the pier, but they put about three LCMs [landing crafts, mechanical] in the water. They got them somewhere and they put their bows on the starboard side of the *Noble* that was tied up on the port side, as I recall, and just kept full speed ahead pushing her. That's how severe the typhoon was. In other words, she was going to break her moorings. A touchy situation.

But we were there several days. I don't remember how many. And we did, in fact, combat load the *Noble* and make our movement to the objective area, Inchon.

**Simmons:** You went to the objective area in the *Noble*?

**Barrow:** Yes.

**Simmons:** Now we're coming to the landing at Inchon, itself. Can you take me along sort of step-by-step with your company as you go ashore?

**Barrow:** Well, we were the reserve battalion and we were to land on Blue Beach, which is the southernmost beach, and we were to land out of LCVPs [landing crafts, vehicle and personnel]. We did everything by the book in terms of preparing landing plans, boat assignment tables, all the things that one would do for an amphibious operation.

I remember space was very difficult to come by. I remember addressing my company twice in the hours before Inchon, once on deck, and that wasn't all of them. But most of it was done down on the mess deck where I remember standing on a mess hall bench and talking to them about what they were expected to do.

We went in and by then it was getting dark. You know, it was getting to . . . what was H-hour, like 1600 or something?

**Simmons:** At least. Maybe later than that.

**Barrow:** Yeah.

**Simmons:** Maybe 1700.

**Barrow:** So we had the Reserve unit going in, and it was getting dark. And there was the usual confusion brought about by the fires, naval gun firing, and so forth delivered on Inchon. It was not a clean, very distinguishable kind of a beach anyway, seawalls, you know, and it had a lot of salt flats: geometric trapezoids and squares and rectangles of things sticking out in the water that were salt flats.

So we go in and I remember . . . well, it didn't portend to be life threatening, but you still don't go in like you're going to a picnic in the Reserves. We had a [Navy] wave commander who was not in my boat, where he should have been—I should have been in his boat, I guess—who was hell and determined to take us to the wrong spot, as I could see it, and there was no dissuading him. So the entire wave that I was in just went up to a place that nobody had ever been to or would ever go to again. It was one of these salt flats. [Laughter] And the eagerness of all of our troops was such that everybody piled off. The ramps were kind of . . . some of them were down, some of them half down. It was not a beach; it was one of those little things.

**Simmons:** Right.

**Barrow:** And I remember getting off quickly as I could to run up and down that little formation of boats and tell them to get back in the boats. "Get back in, back in." I had help from the usual people, gunnery sergeants and one thing or other. And getting ahold of that Navy officer and saying, "You have put us in the wrong place. This is where we back off of this, and then we're going to go this way, and you will see where the evidence of those who preceded us, and that's where we're going." Anyway, that was the subject of some fun making. People like Bill Bridges and others said that—making fun of us landing in the wrong place. And my reply was, "I'm simply doing what I was taught to do in school and which all the publications say we're supposed to do, [which] is conduct a rehearsal before the landing." [Laughter]

By the time we got ourselves ashore and kind of organized . . .

**Simmons:** It must have been well after dark.

**Barrow:** It was after dark. It was an eerie experience because there were fires, and there was a lot of firing and so there was smoke, and there was flame, and there were shadows. It's in a built-up area. A lot of uncertainties, you didn't feel at all comfortable that you knew where everyone was and you had some sort of cohesiveness and definition of your disposition of people. But nothing happened during the night.

And then we followed the orders we had which put us as the southernmost unit of the 1st Marine Division going, generally, in an easterly direction. I don't recall that there was anyone south of us.

**Simmons:** We had one platoon that was on that little hook. Remember how there was a little hook of land that came off into the beach?

**Barrow:** Yes. Well, I'm talking about, now, Inchon toward Yeongdeungpo, toward Seoul.

**Simmons:** You mean when we formed up to move out, you mean?

**Barrow:** Yes. As I recall, and not only was there no one south of us but as typical of so many movements to contact or whatever one chooses to call them, my unit was by itself. There wasn't anyone. I'm not saying that Bravo or Charlie, whichever company, wasn't there, but they were not tied in with me. And we were going, more or less, in a proscribed route in a kind of a movement-to-contact formation. But there wasn't anybody I could feel on the right or feel on the left or had any connection with. And we had no contact.

I think, as I recollect, it was the next day that we didn't have any, either. And we had orders late in that day. I've had so many orders that have come to me in the late afternoon in my career, as I'm sure you've had in yours, that could have been, in my judgment, given in a more timely fashion. But late afternoon we were given orders to get aboard trucks. And we were going to make a lateral move. Again, as far as I could see, it was A Company. It could have been all folks doing this, but this is what I remember: a lateral move from the extreme right flank of the division to the extreme left flank, aboard the trucks. All kinds of roads. Who the guys were, I don't know, but they did a masterful job of weaving us through all the traffic, plus limited road nets. They put us, finally, up there just south of the Han River.

We got out. No one, up until then, knew what we were to do, and I got my orders then. I saw Hawkins and Bridges for the first time in a couple days, really. And they said, "A Company will go to Hill 118, which is almost due east of here and not too far away from the Han River. And it's the most prominent piece of ground there in that little terrain complex. And you relieve a rifle company from the 5th Marine Regiment." As it turned out, commanded by [Captain Francis I.] "Ike" Fenton [Jr.], son of old Colonel [Francis I.] Fenton, my battalion colonel. "And C Company will relieve a rifle company on Hills 80 and 85."

**Simmons:** Right.

**Barrow:** And it is now just about dark. I should sometime get the map out and plot where I think we were when we received the orders. It's easy enough to find 118. It's some distance. Three miles?

Now, I guess, from time to time, Ed, as we talked it wouldn't be inappropriate for me to throw in a little philosophy, trying to analyze my own personality or even professionalism. I'm laying no claim to being any superior officer, but I will underscore some strengths that I think I possessed then and throughout my career.



I have long believed that once a decision is made to do something, and you have a clear understanding of it, and you have done all you can preliminary to doing it to make it easy to do as possible—e.g., supporting arms, etc.—then move out. The quickness of execution is . . . I don't mean you do it without regard to security and that sort of thing, or surprise. But quick execution; move out. Rapidity of movement is almost like another principle of war.

So when I knew what I was supposed to do and knew where it was and could discern that it was a pretty good distance—and I'm not too far off, according to this scale here, it had to be about two-and-a-half, three miles—we took off at high port for [Hill] 118. It was probably the most rigorous forced march that I'd ever [inaudible] that company, that half of us that had been in Lejeune never had that. Well, I may have pushed them a few times because I used to like to do that sort of thing, particularly coming in off a training exercise. You'd say, "All right, the quicker we get back, the quicker we clean our weapons and go on liberty." So we'd kind of push it. But this company, in its entirety, certainly didn't have this opportunity [inaudible]. But I put it to them.

The NCOs were furious, because they sort of took up the stragglers. I remember some of them, and I remember the sergeant I had in machine guns whose name was Harry Keys, now dead from cancer; what a fiery super person he was. He must have had about three packs of stragglers and kicking them in the butt to make them keep up.

We put a hump on, and it soon became apparent that we were way ahead of anyone else and that we were closing on 118. I got on the radio and talked to "Dave" Bridges and said, "Since 80 and 85 are more distant and I'm in the lead, and they're chomping at the bit to be relieved off of those two complexes, shouldn't I continue on and take 80 [and] 85?" The answer was, "No. You go to 118."

So we got to the base of 118, which had the [inaudible]. The particular part of the base that I got to was a finger running down from the topographical crest, which is where the company CP was that I was relieving. So I took that finger right on up there, the whole company right behind me, and met Ike Fenton, who was very impatient. You know, "Where have you been?" I said, "Don't give me that. No one could have gotten here quicker. I don't know how long you've been expecting us, but we got here as quickly as we could." He said, "Well, I've got to move, because we're getting ready to cross the Han River. That's why you're relieving us. Now how about the outfit that's going to relieve over there?"

They were on the phone, on the radio, with the company, and I think it was the men who was [were] on 80, 85. Then when he saw I was right . . . in other words, he had one set of orders that said, “Move out because you’re going to be in an assembly area preliminary to crossing the Han River. On the other hand, you will also be relieved.” That’s mutually inconsistent. So he’s chomping at the bit for Charlie Company to come and relieve him. So I made another appeal since Charlie Company was nowhere in sight or sound. And they said, “No.” So the company on Hill 80, 85 pulled off. He executed his orders while failing to do something he should do. If he was going to do one, he couldn’t do the other if they weren’t there, obviously. And so 80, 85 was abandoned after having been taken with some effort, as I recall, by the 5th Marines that day. Ike Fenton gets livid about this subject anytime it comes up.

I reckon it must have been nine o’clock at night before Charlie Company got within sound of us, and he got permission since it was so dark and so difficult to ascertain where he was, and no guides from the relieved units—unit being relieved to take him in, one way of doing it, at least that’s what he waited for. He got permission to tie in at the base of 118 with A Company, which was below the topographical crest but [inaudible]. It was sort of an all-around attempt for the emphasis toward the Han and Yeongdeungpo to the east, northeast, toward 80, 85 at any rate. And they gave him permission, so he stayed there for the night.

Along about four o’clock the next morning, more or less four o’clock before daybreak, all hell broke loose on 80, 85. A North Korean attacking unit (because it was critical terrain) was attacking what they thought were held positions, and to their pleasant surprise, there was nobody there. So you can imagine the feeling we had to see what had happened simply due to a lack of doing the right thing. I’ve never understood that. I never talked to Dave Bridges about it. The poor fellow’s dead now. Whether he asked Hawkins and Hawkins said no or just did it on his own, or what.

Anyway, the next day, the next morning, Charlie Company is given the mission of attacking 80 and 85 to be taken for the second time, and we were to give them what support we could—long-range fire and supporting arms. It was during that period that a couple of tragedies occurred that I just never . . . I just couldn’t forget. The Kimpo-Yeongdeungpo Road was presumed to be in friendly hands by some elements of the division, like artillery survey elements people—you know, the kinds of folks who kind of go off independently looking for things. So while we were on 118, here come Marines. One vehicle, in particular, I remember going toward that bridge that crossed a little river just to the north of Hill 80, 85.

(What happened to all the good maps we were just looking at there? We got the same volume?)

**Simmons:** Oh, yeah.

**Barrow:** Anyway, we were helpless. The best we could do was to fire long-range machine gun fire across their bow, hoping to deter them. So we did that, we fired, and they could have seen the live rounds, plus the tracer rounds. But they went right on and we could witness their capture. They stopped at the bridge, which was blown out, and . . . I have it right here. You see, 80 and 85 command that bridge.

**Simmons:** Yes, uh-huh.

**Barrow:** And had anyone been on it . . . as a matter of fact, the 5th Marines the day before had secured it and 80, 85. So these people did not know that the bridge and 80, 85 had been abandoned by the 5th Marines under orders during the night and not relieved. So whomever they were, coming down this road, thought they could go until they ran into friendly troops. And these were enemy troops at the bridge. I remember them being taken prisoner, hands up.

**Simmons:** Really?

**Barrow:** You could see it all. And one of the books tells you who it is.

**Simmons:** For the record, we're looking at pages 206 and 207 of volume II of the official history of *U.S. Marine Operations in Korea*.

**Barrow:** That was the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, who were in there. We're talking about the morning of 20 September. And the book, here on page 213, describes it quite accurately, that they thought they were assaulting . . . the enemy thought they were assaulting occupied defensive positions when, in fact, it wasn't.

While this business was going on about the people moving against, moving down the road, and being taken prisoner, actions were underway for Charlie Company to retake 80 and 85. It was a pretty . . . they left the base of 118. They took 80 and then they took 85, and with some difficulty. It was a tough fight. Probably tougher, maybe, than the 5th Marines had had the day before.

The people that were fired at by us who couldn't be turned around was the signal battalion who was stringing wire in the 1st Marine zone and had gotten out ahead of themselves somehow, at the Kalchon Bridge that I was talking about. And, as the book says here, we watched helplessly as they were taken prisoner.

Anyway, the action on Hills 80 and 85 was the one in which young [Second] Lieutenant Henry [A.] “Hank” Commiskey received his Congressional Medal of Honor. He’s not a [inaudible].

Well, what can you say? It was a well-executed operation to retake 80 and 85 but . . .

**Simmons:** It shouldn’t have been left empty.

**Barrow:** It shouldn’t have been left there.

**Simmons:** And I remember that we had a [inaudible]. We were sitting on Lookout Hill just waiting. We could hear and see some of this to our left, and we could look across into Yeongdeungpo, and we could see the enemy scattering around in Yeongdeungpo, itself. But, technically, we had passed in reserve by that time since we had no role to play.

**Barrow:** Well, so much for the day of the twentieth.

**Simmons:** I remember very well the 21st of September. We had come down off the hill and we had moved on up against the dike. There were, if you’ll recall, two very well-defined dikes that . . .

**Barrow:** Uh-huh.

**Simmons:** . . . that channeled the Kalchon River. And while we were in reserve, we were still out in front of everybody else. And then, in late afternoon, your company came down from Hill 118 and across the dry paddy toward the dike. And I actually remember thinking that crossing the paddy there must have been very much like crossing the wheat fields at Belleau Wood [France, during World War I]. I remember very well coming across there deployed in a lot of skirmishes. And we had quite a firefight across the river, ourselves.

**Barrow:** This was the day of the twenty-first and we got our orders to attack into Yeongdeungpo. And [inaudible] saw us in that skirmishing formation and dry rice paddies. This is described by some who saw it as sort of by the book.

**Simmons:** Uh-huh.

**Barrow:** We were well cleared out, and we got to the dike of the Kalchon River. He repeated that there surely must [be] something awaiting us on the other side, so we deployed very carefully—advanced very carefully, I should say—over the dike. Then you had to go over the next set of dikes, obviously, sort of levees, dikes, and it was even more eerie because you were then right on the outskirts of the city of Yeongdeungpo and there was nothing, nothing

happening. And so we continued. We were well in the city before contact began to be made.

I think, as I look back on it, we just happened to experience one of those rare fortunes of war in which there was a momentary opportunity for a unit to advance to do something that was in the best interests of the effort overall, and they were able to do it. Again, I'm not forgetting that I've always practiced the idea that [inaudible phrase], but we moved prudently but quickly into Yeongdeungpo, talking to battalion all the time, [and] them knowing that we were, in fact, having this success, so this could continue.

After contacts were made, the 1st Platoon under Bill McCullen [?], for example, surprised a formation of North Koreans who thought they were secure and safe from even being seen in the town and on one of the streets sort of coming along in formation. They [the Marines] fired on them [the North Koreans], and they, of course, dispersed and fired back. So there was a little bit of contact here and a little there. The next thing you know, as we continued our advance, we'd end up at an area where a road junction of where the Incheon-Yeongdeungpo (and onto the bridge across the Han River into Seoul) the Incheon-Seoul Road crossed with the Kimpo-Seoul Road, which occurred on the easternmost part of the town of Yeongdeungpo.

The area between where that elevated road junction is located and the Han River was a very flat, unpopulated farm area that was subject to river overflow. That's why this was a dike. This was a dike to help protect the city of Yeongdeungpo from over flooding from the Han River. It also served as a roadbed for the Kimpo-Seoul Road. And a road junction with the Incheon-Seoul Road just happened to meet there on top of this road there. And that's where we ended up.

Well, we immediately recognized that we had a valuable piece of real estate—the road junction. It commanded—surprisingly, the elevation was such—the dike that it commanded most of the ground between there and the Han River, which, among other things, also had a little airstrip on it. And, it was a very defensible piece of ground. I would liken it to a sausage, a hotdog kind of sausage. It was elongated and raised. It being a dike that was created by man-moved earth, it was pretty good digging. It wasn't like hard packed soil some place. So we adopted this immediately as our defensive position.

Marines were digging in on the shoulders and just below the shoulders, staggered formation, on this elongated dike with machine guns set up at each end, firing sort of minimal enfilade of cross fire—one on the right and one on the left. Both fired to some extent in an

enfilade fashion, so you had the macadam road covered. We had, by then, picked up quite a large number of prisoners and also an odd interpreter or two. They always seemed to just appear out of nowhere. I don't know why we were as trusting of them as we were. I don't know anyone who had a bad experience with them, but you did have them. And we had our wounded, which we had acquired some wounded by then. All of those were put on the east side of the dike. The dike sort of extended out a little bit down at the base to incorporate the prisoners and the wounded. We also put our mortars down there; 3.5[-inch rocket launchers] were sort of at a couple key areas looking down at what might be called [the] anticipated route that armor might take.

Within [a] stone's throw of the southern extremity of this sausage-shaped defensive position was a several story—three- or four-, maybe even five-story—building that had a fair amount of medical supplies that had been taken from U.S. Army units earlier. I mean the Koreans, but they were U.S. Army medical supplies. Some of that was sort of taken over and distributed among the corpsmen, not that they were having any problems with that.

I want to convey this thought that while we were signally in a very precarious position, and surely that was the attitude back in Seoul and Inchon of that regiment, that battalion, "My God, they're out there and that's a lost company." We never felt that because of our disposition, defensive position, on that dike. We felt strong. And indeed, one of my worries was that the battalion or regiment, thinking that we were in a serious situation, would attempt some sort of emergency relief, which would be worse, potentially worse—some unit moving at night to relieve some unit that they thought was lost—than anything that might happen to us. So I tried to convey that assurance that I had, good feeling that I had, to Bill Bridges.

I remember once, during all of this, he asked me to be as precise as possible as to where we were. I think at the time he was on [Hills] 80 and 85 and could see much of Yeongdeungpo. We were still moving around. Little patrols were going out from our perimeter, which was being formed. It wasn't just everybody got in there and started digging. We had security out beyond us. One of them had had a little skirmish and threw a hand grenade that caused an enormous explosion. Do you remember seeing that?

**Simmons:** I can't say.

**Barrow:** It was a big cache of ammunition, as I recall, hidden under a coal pile. Coal was part of the camouflage. And to keep protecting it, it brought in five of our people and it ended up a grenade or something was thrown, and it blew up. I remember saying to Dave Bridges, since it

was within a couple hundred yards of where I was actually standing, I said, “Do you see that atomic bomb?” Because it had a mushroom-like cloud to it. He said, “Yeah, sure do.” I said, “Well, we are just north of that.”

Now we were still getting settled in but had pretty well determined our disposition when we heard this clamor and clatter of what was unmistakably some kind of tank, and it didn’t sound like one of ours. It turned out that there were five R-6s/T-34 [medium tanks]. I don’t think anybody’s memory is as accurate as the fact on what happened, but they were coming from the same direction we had come. They were on the Inchon-Yeongdeungpo Road. Where they had materialized from, I don’t know, from the west part of Yeongdeungpo, or had they moved around and come in what they thought was behind us, or what? But they came to attack us, unaccompanied by infantry.

Just before that road, the Inchon-Yeongdeungpo Road joins with the Kimpo-Yeongdeungpo; it has to rise up to do that. The Kimpo road is on a dike. They turned off of that road at that point, between the multistory building and our protected position. I would say, without fear of being wrong by more than a yard or two, that they were probably 25 or 30 yards away from the nearest man down at the base of the hill. They were in line. They turned and stopped, and they formed their guns all to the right and fired as they continued to move.

I’ll never forget one of the most courageous acts that I witnessed was those brave young Marines with the 3.5[-inch rocket launchers] who fired no more than one round and then should be there [an] expectation that when they fired the next one, the d——n guys are going to be so far away that you might have two or three goes at him before, you know. . . .

**Simmons:** Uh-huh.

**Barrow:** In this case, at my direction, they got right up on top of that macadam road, and they were literally firing within . . . from that distance, maybe 40 or 50 yards, and they were firing kind of clumsy, kind of down. There were hits, and there probably were misses. They were fired at every time they made a pass, and they made several passes. They went past us, and there was one that was a casualty that was left there. We think another one became a casualty after he passed us, probably limping. [He] reversed, came back, turned around, went back.

I would not . . . I don’t care what the book says or anything else. I was there on top of the macadam road looking at all of this, and I couldn’t have told you an hour after the battle any better than I can tell you now what damage was done, in what order, or anything else. But I do

know that we hit tanks. We knocked some out. We crippled some. And they did not succeed in doing any harm to us. That's kind of the sum and substance of that.

One round . . . they were firing (good luck for us), they were firing armor-piercing ammunition, and one round of it (otherwise, they wouldn't have had any harm) hit at the base of one of these sloping foxholes at point-blank range. It happened to be occupied by a tech sergeant of 1st Platoon named George Gordon—a super Marine, now retired in Beaufort, South Carolina. It knocked him out. I don't know what else it may have done to him, but it was the concussion and not the explosion. It wasn't the explosion. And he, subsequently, the next day, of course, was evacuated and never came back to us. I'm not sure what all happened there.

Anyway, no sooner had we finished with this little minitank battle that we had, which we felt pretty good about, then we started to receive these infantry attacks—most from the north and the northwest against the northernmost end of the sausage. And they were all repulsed. I was proud to say my people didn't lose their fire discipline and go bananas and shoot randomly and into the town, because the buildings—at that point, other than the road itself and the flats east of the road—the buildings came up close. So you had the threat of covered routes by the enemy right up to within maybe 50 yards of us. So we continued to get these probing and more kinds of attacks.

There were several things that happened. I think some of the histories have covered this. One of our prisoners escaped, and that's understandable; it was a kind of a loose arrangement, anyway. As he escaped and ran in the direction of the enemy and announced who he was, I guess, he was yelling something else. The interpreter with us said that he said, “Don't attack, they're too strong,” telling his Korean soldier friends. But they did, although that may have had some effect.

Now I'll relate my firsthand observation that, without question, is close to the facts of it. Down on that northernmost end was a brave, young man named [Corporal] Billy [D.] Webb from Tulsa, Oklahoma. If you were searching around the Marine Corps looking for a picture poster of a Marine, you would say, “Bring him over here. I want to take his picture.” He stood straight. He was handsome, muscular, not real tall, maybe six feet, 5'11”, six feet. He was Reserve brought up to active duty. He had fire in his eyes, and you could see it. I was attracted to him the very first time I saw him in Camp Pendleton. Just alert, super.

He reckoned correctly that there was a leader who, preliminary vis-à-vis attack, fired up



his unit [and] pressed the next one, for he could hear out there beyond the buildings, somewhere in that maze of buildings and what not, this voice. He didn't know what he was saying, but he was . . . he sounded like he was rallying the troops. After he harangued and carried on, there would be a pause and then here comes the attack.

So Billy Webb said to his foxhole buddies—I think there were two of them in the immediate vicinity, three of them; he was sharing one with one and then two next to him—“I'm going to get him. You cover me and, for God's sake, don't shoot me when I come back.” After one of these attacks, about the third one I reckon it was or the fourth, he crawled out in the dark, flickering flames of nearby fires and confusion of smoke and all the stuff that goes with it, and worked his way through this labyrinth of buildings and alleys. He came upon this kind of open area, not a square in the town, but sort of an open area where this guy was doing exactly what he thought he was doing, haranguing the troops preliminary to the next attack. He did what he said he would do. He shot him and returned.

The combination of the escaped prisoner saying what he did and shooting that leader, we ended up with something like five attacks, but no more. A major concern of ours was that we would run out of ammunition, and had they continued to attack even if it had been feints that would have caused us to expend some amount of ammunition, we would have indeed run out. So that is another fortune of war.

These were serious attacks because the next morning . . . some of them killed before we went into our defensive position; they were there from late afternoon. Some of them killed by supporting arms. We won't lay claim to this having been a number that were hanging into our foxholes in a last desperate attack. But there were some 210 enemy within counting distance of where we were on that site that night. That was the action which every combat unit that, I felt, underwent conflict successfully had as a kind of unifying experience.

Yeongdeungpo did for A Company what no other thing, six months of training or anything else, could have done in terms of unifying it and giving it its own spirit—a spirit that said, “We can do anything.” No one went around bragging, and the company commander didn't say, you know, “We are the greatest and we are this, that, and the other.” He may have been complimentary, as indeed everyone was who came in contact with us. But the fact that we had done what we did and did it well brought that unit together like nothing else would have done and gave it an identity of its own and made it feel special. Just like there is something called self-

esteem and self-image, there is the same thing to be said for units. In no time at all you can get words like—I don't know who cooked this up—they called themselves "Able, Able, hot to go."

**Simmons:** Uh-huh.

**Barrow:** Which was Able Company and then "Able, Able, hot to go," that was kind of a little rallying cry we had. So if I dwelled on that particular episode, it is because of the meaning: confidence in themselves, confidence in their leaders, leaders having confidence in them, [and] spirit. All these things emerged out of the rally at Yeongdeungpo.

**Simmons:** Well, it was a very striking company-sized action. And you received a Silver Star for that night's action.

**Barrow:** Yes. I would like to add a footnote to that. I've been very generously treated with awards in my career, but that's the one that maybe has a special meaning because it was officers and senior staff NCOs in my company that went to the battalion executive officer and asked to see him about my award. Maybe I would have gotten one, anyway, but it's interesting that they thought I deserved one. I'll try not to say any more about awards. It's a [inaudible] subject that . . .

**Simmons:** Readers of this transcript are advised to read Chapter 11, "The Fight for Yongdungpo," in volume II of the official history, *U.S. Marine Operations in Korea* [published by the Historical Division, Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps]. In the last hour we've been, from time to time, looking at maps and tracing the route of the battalion to [Hill] 118 and then to Kalchon and on into Yeongdeungpo.

All righty. What came next?

**Barrow:** Well, next thing we were relieved, the relief column arrived the next day. Bill Bates and some of his Weapons Company and one of the rifle companies, I think it was Dick Bland's, and Bravo Company all arrived kind of a gloomish . . . I must tell you that the night before we lost communications, which didn't help the anxiety attacks back in battalion and regiment. We just didn't have . . . the batteries played out. We ran them and, you know, we just reached that point. We tried to conserve them by turning them off, and then, you know how you can do that, let them stay off for a while and then turn them back on and get quick little surge of power and make a quick transmission. But none of that worked, so that raised our anxiety factor more that they were not able to hear from us and could anticipate to expect the worst.

So I can understand, since we had no communications, why Bill Bates and his crew—

with the regimental tank platoon, as I recall, remember we had a regimental tank platoon?

**Simmons:** Yes.

**Barrow:** They all came down the Kimpo road to rescue us and were pleasantly surprised to find us all in reasonably good health and sitting there holding our position. The next thing for us—

**Simmons:** Let me interrupt just a second. We had a peculiar situation in that fight for Yeongdeungpo, because all three battalions were in motion and all going in a different direction.

**Barrow:** Yeah.

**Simmons:** More or less coinciding on Yeongdeungpo, but going in a different direction.

**Barrow:** That is correct. On the next day after this, we were ordered to attack—the A Company—the bridge approach south of the . . . the bridge was knocked out, but the approach was there.

**Simmons:** Right.

**Barrow:** I never understood the why of that to compel us to continue on down that, using it as an axis of advance since, well, now that we had the Yeongdeungpo-Seoul Road, which kind of looped around and made the eastern and southern definition of that no-man's-land out there, that flat area that I keep referring to. Which, incidentally, early the next morning we killed a number of enemy by long-range machine-gun fire that were escaping from, I guess, Bates's relief column or whatever. They went across that open area. But, anyway, it was the next day that we were told to secure that area.

It had a special . . . it brings back special memories because it was classic, by the book, in terms of supporting arms and maneuver but no opposition. It was as if someone had said, "We're going to have a training exercise, and we're going to use live ammunition. Don't worry about any safety business, just have at it." It was told to others to expect resistance, so we did the proper preparation of the objective, which was that area of the approach. We went down there, and it was good to have done it, I mean, as far as the game. Getting us all . . . it was like training. And then, having found nothing, we retraced our steps and then crossed the Han River with the rest of the battalion.

We are west of Seoul on the north bank of the Han River, and it was the 2d Battalion who had already received from Colonel Puller the order to attack more or less to the east, toward the southern part of Seoul with the Han River on the right, the railroad tracks on the left. So, it made a good boundary there—the railroad tracks on the left, the Han River on the right—to attack Hill 105. There were a couple of [Hill] 105s.

**Simmons:** Yes.

**Barrow:** Maybe more than that. The first and only time that I ever was in the regimental CP with my battalion commander . . . I had occasion after that to receive orders from Colonel Puller, but that was a situation in which the regimental commander is telling the battalion commander what he wants him to do, and the company commanders who are going to do it are standing there receiving it at the same time. Sort of unusual. I don't think that happens too often.

It wasn't really an OP [observation post]. We were not on particularly high ground, but it was kind of an OP, more of a mobile jump CP, as one would say, jump CP, when he told Hawkins that he was to attack and gave him what it was he was to do—railroad on the left and Han River on the right—going into Seoul. I don't know if there was anybody between or another unit pinched in there or not. Do you recall?

**Simmons:** Well, once we get into Seoul, I've got about [inaudible; voices mixed].

**Barrow:** Hawkins said, "Colonel, the 2d Battalion is already attacking in that zone." And Puller said, "Well, you just move faster than they do." I'm here to tell you that that's what we did. We had two rifle companies in the 2d Battalion on line moving into that zone against some light resistance, and we had two coming right in behind them. I was on the extreme left of the river. My left boundary was [inaudible], and I think Bob Wray was on my right. [First Lieutenant] Johnny [L.] Carter of the 2d Battalion, had the company that I was going to overtake and did, and he looked around and said, "What the hell are you doing here?" That's when I said what I've seen in some of these little write-ups. I said, "Don't worry, we have passed your lines on the move." And that's exactly what we did; we got them delayed. We swept on, and the next thing you know we are back on Hill 105. One of the 105s.

There's a little footnote here. I'm standing there when . . . I just need to be . . . because there's a lot of tales been told about this kind of thing. I was standing there with Hawkins when he received the word from Puller to attack. Before the little group broke up, Puller spoke to his driver or somebody who handed him a flag. He handed it to Hawkins, and he said, "Give this to one of your units to put up when he gets there." Hawkins gave it to me. Somebody opened the flap on my pack and put it at the top of my pack. When we got on 105, somebody remembered that—I don't think I did—and they took it out, and the first sergeant, a guy named Heeber, and one of my runners climbed up a thatched-roof peasant house with a bamboo pole and raised the

flag, American flag. David Douglas Duncan, who had joined us by then, took that picture and it's in his book, *This is War!*.

I think every unit in the Marine Corps of any size that went into Seoul—it being the capital and to raise the flag was to suggest you had taken it, whether the thing was over or not—I think every unit must have raised some sort of flag . . .

**Simmons:** Yes.

**Barrow:** . . . à la Iwo Jima. This must have been one of the first, certainly not the most significant, putting the flag on a bamboo pole over a peasant's house on the edge of Seoul does not constitute retaking the city. But that's the story of that particular flag did come out of the idea of the company commander or somebody.

**Simmons:** Going back to Puller giving you the same zone of action as the 2d Battalion, perhaps your observation wasn't enough to come to the conclusion, but did you have the feeling that Colonel Puller had a grip on the tactical situation or a rather romantic notion of the situation?

**Barrow:** Maybe what I'm going to say is an opinion I formed afterwards, although I will say that I thought it then. He was not the kind of person who would like to see an unemployed unit. In the absence of having something for the 1st Battalion . . . and I don't know what the 3d Battalion was doing. What were you all doing at this time?

**Simmons:** Well, we were coming on behind and . . .

**Barrow:** You hadn't crossed the river, yet. You were still doing something on that side of the river.

**Simmons:** Well, we had been on those bridge approaches that you spoke of. We pulled out of there, and then we crossed the river and we were following in trace over there behind 105. We were not involved in the fight for 105 at all. We did not get involved in the fight until we went into the city, and then we made that left-hand turn up Ma Po Boulevard.

**Barrow:** Yeah.

**Simmons:** Then the fight . . .

**Barrow:** Well, anyway, so we had two battalions over there in, really, a one-battalion zone. I did have a feeling that he just didn't like to have a battalion that wasn't doing anything, sitting in reserve, or whatever. So he just figured, "Well, I'll just quicken up a little bit there and put another battalion in there." I used to suspect that he was making it competitive, who can get there first. I have no explanation for it. That's how it happened. I was there, heard it, heard Hawkins question him. And he answered, "Well, you just move faster than they do."

**Simmons:** He had a very good 2 [intelligence officer] and a very good 3 [operations officer] at that time. Do you recall?

**Barrow:** [Captain] Stone [W.] Quillian was 2 and [Major Robert E.] “Bob” Lorigan was staff. Bob was a very systematic 3. I always had the feeling that Bob was sort of keeping track of things.

**Simmons:** All right. Well, then, we’re into the city.

**Barrow:** We entered the city, and I would characterize that action going to [Hill] 105 as sporadic fire fights, no determined resistance. We got up on the hill, which was a maze of peasant houses, frame buildings with thatched roofs, and that sort of thing.

**Simmons:** And up to this point, there were no apparent problems between Colonel Puller and Colonel Hawkins?

**Barrow:** No. The next day, we swung, more or less north, toward the next 105, in the direction of the railroad station. My company was given a route of advance and a zone of attack—it’d be a better way of putting it—which put us almost headed due north. It might be north-northeast. We had to cross the railroad, the first railroad, and then the railroad going . . . let me back up and correct something that I’ve said that I shouldn’t have said.

We had received our attack orders for that day when we passed in through [inaudible] position 2d Battalion, in the vicinity of 105. You can call it anything you want to, fuzzy memory. The area we were attacking to was Hill 79.

**Simmons:** I see.

**Barrow:** If one would consult that map, they’d see that there’s a nicely defined natural zone from 105 to 79, which attacks in a southeasterly direction, the Han River on the right and the railroad on the left. It was the next day that we swung north-northeast to go from 79 to 82, a distance of perhaps, oh, a mile and a half. [Hill] 82, the southern approaches to 82, would put you in visual contact with the railroad station, which was a key area because that’s where . . . and in getting there you had another railroad line that, in this instance, was on our right going to the railroad station.

This was a situation which, again, made us feel uneasy, in that, shortly after jumping off from 79 to crossing the railroad that had been our left-flank boundary the day before, we had no contact on the left or the right—shades of moving against Yeongdeungpo. We had only sniper

fire and a little sporadic firing out to our front, so we moved rather quickly to what would be the southern part of Hill 82.

Although it was a built-up area, we found some vantage points from which we could, in fact, look down on the railroad station and the railroad embankment approaching that station from the south. The station was our objective.

We had gone so far and so well without any contact on the left and right that any prudent person would say, “It’s time to stop and take account of what’s going on.” So there’s nothing out to our front that we can see. But just as one of those kinds of things you do without always necessarily knowing why, I brought up all the guys who had good sets of eyeballs and binoculars, and that was several, and we kept looking at that area. And, lo and behold, impatient North Korean soldiers, particularly along the railroad embankment southern approaches to the railroad station, began to pop up, curiosity, looking over the railroad, and things. That was all we needed. We brought up . . . I remember the area so well, and David Douglas Duncan has a couple good pictures in his book, *This Is War!*, in which you can see it looks like a mountain of grass from a water pool [inaudible phrase]. We had machine guns; we had everything that we could in the company geared up to fire at that area. And we had artillery and [inaudible].

Once we started hitting it, then they started really revealing themselves, trying to get better positions. We were engaging, by supporting arms and long-range fire, a very sizeable enemy which had been positioned in the most perfect way to have oscillated us as we approached seemingly unobstructed to the railroad station had we continued. We thought we were just having a turkey shoot—nobody getting hurt and knocking the hell out of them. Colonel Hawkins queried Dave Bridges, “What’s holding you up? Move out.”

I could never ascertain from him who was supposed to be on my left and who was on my right and why me? You know, in effect. I didn’t mean to say, why me, but when the company is going to move on and is everybody moving? If everybody else is moving, yes, I should move, too. But if I’m the only one out here and I’m engaged with the enemy in a way that is doing him harm without harming us, why am I to move? So I talked to Dave Bridges. He and I were pretty good friends, though he was a major and I was a captain. Finally, Hawkins got on there and said, “Move out.” Well, that was uncharacteristic of Jack Hawkins. I’ve already told you I liked him.

**Simmons:** Right.

**Barrow:** But one of the things one could say about Jack Hawkins was, if you want to consider it

to be a fault, is he was very sensitive to casualties. Now the irony of that is this was in Puller's regiment. But we all are. No one likes unnecessarily to take casualties. But for those few commanders who become focused on that, that minimized loss of life is in and of itself an objective of what it is you're about to do, then you are not, in fact, likely to always achieve the real objective that you have been given. Or put another way, it tends to breed caution. Hawkins, in my judgment up to this point, had proved himself to be cautious. Maybe that's one of the explanations of why didn't C Company take, relieve on [Hill] 80 and 85 or let A Company go there, or whatever. Think it through cautiously.

It is interesting to note that one of his confidants, a man who spent a lot of time with Hawkins, was a chaplain, Glenn Jones, a lieutenant commander, spent more time with Hawkins than anybody else.

In any event, I found this to be most unusual that Jack Hawkins would tell me, not through his 3 alone but pick up his radio himself and say, "Attack. Move out." Wouldn't you find it from what I've just described?

**Simmons:** Yes.

**Barrow:** It puzzled me and particularly when I was conveying to them that we, in a sense, are accomplishing the mission, if killing the enemy is part of it, and ultimately, we should be able to move somewhat easier to the railroad station.

Well, wouldn't you know that time went on and we continued to do what we were doing, and I get another call from Hawkins, and he said something I'll never forget. He said, "Unless you want a new battalion commander, you will attack at once."

**Simmons:** He was being pushed by Puller at that point?

**Barrow:** He was being pushed by Puller who, apparently either he deduced that there was a threat of relief or Puller had maybe told him, "If you don't move out and take the railroad station, I'll find somebody that can." Who knows? Puller was being pushed by somebody in the division. The division was being pushed by somebody in [U.S. Army's] X Corps, and the X Corps was being pushed by the man himself or somebody [inaudible] back in Tokyo [Japan].

As I've had it reconstructed for me since then, the whole thrust of it was that this was the date of the third anniversary of the fall of Seoul coming up. It was the next day. We had the same kind of business about attacking at night. You remember that, the next night?

**Simmons:** Yes.



**Barrow:** No, that night. That night.

**Simmons:** At night. This is the twenty-six when we say “third anniversary,” we’re speaking of the month.

**Simmons:** The third anniversary.

**Barrow:** Yes.

**Simmons:** Well, you know, that ties in with my personal experience because I had never really seen Puller out of his CP despite of his reputation of leading from the front until that day. He came down to Ma Po Boulevard. While you’re doing this, we’re going down Ma Po Boulevard. And he’s pressing us. He’s telling us, you know, the classic Puller question, “How many casualties have you taken? You must not be fighting very hard. Move out.”

See, we were right over here at that time, see. As you were going toward the railroad, we were right here.

**Barrow:** Uh-huh.

**Simmons:** Now whether this was self-generated by him, we accepted it at the time as being self-generated by him, but you may well be right. There might have been higher pressures to get this thing over with on the 26th of September.

**Barrow:** That’s the story that I heard much later. Anyway, in this oral history business I’m going to tell everything I know, and let those who read it later make their own judgment; not that I’m proud of some of the things I may tell, but I’m going to tell it like it happened.

I happen to belong to the school that says that while we take great pride in the Marine Corps in mission accomplishments (The mission is first, you will do the mission, or put it another way, obedience to orders, even a simple task. Pick that up. Pick it up, you will.), sometimes there’s something as a consequence of circumstances and one’s own judgment in which the circumstances transcend that sacred thing, “you will.” One of those things would be, in fact having just talked about casualties, if you were unwisely going to suffer a lot of casualties simply because it would give you the mission when to do otherwise and get the mission accomplished with some difference in time would be a more prudent thing to do. Then I think there’s some room there for your judgment that says, “I will do what I think is best. And if I’m right, it’s going to be great. If I’m wrong, I’ll pay the consequences.” In other words, I don’t believe that a mission accomplishment is so absolute that you put blinders on and you do it without any thinking or any of your own judgment or reasoning.

So despite these rather harsh words, there are these guys telling [us], “You move out.” That’s a direct order. I should have then said, “I know you guys are having great fun here killing the enemy, but let’s pack up all this stuff because we’re going to move down there where they are.” I didn’t do that, and I did something worse. I did, in fact, turn off my radio, as had been reported. At the time, you know, I didn’t think anybody even noticed it except my radio operator, Bob Poor, from Minneapolis, Minnesota. I still stay in touch with him.

But David Douglas Duncan was with us, and he’s a super guy. I don’t know how well you know him.

**Simmons:** Very well.

**Barrow:** Quiet, unobtrusive, just kind of moves about taking his pictures. If you can see how some of them were taken, you knew he was in a pretty threatened position when he was doing it. He picked up on all that, and it was reported and appeared in *Life* magazine. And I’m sure that some people raised their eyebrows. “Who is this guy disobeying his commanders, cutting off his radio?”

I got Jack Swords, who was an ensign in World War II in the Navy and got out, [became] a graduate of Hobart College, and got out and got commissioned in the Marine Corps. He retired here not too many years ago as a lieutenant colonel. He’s up in Kent State University as assistant dean or something.

But he’s a pretty good talker, a pretty persuasive sort of guy, and so he was picked by me. “You go back and find the battalion CP wherever it is and, in your most persuasive way, tell Colonel Hawkins, and you’re my emissary, tell him what we are doing. Describe it firsthand.” Now, understand, I tried to do this on the radio, impersonally. So he went back there and pleaded with Colonel Hawkins to come forward to see for himself. [Inaudible] So I think Hawkins was back on 79, which is what he moved up to that morning, preliminary to our jumping off north-northeast toward 82. So, lo and behold, he succeeded. Hawkins came up.

By this time, we were in the waning moments of our efforts. In other words, we had done most of the good work. But there was sufficient left to cause Hawkins to join the crowd. He got excited. “Get more mortars in there. Get more artillery.” Just getting all excited about something which we had been excited about for a several, a couple of hours. So the end of the story, really.

**Simmons:** All right.

**Barrow:** But that night, as you recall, we were all ordered to execute some weird plan that

would have put us into the heart of the city on a night movement. So that, presumably, when the enemy woke up the next morning, we'd have the city occupied, and he'd wonder what had happened. No one ever explained to me how he was supposed to be reckoned, not only to be all sound asleep but also dead. [Laughter] Do you remember that?

**Simmons:** Oh, I remember it very well.

**Barrow:** And that ties in with what we're talking about.

**Simmons:** Yes.

**Barrow:** That shows you the stupid politics that enter the war sometimes. And somebody made the decision, "Well, wouldn't it be nice if we got it back the anniversary of the third month of its fall."

**Simmons:** We're almost at the end of the roll of this tape. We're getting at a good ending point. Maybe we ought to end it up by did your company have any part to play in the triumphal entry of [South Korean] President Syngman Rhee and [U.S. Army] General [Douglas] MacArthur into Seoul?

**Barrow:** No.

**Simmons:** Did you see General MacArthur when . . .

**Barrow:** No.

**Simmons:** No?

**Barrow:** Never saw him.

**Simmons:** Had you seen him before that?

**Barrow:** Never seen him in my life.

**Simmons:** All right. Let's end this session here and next time we'll move on to Wonsan [North Korea].

**Barrow:** Okay.

End of SESSION III

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION  
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Interviewee: General Robert H. Barrow, USMC (Ret)

Interviewer: Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons, USMC (Ret)

Date of Interview: 8 May 1986

SESSION IV

**Simmons:** We ended the last session with the conclusion of the Inchon-Seoul operation, and we'll pick up from there. After Seoul was secured, the division went back to Inchon and re-embarked for Wonsan [North Korea]. What are your recollections of this period?

**Barrow:** Of course, we all were uncertain of what our next task was going to be and how the war was going to go, and that sort of thing, and so there was a great deal of uncertainty. Added to that was the fact that we spent an inordinate amount of time sailing back and forth, up and down the east coast of Korea waiting to be told where and when we would go someplace. I was on an LST with my company and some other units. And, of course, we finally put into Wonsan.

**Simmons:** What happened to your company and battalion after you landed at Wonsan?

**Barrow:** We were almost immediately put on a train (the battalion) which had been, I guess, a coal train because most of us ended up in coal cars which, as you can imagine, left a mark on all of us. We went south to a coastal fishing village area called Kojo. This would be about, roughly, I think, as I recollect, 50 miles or so south of Wonsan.

Quite candidly, I never understood our mission. It was to—mindful that this is North Korea—the mission was, in part, to establish some sort of control over that particular area and to intercept North Korean remnants that might be moving north. It was more or less territorial control, as I saw it. And I'm not sure. I'll ask you if there's ever been any clear definition of what our mission was.

**Simmons:** Well, I think what happened was, you know, there was a great debate in General [Douglas] MacArthur's headquarters as to whether the main effort of the Eighth Army was to go straight up north or to go around and make this landing at Wonsan. By the time we executed the landing, including all the delays caused by the mining of the harbor, the South Koreans had been remarkably successful.

Their Capital Division and, I think, their 3d Division had come charging up the east coast of Korea and really had taken our objective areas and they kept on going. And so our mission really became just one of securing Wonsan and the approaches to Wonsan and scooping up the remnants of the shattered North Korean Army.

**Barrow:** You said it better than I, but, essentially, that's what I recollect is a sort of control over a given area and tidying up. It wasn't occupation because we didn't have enough forces for that, but key areas and Kojo was considered to be one. It held promise of being a kind of benign, peaceful assignment, and in some respects, I think that's kind of the way it was approached. Our dispositions in and around Kojo were . . . [Interruption in tape]

**Simmons:** . . . of your mission at Kojo. You sort of considered it a rather benign environment. Maybe you might describe the town or the village a little bit more, where it was situated.

**Barrow:** Very picturesque, situated between the railroads, which was perhaps inland by half a mile or so. The village was south of a kind of a small mountain peak—more a hill than a mountain—which was on the east side of the railroad and just north of the village. Just to the north of the peak and east of the railroad was a bay that was also very charming. The whole area, as a matter of fact, was very picturesque and pretty (rice paddies inland, shrubs, small forests, trees, pines, firs, etc.) and not heavily populated. I would think, as I remember the business in Kojo was probably more fishing than farming, but had a foot in both areas.

**Simmons:** This was mid-October when we were just beginning to get into some crisp fall weather. The leaves were beginning to turn and so forth.

**Barrow:** Very pretty. That is correct. We were initially disposed, as I indicated earlier, in rather a dispersed way. My company was occupying a low hill mass west of the railroad, almost due west of the bay that I spoke of earlier. From this hill mass, we could look east and see this bay, and the battalion headquarters was loosely tied in with us, as was an elbow of Charlie Company extended down toward the town. Bravo Company was most dispersed, including one platoon that was quite a ways south. I don't, at this point, recollect exactly where Bravo's mission was, but I would say it would be like an outer defensive arrangement; in other words, sort of occupying with small units key terrain features that covered the approaches from the south toward the little town of Kojo. The rest of us were sort of loosely in defense of Kojo, if you want to put it that way.

**Simmons:** How did the natives react to your arrival?

**Barrow:** They were neither hostile [n]or welcoming. They were more or less apprehensive and apathetic. They stayed close to home, so to speak. There were no natives bundling up to move out or waving banners. It was a pretty sort of quiet acceptance.

But the problem that occurred at Kojo relates to some of these remnants, which were not remnants in the sense that they were stragglers, but they were units of the North Korean forces that had been pushed north by the ROK [Republic of Korea] Capital Division and one other division. Units that were obviously bypassed who, you might say, stepped aside in the movement of the ROK forces. They were, themselves, going to move north, but I would reconstruct what I think was the situation in that they wanted to make as much mischief, do as much damage, as they moved north, as possible. They had not been made impotent by any means. They were units, which were capable of putting up a fight, and they were not designed to hold ground. They were moving north, themselves, and if any target of opportunity presented themselves, they would do something about it.

That is the way I would deal with the way the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, handled that problem. Most of it related to a specific platoon of B Company that was in a very isolated position. Sometime after nightfall, one of these North Korean troops in the vicinity that had probably seen them go in that position simply attacked them. I surely would not wish to presume to make a judgment on whether they were as attentive as they should have been in their defensive arrangements, but the fact is that they were surprised and suggests that they were not as attentive as they should have been. Sad to report, we had Marines that were, in fact, killed in their sleeping bags, evidences of Marines trying to break out of their sleeping bags to resist. Some were successful in resisting, and the attack was not totally successful in that the platoon was not wiped out, but it was very much hurt by the attack.

**Simmons:** Did it hold its position or did it fall back?

**Barrow:** It did some of both. Some people fell back and some people remained there. Of course, there were wounded and dead there. I think the fact that the North Korean unit that was attacking broke off is the only thing that kept it from being a greater disaster than it was.

The unit had communications problems but, still, we had a pretty good picture of what was going on. And I'm not sure why the battalion did this, but they sent out a kind of relief column for which the battalion communications officer volunteered to take it out, a fellow

named [First Lieutenant] Paul [A.] Vnencak. His initial reports, after he had arrived in the area, suggested that they had more on their hands in the way of wounded and dead than they could handle.

So I volunteered to the battalion the comment that they needed more than what he had to deal with in that situation and that we would send out enough people to ensure that they could make an orderly return to the area where the rest of us were and make sure that they wouldn't get surprised, because they were in a tenuous position at that point. A small, inappropriate relief column of about platoon size trying to take care of the wounded and dead of an outfit that had been badly demoralized during the night; this was the next morning. I should have added that. So they approved that and we had I think it was a platoon that went out and assisted and brought them all back in.

Meanwhile, we were holding a kind of council of war back in battalion headquarters, because this cast a new dimension, new light, on whatever our mission might have been; it became something else. So I should also tell you that one of the reasons why we went down there . . . (Throughout this oral history interview, I have been doing this and I'll continue to do it, as you talk about something your memory comes into play and you remember something else.)

One of the reasons we went down there is there was supposed to be a sizeable amount of food supplies, stored food, and other things that would benefit an army at Kojo. We were to go down and gain control of that, provide security for it, is one of the things we were to do. When we got there we found it didn't exist. So that part of our mission no longer pertained. So [Lieutenant] Colonel [Jack B.] Hawkins, who was very vividly disturbed by this incident of the night before . . . although it involved only elements of one company it necessarily impacted on the entire battalion. The company commanders and the battalion staff and battalion commander were gathered and discussing what do we do next.

Well, in [the] face of the uncertainties which were there, you couldn't tell whether what had hit this unit was part of a larger unit that was in the vicinity. If it was, our current disposition was inappropriate, because they could have done just what they did to that unit, probably less successfully because they obviously surprised it. But it would have been not good defensive arrangements. So I recall speaking up and saying, "It appears to me that our earlier mission, which centered in large part on the protection of the storage area, no longer exists, and so we can deduce by ourselves that our mission is to protect ourselves until we get further orders to do

something else.” And I remember making a gesture. I was in this little battalion CP, which was up on top of high ground, really in a CP up from the high ground, above the actual command post. I said, “If we’re going to be secure against any form of attack as a battalion, the best place to do it is right over there.”

I pointed in the direction of the cone-shaped high hill that was between the railroad track and the base, and there seemed to be kind of agreement to that. It gave us access to the railroad. If, indeed, it could be kept open, we’d be close to it. We’d be near the sea in case there was any requirement for sea evacuation or reinforcement. So the decision was made to do just that, to go gather ourselves in and put a good perimeter around this cone-shaped hill.

Meanwhile, my company was given the mission of conducting what would be called a reconnaissance in force, company-size reconnaissance in force to see what, in fact, might be out there generally in the vicinity of where the platoon had had its problems the night before. So we conducted that reconnaissance in force with one or two destroyers off the coast prepared to provide naval gunfire support if needed, and always on station above us a section of [Vought F4U] Corsair [fighter aircraft], and we had good communications with both.

I’m bringing this story up because it points out some of the innovativeness that one finds in a situation like that, the flexibility that’s inherent in our forces. We did not see anything along our route that we took out. We were about at the limit of our distance that we were to go preparatory to them turning and swinging back in before nightfall, and one of the Corsair pilots reported enemy forces just beyond where we would be when we sort of made our turn to come back and that they seemed to be digging in or occupying positions probably in anticipation of our continuing to move in that direction.

So we directed him. Since he could visually see them, we didn’t need a forward air controller because none could be that close; anyway, he was with us, to go ahead and engage the target, which he did. Then he expended his ordnance. We then asked him [inaudible], “Do you think you could adjust naval gunfire?” He said, “Yeah, I can do that.” So the naval gunfire spotter team that was with us gave the mission to the destroyer, which fired, and the Corsair pilot adjusted the fire on the target area and reporting doing the same through the forward air controller, who turned at his elbow and posted the naval gunfire officer who on naval gunfire nets adjusted the fires. Ultimately, after a couple of adjustments fired for effect on the same hill mass, that aviation had expended their ordnance on. He reported good success, enemy troop



remnants running in various directions, and a successful sight, in other words. I've often thought about that, how today, of course, you couldn't do that, because a high performance aircraft never, never could be in a position to have that kind of observation.

We then had to make a decision as to whether to continue and see what was there, which didn't need to be done because that was very well reported by the aviation . . . by the pilot. We were not going to seize some ground and occupy it. There was no need to get any additional damage assessment; he'd given that. So we figured that a mission of sorts had been accomplished. Our reconnaissance in force had, in fact, discovered some enemy but that the enemy was dealt with by means other than those organic to our company. So on that basis, we did as we were then planning to do anyway: made our turn and came back to the area where the battalion had assembled itself.

I think where Charlie Company also went out on a similar kind of mission, more west. In any case, while we were there, Colonel [Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller, who obviously was concerned with reports coming out of Kojo about Marines having been attacked in the night while they were in their sleeping bags, he came down by train. I remember being in earshot of his conversation, part of his conversation, with Colonel Hawkins when Hawkins had explained our original disposition and how we had made the decision to tie ourselves in rather tightly around the base of this hill. Colonel Puller said, "Well, that's where you should have been in the first place," which, of course, wasn't altogether true because that would not have incorporated the storage area, except that after we got there the storage supplies had gone. So maybe it would have been the proper thing to have done.

But in any case, he was there long enough to assess for himself what he thought the problems might be, and then he departed. We, the next day as I recall, went back aboard our train and went north again, and specifically, we put out west of Wonsan.

**Simmons:** I'd like to explore a couple points. One, you said that Colonel Puller came down by train. This seems to reinforce the thought held then that he really didn't like helicopters. He didn't like to travel personally in helicopters. I remember when we were out Majon-ni [North Korea] at about the same period, which we're speaking here when it became necessary for someone from regiment to come out and see for themselves the situation. It was [Lieutenant Colonel Robert W.] Rickert who came out by helicopter rather than Puller.

You've now gone back to Wonsan. Kojo was a nasty little business, but it really wasn't all that serious.

**Barrow:** No.

**Simmons:** The battalion was never in jeopardy. The company was never in jeopardy. Did this contribute to or lead to Colonel Hawkins being relieved of the battalion?

**Barrow:** In all candor, I cannot say with any certainty, but I think so. In any case, it was only a short period after that, within days, that he had in fact gone.

**Simmons:** So now you're kind of in regimental reserves there at Wonsan, and we pick up on Majon-ni, which was a little village and an important road junction about 26 miles west of Wonsan. This was the temporary home of the 3d Battalion, 1st Marines, of which I was a member. What are your recollections of taking a road convoy west to Majon-ni?

**Barrow:** Well, as you said, we were in the vicinity of Wonsan, generally west. And my company was actually on like a kind of hill mass of sorts, irregularly shaped hill mass, and had no contact with any enemy and was sort of, as you say, more or less in reserve status when I got a call in the early afternoon one day to report to the regimental command post, which was located just off the road near Wonsan, but just off the road that was Wonsan-Majon-ni. The regimental command post was in and around a schoolhouse.

Upon arrival, we were told that we were to be escorts for a convoy of trucks loaded with rations [and] ammunition, a resupply convoy to go out to the 3d Battalion at Majon-ni, some 26 miles west, and that they were, in fact, in need of this resupply. So we departed.

**Simmons:** Let me interrupt you to say that there had been several attempts . . .

**Barrow:** Several attempts, unsuccessful attempts.

**Simmons:** Unsuccessful, yes . . .

**Barrow:** . . . launched from both directions, as I recall, and they had encountered ambush or obstacles created in the road, etc. Well, as it turned out, this was a pretty interesting assignment. I would even characterize it as a difficult assignment, just to take a convoy 26 miles through those mountains that were characterized by narrow roads with hairpin turns.

You look to one side and you're looking straight up the mountain; the road's been cut out of the side of it. You look to the other side and you're looking down into precipices and . . . it was just a very, very difficult MSR [main supply route] to the 3d Battalion. If you didn't have any opposition, it was going to be a sporty proposition just to take a convoy of trucks because the big Marine trucks were not suited for such a narrow road. But we had our mission, which was to

get going and do it. We organized ourselves with infantry elements mounted in the lead, and we did have an observation aircraft overhead. We had what would be almost a classical kind of convoy arrangement. We had strong elements up front which in turn had, you might say, scouting elements all still mounted, because the urgency was to get there before dark. That dictated the way we had to do it; stay embarked aboard the vehicles.

**Simmons:** Did Colonel Puller give you any sort of a personal send-off when you left the battalion area?

**Barrow:** Just to get it up there. His exact words I can't recall, but it was a personal send-off underscoring urgency. In other words, get on with it because it had been unsuccessful.

The important thing to know here is to do it in the face of knowing . . . to do this, knowing it was going to be interfered with, intercepted, ambushed. Something was going to happen en route immediately compelled one to take certain security measures, which would have been different from what we, in fact, did because what we did was to try to do it all before it got dark. Now this is winter in North Korea, October, and we're talking about leaving at 2:30 in the afternoon to go 26 miles at a rather slow pace. So we were not comfortable. I was not comfortable in this arrangement, which was tantamount to saying, "We're going to run this convoy until somebody stops us, and then we're going to see what we're going to do about whatever it is that's stopping us, and we're going to punch through."

So that's essentially what we did. We found some obstacles, which delayed us somewhat, but were not covered by fire, and finally, after about the third such stop due to some sort of obstacles in the road—the road was not cut, easily repaired—we found an obstacle that was covered by fire. They picked a good spot. I don't know how many people were involved in the enemy positions, but it didn't take many. They had the advantage of our presenting a narrow, confined front. So we got air strikes on what we thought were the forces involved. We had a tactical air control party jeep that was not at the head of the column, by any means, but it was close enough to communicate. We hit the area, and we deployed to the extent that we could. The forces trying to work themselves up this almost a sheer mountain-climbing kind of experience to the left. Nothing could be done on the right because that was just going straight down.

It soon became apparent that we were not going to be successful. They had machine guns and automatic weapons fires on this point of contact and covering this obstacle. So you could say we made efforts to "punch through," and it just could not be done without sustaining an awful lot

of casualties, and then you still might not have been able to do it. In other words, it was just not a good thing to do. The bad thing was that nightfall—having been stopped several times before we got there—nightfall was approaching. It was right around getting around dusk, and we had some evidence that above us, way up above us on the left, that some of the enemy either was already there or was working their way down above the convoy and were firing down into it.

I don't believe in councils of war but there are times, sometimes, when you get the interested parties together when they're immediately at hand and discuss it with them and at least let them know why you're going to make a certain decision. So I got my platoon leaders and forward air controller and some of the people that were in the convoy that were going to the 3d Battalion together in a little protected area on the side of a hill and gave them a little summary of the situation, which was that we were absolutely stymied and that while it might be possible to permit enough forces to go through, that we still had a long way to go and that we still had a very high value cargo that might not be well protected. Therefore, the next choice was then to dig in for the night right where we were and try to do that punching through the next morning. That didn't look too promising, because we had some evidence that they were above us and that some of the things we had in this convoy were fuel, as well as the fuel in the trucks, and that all they needed to do was set a couple trucks on fire. They couldn't easily be moved off of that narrow road, and we really would be in a heck of a fix and we'd not be accomplishing our mission, which was to get it to Majon-ni. So the next morning, we may not have the things that we were to get to Majon-ni in being.

I said, "The third option is to do what none of us in our hearts like to do but which made good sense. [That] is to turn this thing around, as hard as that's going to be, and go back to Wonsan and start all over again with enough daylight and a better plan to make it work." I could tell immediately that that was in high favor with the people I was talking to. I said, "I sense that all of you or most of you are in agreement with that latter course." And they all said, "Yes, sir." I said, "Well, that's what we're going to do." And I said, "Turn her around," were my orders.

I'm going to say that we probably had about 50-odd trucks in that convoy. Do you remember?

**Simmons:** Yes, indeed. It would be about that, 40 or 50 trucks.

**Barrow:** And these are big old Marine 6x6s and the odd assembly of jeeps and communications vehicles, and so forth. So the physical feat of turning those trucks around on this narrow-ledged

road has been something to this day I have never understood how it was done, even though I witnessed parts of it. Obviously, I couldn't see all of it because it was strung out over . . . you can imagine the long road. Pulling them back and pulling them back a few inches or a few feet at the most, and got those vehicles turned around. It didn't take too d——d long. I suppose the urgency of it promoted fast action on the part of the drivers.

So we started out and I passed the word down. It was dark. I passed the word, "No lights," because that would be something that these guys above us, which were now evident [inaudible] more and more, would have had something to shoot at. But we didn't go very far before the convoy stopped and not too far ahead of me. At that point I was near the rear of the convoy, having been near the front of the . . . right at the front, as a matter of fact, with the lead vehicle. So I said, "My God, I wonder what's happening."

So I went forward and hadn't gone very far before I found that one of these trucks had gone over the side. And that made me sick, because I had seen too much of over the side. It looked like it was down hundreds of feet down below. Fortunately, the truck went over the side in such a manner that, as it did, it just threw out the occupants and seemed not to have rolled over any of them. It was in an area that was not sheer but had enough slope and vegetation, scrub growth, on it that Marines clung to the side of this thing for, I guess, a 100 feet or more down the side of this thing. If you could have taken a picture of it, it would look like just that—what had been a truckload of Marines all hanging onto something. Some injuries, broken bones, etc., but no one was killed.

We started sort of like a bucket brigade, passing these fellows. Able-bodied folks went down and would pass them up, physically, in a line to get them back up on the road. Well, this really delayed us. But then I made the decision to turn the lights on, which was the right one, because it really did make it a lot easier to drive, obviously, and make it quicker as well. So we went hell-bent for leather back to Wonsan.

My concern was that this was kind of an un-Marine-like thing to do. You're given a mission. You go out. You not only don't accomplish it, you end up what appears to turning tail and coming home. So I was embarrassed by it; I was troubled by it, and I didn't know what the reaction of the regiment would be, Colonel Puller for whom I was then working. But I felt there was only one thing to do and that was go directly to him, not someone else, and report what had happened. I'll never forget the scene, because he was in one of the classrooms of the schoolhouse

and he physically was seated behind the teacher's desk, his back to a window. And I went in and said, without hesitation or even anything from him, I said, "Colonel, I have failed you." And that may not have been the most appropriate thing to say, but that's what I said. To which, he said, "No, you didn't, old man. Have a seat." He gestured to a chair that was on his right, and I sat there. He said, "How about a little drink?" And he pulled the teacher's desk open, and he got out a bottle of bourbon. I wasn't particularly interested in having a drink, but I didn't feel like I should refuse one either. So I put my canteen cup forward, and he gave me what would be about an ounce and a half or so, and I sipped on it.

He said, "What do you need to get this convoy through tomorrow?" I remember very well saying to him, "I need more hours of daylight and a forward air controller." The day before we had a tactical air control party [TACP] jeep, but we didn't have a manpack radio. So it was not a good arrangement with no one able to hand pack a radio up [inaudible] relayed back down to column to where the TACP was. He said, "You can have anything you want."

The next day we left early.

**Simmons:** I'm going to interrupt at that point. Several points I'd like to point out, which may not be obvious to future users of this transcript. First, at least one other company from the 2d Battalion had tried this and had failed and had not gotten through. Second, this was not a unique situation. This kind of thing had happened before, and it would happen again, and we'll get to some future examples of that. Maybe we were slow learners in how to deal with this kind of situation. Finally, I think you've offered a very interesting vignette on Colonel Puller's leadership as you told that tale of your reception at the schoolhouse. I was thinking how different it might have been if it had been one of several other regimental commanders of that period, and what their reactions would have been if you had walked in and said, "Here I am, I've come back. I haven't accomplished my mission."

Please continue.

**Barrow:** We had all night to think about how to do this thing right, and we think we came up with the best of all plans. And as it turned out, it was. We reckoned that whoever these ambush parties were . . . and it may have been one that had been left there for that sole purpose. I doubt that these were stragglers, each one coming through and setting an ambush. They had had so much success with these convoys, including ours, which lumbered slowly up the road making all kinds of noise, because they knew exactly where we were for a long period of time before we got

to where they were and could sort of do what they had to do in a very calm, measured, whenever-they-had-to-do-it fashion. I believe that the sound of the trucks was the key. If they could hear the trucks, they knew something was coming. “Let’s go and man our positions and have more fun.”

So the key to our plan was that we would have dismounted troops almost totally disassociated with the convoy, only incidental to it in that they were necessary for the accomplishment of the mission (but you couldn’t say they were part of the convoy), and the key to their performance was they had to be far enough out up the road that they really couldn’t hear the trucks, or if they did, it was so faint that one could say they were way back there. We had good radio contact and the convoy would pace itself on the progress of those dismounted troops in the lead.

It worked. We did not encounter any road cuts or obstacles. When we encountered what was to have been our ambush of the day, that was obstacles covered by a fire, we had this platoon that was in the lead, and they had a fire team composed of points that went around every curve with rifles held in the ready to fire. In other words, they expected somebody to be around one of these corners, and everything was done in total quietness, total quietness.

This is the 2d Platoon, [Second Lieutenant Donald R.] “Don” Jones’s platoon, and this fireteam that happened to be in the lead—and they would switch them off every now and then to keep up their alertness—rounded a corner and the scene was just about as we had predicted it to be. The ambush force was scattered all over this hillside some of them resting, some of them eating, some of them talking, [and] none of them with their weapons. They were just totally relaxed, like being in bivouac [temporary camp]. What they were waiting on was the sound of the trucks. Then they would say, “Ho, hum, let’s go get in our position.” To the everlasting credit of the fireteam, they didn’t run back around the curve and say . . . because they were, obviously, spotted or you could assume they were spotted. They took immediate, prompt action. They fell down into firing position and opened up, which was all that the rest of that platoon needed to rush forward and join them.

We just laid them out. I’m not going to say we killed them all, because some of them were at some distance up the hill and probably escaped. But it dealt with the problem. That simple solution—as one looks back on it, it’s so simple—was the reason for the success of it. A solution, which seems to have escaped those who followed us who, in fact, were told how we did it successfully. We’ll come to that in a minute.

So then we continued our journey and arrived in Majon-ni very pleased with ourselves that we had failed the day before, and finally corrected ourselves and did it right, thwarted this ambush and arrived. I met my friend, [then-Major Edwin H.] “Ed” Simmons, and I saw others I knew, like [Major Joseph D.] “Joe” Trompeter, and I met your battalion commander, [Lieutenant Colonel Thomas L.] “Tom” Ridge.

**Simmons:** Right.

**Barrow:** I must tell you of a reaction. Maybe we were over crediting ourselves with our success. But mindful that other efforts had failed, including our own the day before, this was somewhat noteworthy. It was an achievement. Somebody had finally done it and done it right. No loss of life. I was expecting a few accolades, a few attaboys, a few compliments like, “My God, Barrow, it’s good to have you here; you guys really did it right. I’m so proud and pleased with you, and we’re so thankful that you brought us all these things we needed.” To my disappointment and surprise, Colonel Ridge, who apparently was a very quiet sort of fellow not given to much expression, acknowledged my presence and said something along the lines of, “The S-3 will tell you where your position is going to be.” [Laughter] Is this technically characteristic of him?

**Simmons:** Yes. Yes.

**Barrow:** So the S-3, Joe Trompeter, did just that. He said, “You see this bowl way in there? There’s some parts of the bowl doesn’t have anybody out there on the perimeter, and there’s a big gap up here between . . .” He was able to, in fact, point. “There was a big gap up here between where this company’s right flank ends and this company’s left flank begins. It’s just about the right size to accommodate you going in there. That’s where we want you.” So, suddenly, our mission of taking things to the 3d Battalion got added to. We were going to be a part of the 3d Battalion defensive ring, which was all right with us. So we moved up and positioned ourselves in this hole.

**Simmons:** I’ll interrupt you again. I think that, again, a couple points need to be made. One, in a way, 3d Battalion’s position at Majon-ni was a precursor to our position at Hagaru-ri [North Korea] with many of the same elements. Hagaru-ri, again, we were in a bowl. Again, we had three major roads coming together, three roadblocks, the problem of having not enough people to do a decent perimeter, [and] the problem of a long, dangerous main supply route trailing off the



rear with difficulties in getting to us. In a way, Majon-ni was a dress rehearsal for us, for what was going to come up at Hagaru-ri. Also, it illustrated then, as many times before, how valuable the fourth rifle company was to us. That was a lesson we learned and relearned; that when a battalion was operating by itself, it badly needed a fourth rifle company.

Another thing that our own experiences convinced us of was the value of an attached artillery [inaudible]. We had [Captain Andrew J.] “Andy” Strohmenger’s battery with us, and Andy was ordinarily with us when we were on detached duty. You could get much more use out of an attached battery than you could out of a direct support battalion somewhere else that wasn’t immediately responsive to your needs. I know that goes a little against the tactical teachings of the day, but that was our experience.

**Barrow:** Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

**Simmons:** But continue.

**Barrow:** As you know, we had, in some respects, other than the fact that a bowl is not what you had, it was like [the battle of] Khe Sanh [South Vietnam], the end of a long, tenuous supply route in a no-man’s-land. It was quite evident to those of us who arrived that you were in a no-man’s-land, and there were all kinds of North Korean forces passing in the vicinity and some ready to do harm when the opportunity presented itself. It was the perimeter that you had [inaudible] holes in.

So we were there that night the perimeter got probed. I don’t know what the extent of the firefight was in other areas. I’m not suggesting that we had anything that was major or serious, but we had fire directed at our part of the perimeter and we returned it, etc. I gather that that was sort of a nightly occasion, that they were probing all the time.

**Simmons:** Yes. It happened almost every night. The most serious thing that happened, we lost our battalion OP one night, and we had to counterattack and take it back the following morning. Intelligence credited the enemy with having some 10,000 folks in the vicinity of Majon-ni. Of course, they were disorganized and many of them were trying to do nothing except get back to North Korea. But there still were one heck of a lot of North Koreans.

You’ll recall that we had a large POW [prisoner of war] corral in which we had more prisoners than we had members of the battalion. That led to your next mission that you might tell us about.

**Barrow:** Yes. Well, we were given orders to return to Wonsan, and we would be escorts for a

large contingent of prisoners that were being sent to Wonsan. The number 555 sort of sticks in my head. In any case, we had what could only be characterized as self-prisoners in . . . [Tape interrupted]

**Simmons:** You were speaking of stuffing the prisoners, some 555 of them, into the 6x[6]s.

**Barrow:** Yes. And these are not many 6x[6]s that we had going back. I'm going to say like 10 or 12 trucks, so they were cramped. I wouldn't say it was inhumane, but it was necessary, and that's the way we had to do it. I was determined that we would not have any prisoners revealing themselves, because that would be an attraction to any potential ambushers to press their attack figuring that they might provide an opportunity for prisoners to escape or to join them, or whatever. So we put them in these 6x[6] trucks with tarps over them in such a way that you actually wouldn't know what was in the truck. There were no open trucks with prisoners hanging around on the sides, and we kept them in a very tight formation so that someone riding on the hood of the truck behind the one in front of it would ensure that they were not jumping out. They were just kept in a tight formation. Of course, they didn't appear to be the kind that were anxious to run away, anyway. They probably surrendered in Majon-ni.

So we felt reasonably confident about going back in the way that it had been done before unsuccessfully; that is, everybody mounted in their vehicles. The reason why is because another column carrying things for the 3d Battalion was coming up from Wonsan, and it was the company out of 2d Battalion, a company commander named [Charles C. "Chuck"] Frederick.

**Simmons:** All right.

**Barrow:** I remember he had a big, tall platoon leader named Hamlin, Phil Hanna [?]. You might know him as a sergeant many years before. We made the assumption that he would have done what we did the day before in taking whatever action in clearing the ambushes and clearing the road and that the road would be cleared, and therefore, we could proceed back down a cleared road. We started out knowing we'd have difficulty passing them, so we kind of held within the perimeter or in the vicinity of the perimeter, where the road permitted vehicles to pass one another.

We got word that his convoy had been ambushed, and we said, "Oh, my goodness. What in the world? Didn't he understand how we did it the day before?" There was no reason for it to have been ambushed. With that, we pressed on and ultimately down this tortuous road we found the column still in a firefight with the ambushers. In this instance, the people executing the

ambush did not engage the lead element of the motorized column as it showed itself around the bend. They remained concealed in the ambush position [and] did not have an obstacle covered by fire. The ambush position was a rim in the curve of the road, and they were up above the road—a very steep slope but one in which you could, in fact, get positioned plunging fire down on the road. Not all of the convoy would end up getting in that big curve, but most of it would. And when the lead vehicles were at the part of the curve that would take them out of the bow, that would be when they would open fire. It was like shooting down in a rain barrel, and that's what they did. So that column had not encountered resistance at the point; it was fired on along most of its axis, which happened to be in a curve.

They did a super job of responding. I think most of the harm done to them—and they did take some killed and wounded—was in the initial fire received from these people up above them. They got out, and they engaged the enemy by fire and then started moving against them. My impression is that they acquitted themselves very well.

I was up in the lead part of the little convoy we had hauling prisoners. I found the company commander, because he was more or less up near the front of his column so we, ultimately, would come together. He had been shot in the leg and was lying on the side of the road being tended. He had a pretty bad wound, and he didn't have a clear picture of what was happening, and so he was . . . and with his wound he was a little bit not incoherent, but he was not very clear about things. I remember him saying to me—I knew him—"Bob, you've got to get your people dismounted and join with us and fight these people that are in the vicinity."

By then the firing had just about died down. They had the situation under control, I would say, and that was all right around the curve from where we were talking. I said to him, I said, "I can't do it. I have about 555 prisoners. I can't just turn them loose." I said, "I think your situation has improved and you're in pretty good shape, but I will certainly take all your wounded down to Wonsan." So that was agreed to. We made a very difficult passage; essentially, we picked up their wounded, passed them. They went on into Majon-ni. As a matter of fact, I'll ask you in a minute here how they presented themselves and what kinds of problems they had, because we went on unbothered, unmolested, unopposed back to Wonsan, happy to arrive without any loss of prisoners or having had any problems. And that was sort of the end of the Majon-ni experience, which was interesting.

**Simmons:** Well, the postscript to that is that Chuck Frederick's company never did reach

Majon-ni. The next unit to reach Majon-ni was a battalion of Korean Marines, a very feisty battalion, smaller than ours, but well led. They arrived and they fit into our perimeter. And they did things that were kind of characteristic of the Koreans since. They would have organized PT [physical training]. Here we are in a combat situation, yet every morning they would come out of their position shouting and yelling and forming up and jogging through the village, and so forth, and so on.

The next element that we had was a battalion of the 3d Army [Infantry] Division from the [Army's] 15th [Infantry] Regiment, a battalion that had come almost straight from Fort Benning [Georgia]; an under-strength Army battalion that moved into our position, did certain things to our power as to how they were going to hold this large perimeter with a very small battalion. And the Army battalion commander, who seemed to lead his battalion in the same vein as though he was conducting an illustrated problem at Fort Benning, he kept making these radio announcements. "I am now proceeding with the CO [commanding officer] of so-and-so, and so forth. We're now doing this. We're now doing that." Of course, we're thinking of other pairs of ears listening to this. Every time we came to a gap, he'd say, "I'll cover that with fire." And then he kept on going. He really didn't have nearly the weapons that we had. He did not have, for example, a detached battery of artillery nor did he have as many organic weapons as we had.

So we were in something of a hurry to get out of there, because we figured that the enemy was going to react to this relief. So we sort of scurried out because I remember it was about dusk by the time we started back to Wonsan. As we started back on that road, we could hear the mortar shells crumping in on his position. For us that was the end of Majon-ni.

**Barrow:** What happened to his unit, do you recall?

**Simmons:** Well, they didn't lose the position or anything like that. I guess they did all right.

If you'll recall, the 3d Division had arrived late. We're now speaking of Thanksgiving, approximately Thanksgiving, and they picked up on the missions at Wonsan and eventually picked up on the missions at Hungnam [North Korea]. They were basically very well-trained Army troops from the states, but they were fresh out and they were under strength.

Speaking of Thanksgiving, do you have any particular recollections of either the Marine Corps birthday that year or the Thanksgiving that year?

**Barrow:** I really don't remember either one of them. In the Wonsan area, at the time of the Marine Corps birthday, we were occupying some hill mass. I don't remember the specifics of it,

and I don't remember that it was anything unusual about the birthday except somebody produced a cake and we had a very modest ceremony, but nothing that would have any particular memory to it.

**Simmons:** Don't you recall that there was a tremendous effort to get turkeys out there for Thanksgiving?

**Barrow:** I remember that effort being centered on Christmas, after we got back down to "The Bean Patch" [at Masan in South Korea]. Maybe it was Thanksgiving, too. I just don't recall that.

**Simmons:** I recall because we were back from Majon-ni, and two things happened to us before we went north. One, we were issued our winter clothing. And two, we had a belated Thanksgiving dinner with the turkeys.

So that leads us to the next step, and that's the move north from the Wonsan area to the Hungnam-Hamhung area. What are your recollections of that move?

**Barrow:** We moved slowly, paced in part by the fact that we were the tail end of troops going north.

**Simmons:** Was this a motor march?

**Barrow:** A motor march and train. Some people went by train to Hamhung. We bivouacked along the way. When we finally got to Hamhung, we proceeded right on up the road north to Chinhung-ni [North Korea]. In other words, the events between the ones we've been talking about at Majon-ni, etc., and going to Chinhung-ni was of no consequence.

**Simmons:** You had mentioned before going to Kojo in the railroad cars, the coal cars, the gondola cars. We made the move north from Wonsan to Hamhung in those kinds of cars. It sort of reminded me, again, of World War I. It was like an armored train. I didn't know whether I was going across the steppes of Russia or what. But really, they weren't all that bad because you felt you had a certain amount of protection from the steel sides of those cars. At the same time, you could see out. You were prepared to fire out of them if you had to. It wasn't a bad way to go.

**Barrow:** Well, we had a little incident in one of our bivouac areas that maybe deserves just . . . it's an anecdote. It's a little story. Maybe there's room for something like that in this presentation. It would give me an opportunity to comment about some people that are often overlooked down in the rifle company area.

I knew this before I left [MCB] Camp Lejeune [North Carolina], but it was certainly well learned in Korea that the three most valuable enlisted personnel, other than perhaps corporals in

time of a firefight, the three most valuable Marine personnel, enlisted personnel, are your supply sergeant, your wireman, and your radio operator. My wireman was named Frank Lasko from Maine. My radio operator was Bob Four from Minnesota, and my supply sergeant was Sergeant Michael Bennedetto from New York.

Bennedetto had been captured on Wake Island and was a guest of the Japanese for four years. I used to say, after I got to know him well, that he must have been a problem for the Japanese. He was, to say the least, resourceful. For example, back in Camp Lejeune he kept up with all units that were out on training exercises in the Lejeune area. Particularly, he was interested in those that maybe had a night bivouac left during the predawn hours. He was convinced, and rightly so, that there would be inadvertently left behind entrenching tools, helmets, you name it. So he used to take his personal car, an old beat-up Buick, and drive out to the areas where units had been and scrounge around and pick up gear.

All of these things we've done thus far, and even later in Korea, there were times when you'd say, "Well, we'll have to tighten our belts tonight. There's no way in the world we're going to get any resupply of rations," where there's no road or it's near dark and we're too far away, or something, and Bennedetto never failed us. He would somehow get there, eager, with all the things he had to do.

In a similar way, our wireman, which was so essential in those days. Our radios were not all that dependable, and we needed redundancy anyway. We would maybe stop for the night someplace, and you'd say, "Well, we're so far away from the battalion and it's dark. There's just no way we're going to be wired in." Frank Lasko would get his trusty rifle and his wire and start out, most often alone. Very lonesome, lonely job to run wire back to someplace in the middle of the night to the rear. And, of course, my radio operator, who was just so reliable and competent. We were there in a bivouac between Wonsan and Hamhung, and I had several times lamented out loud that we could surely use some better transportation than a company jeep; that we were beginning to have just a little bit more stuff that we needed to have moved and one of those [inaudible] would certainly be a good thing to have.

So we were at this place for a couple days, between Wonsan and Hamhung. One morning Bennedetto presented himself to me, and he said, "Skipper, sir, could I trouble you to come look at something?" I got up and followed him to a little area, which was a lot of natural vegetation, but clearly there was extra vegetation, limbs and stuff, over what was discernable, even so, as a

vehicle. He pulled all of this back and revealed this almost brand new 6x[6] with hastily painted out Army markings. Well, what do you do? You don't say—at least I didn't, because we did need it—"Wherever that came from, you get it back," because we had orders then; we were going to be moving north. But I did chastise him a little bit because I thought it was an inappropriate [thing] to do.

I learned the story later that he and another companion in crime, named Lazaro, who was just a rifleman out of one of the platoons, but he had I guess had some prior communication with him and reckoned that Lazaro would be the kind of person he'd want for his escapade. They went to Hamhung without anyone's knowledge. I'm not sure how they got there. Maybe that's why he wanted Lazaro, to drive. They stole an Army weapons carrier. But they got caught and the Army MPs [military police] had them en route to where they were going to be booked and, I guess, locked up. They escaped and still persisted in accomplishing their mission and stole another weapons carrier and that came back.

I'm not proud of the fact, you know, that it was done. But it's not untypical, and it sort of describes how resourceful some of these people can be. Anyway, we ended up at Chinhung-ni.

**Simmons:** I'm going to interrupt again. I shouldn't be interjecting my own thoughts on intruding on your interview, but that little story or those two little stories really triggered my memory.

First off, with respect to the communicators, they were remarkable and, particularly the role of the wireman, because, as you say, our radios were not that reliable. We depended, primarily, on the SCR-300 [radio], and we had great problems with the batteries. You spoke of that earlier when you were at Yeongdeungpo. It was a very limited radio. Our telephones were really World War I vintage. They were those EE-8s, the telephone in the leather box. Primitive.

But in our battalion the wiremen never failed us. There was never a night that they didn't succeed in getting the battalion wired in and within an hour or so after you had halted for the night. We had a particularly good battalion communications officer, a person I know you know, [First Lieutenant Robert A.] "Bobby" Foyle. "Kitty" Foyle was a lieutenant in our group here.

With respect to the entrepreneurship or ingenuity or enterprise of our Marines, that was something that I noticed different in Vietnam. I didn't see that. For better or for worse, I didn't see that in Vietnam as I had seen it in World War II and in the Korean War. I think possibly because Vietnam-vintage Marines were used to a bountiful supply. They were used to affluence.

They were used to, “When I finish with this, someone will hand me my next battery or whatever it is I need.” But we had a Depression-bred crew of Marines in Korea and World War II who did things for themselves, sometimes going over the line as to what was quite proper. In my company, we had a Russian truck that we had picked up, kind of a bad copy of about a 1936 Chevrolet truck, just rear-wheel drive; it was not four-wheel drive. And we had a Russian trailer that we hooked on behind it. And we got yeoman’s service out of it before it finally gave up. But we did do that kind of thing.

**Barrow:** Yes. Very common to see Marines, peace or war, sitting on the edge of their bunk or foxhole or whatever [and] sewing their web gear together.

**Simmons:** Yes.

**Barrow:** Not going anywhere and saying, “Give me a new one,” but kind of maintaining what they had. The horn of plenty that was so evident in Vietnam, along with a generation that had been brought up in a material world where their wants seem to be always satisfied, accounts for the difference. You’ve already described that.

**Simmons:** Well, anyway, here you are at Chinhung-ni. Describe your position and what were your initial operations from this position. And how was the weather? What was happening to the weather about this time?

**Barrow:** Chinhung-ni was the southernmost . . . well, there was one area, one town, Sudong [North Korea], I guess it is, after that. We don’t have that history book, do we?

**Simmons:** Let’s see.

**Barrow:** Chinhung-ni was the southernmost battalion-sized Marine position in that very long, linear disposition of the 1st Marine Division that we had in the month of November, late November, early December 1950. We were still, oh, quite some distance from Hamhung. I’m going to say 40 or 50 miles. Is that fair, you think, to say?

**Simmons:** I think so.

**Barrow:** Chinhung-ni had importance because it was at a road junction. The main road going north to Koto-ri and Hagaru-ri, and Yudam-ni [North Korea] had a road going west from it at Chinhung-ni that gave you access further inland, but for reasons of defensive purposes it was also a coach route into that important MSR from the west. Whoever was [inaudible] would hold Chinhung-ni.

Chinhung-ni was the jumping-off point for all forces going north as they went as much



up as they did horizontally on the ground. It was the beginnings of the high rise of mountains that carried you all the way up to Chosin Reservoir area. It was a position that should have been held, and not knowing what size enemy opposition you might have, it would take surely a battalion to hold it reasonably well. So we were disposed around this road junction. Chinhung-ni, itself, was a very, very small, little village of no consequence. My company was sort of in the southern and western part of the perimeter.

The nights, particularly, started getting much cooler, colder really. The things that we did while we were there were to reconnoiter in all directions.

I should tell you that by this time we had a new battalion commander, about whom I should make some comment. He had relieved Colonel Hawkins in early to mid-November time period down at Wonsan. And his name was [Lieutenant Colonel Donald M.] “Myron” Schmuck, S-C-H-M-U-C-K. Known by everyone as “Buck” Schmuck. He’s from Wyoming—was and is. He’s retired there now. He was a bachelor and still is. He owns a ranch, had a great interest in rodeos, [and] liked to participate in rodeos. His physical appearance was a small man but muscular and stood very erectly—always up straight, almost cocky looking. He was outgoing, talked a lot, had an opinion on everything, [was] quick in his movements, [was] quick in his comments, [and had] an abundance of self-assurance. I liked him.

**Simmons:** Had you known him back in Harry Lee Hall?

**Barrow:** I knew him when we were bachelors together—though I was a captain and he was a lieutenant colonel—in Harry Lee Hall, so he was no stranger. He was a dynamic guy, aggressive, interested in taking care of the troops, and smart. I liked him. I think he was extremely well accepted by the battalion as a battalion commander that they would admire and be very faithful to.

He, himself, did some interesting things there that facilitated subsequent action that seemed successful. He and a handful of others made a personal reconnaissance up to the pass to the vicinity where the bridge was blown. You all know about the Funchilin Pass. Just getting the insight into the topography that he would not have gotten from those terribly inadequate maps that we had. The only way to do it was see it firsthand. That took a certain amount of courage because it was kind of a no-man’s-land. He didn’t go up there with any big force; he went up there with a handful of people.

We made—my company, because we had some harassment attacks down the road that

went out to the west—a probing of our perimeter. He said, “Crank up the force and go out there and clean out that valley. Go until you find them and get rid of them.” I’m telling this to tell you in part what we did but also his role in it. We did it by the book. This was a narrow valley with a road winding down in the valley, following the stream—a narrow, small stream in the valley. Though it was difficult, I wanted to put people on the high ground on both sides and not just go plodding up the valley, which was very narrow and would have been easily thwarted by a minimum force.

But it looked like mountain goats. People talked about it for days afterwards how we were able to put about a squad-sized unit on each side of the valley. You paced your movement on the valley floor by their movement on the flank, and they made pretty good movement once we got up on the top. We had radio contact, and they had observation down into the valley floor so we wouldn’t be surprised. We didn’t go very far before we encountered the first enemy. This combination of people up and people down in the valley floor, and supporting arms, we just kept going. In other words, we stopped and deployed mortars. They would shoot at us from up on the sides, and they just would crumble and give way, retreat, and we’d press on. So we went quite a ways doing this. We encountered a little resistance here and there.

We’d gone about as far as we were going to go and I looked around, and there’s our battalion commander right up there with us. I think he had, maybe, a radio operator and one other person. He had three. Well, that was kind of unheard of and a refreshing, welcome sight—showing an interest, finding out what was going on. It was good. So those are the kind of things that he did that made him popular with everybody.

We knew that trouble was brewing further north and that somehow we were not going to sit indefinitely in Chinhung-ni. [We] did sense that waiting for something that didn’t look like it was going to happen—any threat to us [inaudible].

So it was that when the 1st Marine Division started its now famous march to the sea—our retrograde, attack in another direction or however one wishes to describe it—we were given what turned out to be a pretty key role to play.

**Simmons:** To put a date on this, I think your battalion was relieved at Chinhung-ni on 7 December by elements of the 3d Infantry Division. We’d spoken of the 3d Infantry Division.

**Barrow:** That’s right.

**Simmons:** So that you could attack to the north.

**Barrow:** It was along about the sixth, it started snowing; the seventh, we had a lot of snow. We were relieved by elements of the 3d Division. I remember meeting with the company commander who relieved my company, and I had been taking him around, showing him our disposition, and giving him a rundown on what was going on. I then listened to him describe how his unit had gotten formed and gotten to where they were, and I never ever felt so depressed about an American military force. In this instance, one in which this particular company, made up of U.S. Army soldiers kind of gathered in from wherever, it was not an existing unit when the war started, but in sufficient numbers so that about half of his unit was South Korean soldiers—many of whom were conscripted off the streets by, you might say, gunpoint. South Korean officials, literally, going around finding what could be eligible young men, sticking a weapon at them, [and] saying, “You come on. You’re now in the Army.” And they whisked them off and gave them a uniform and a weapon. And they ended up being assigned to U.S. Army units in what was called a buddy system.

Ostensibly, the untrained Korean would learn from the U.S. soldier how to do the job, and together they would make a capable team. The trouble with that is that the young soldiers were also untrained and were not part of a . . . although they were elements of the 3d Division, in this instance they were not, themselves, an existing unit around which something like this might have some chance of success. So that’s what he had. I’ve often wondered just how someone arrived at that kind of decision, how that was done.

They relieved us. We had been called back to battalion to get our orders to go north to attack Osan. The Chinese forces occupied high ground, or Hill 1081—1,081 meters—that had a commanding view of the bridge that was out in the pass. And therefore, it was absolutely essential that they be removed from the mountaintop. This was not the kind of assignment that could be accomplished by an entire battalion going up the hill. It was kind of [inaudible], kind of a one-company effort, because part of the hill was so protected that no one could go up it. And the part that you could go up could only accommodate, really, at times only about a platoon-sized clump and that only after you got up there. Going up there, it almost had to be single-file mountain climbing.

I’m getting ahead of myself but that was the character of it, which Buck Schmuck saw in his reconnaissance. That’s why I say it was so invaluable.

So he assigned tasks which one company was to secure the ground at roadside level and

below, because the roads begin to be up above the [inaudible] there, south of the bridge. Another company would be going up the hill, up 1081, and the third company would be sort of in reserve or provide security on the south side of the road. That was the mission we got because we were the reserve company. Able Company was going to be first in the movement north of the road, and they were going to continue on up the road. We were going to stop and then Charlie Company was going to pass through us and go up to 1081, which was surely going to be the most difficult undertaking.

I went back and assembled my officers and outlined what it was we were going to do. They all looked, to my surprise, disappointed and even said so that this was going to be the major action that we'd probably had so far in Korea, and we were not going to be given the key role. Well, no sooner than we had began to feel sorry for ourselves then the phone rang, and Bill Bridges said, "We've reversed the mission, you and Charlie." So we ended up bringing up the rear in the movement up the road until you got to where 1081 was. And we did pass through Charlie Company. All of this, I might add, was with a lot of snow on the ground and a lot of snow falling. We're talking about the seventh of December 1950. I remember it was a tough movement because we had so much gear on us, and it was in the snow, and it was, you know, difficult moving.

But that was nothing compared to what we were about to encounter because, when we got to "the base" or the southern approach, the base of the southern approach of Hill 1081, and you just sort of looked at it. There was so much snow you couldn't see very far up it, but you could see from that part which began right at the road that this was going to be some kind of climb. While our maps were inadequate, we looked at them and kind of looked at the sketches that were made by Schmuck. We knew that there was a narrow ridge that was, in fact, the southern approaches that was at a left elevation than the topographical peak of this 1081, but would represent the only way in which you could expect to find yourself finally getting there. At this narrow ridge, southern approach finger, was characterized by its own saddle—peaks, dips, peaks, and dips. It made sense, if you looked at it, that they had little or nothing to worry about to the immediate east because it was almost a sheer drop-off. I said east; I meant west.

**Simmons:** I understand.

**Barrow:** To the south, this would represent a way to get, ultimately, on 1081, to take this finger. You, therefore, expected in addition to defending in strength at the top of the hill, the mountain, that they'd have forces on what was the logical approach to it. And they did.

I reckon that no one knew what it was we were to do, and how we were to do it, better than I. So I took the lead in going up the mountain to where we would probably find ourselves in some sort of attack position; snow being the thing that permitted all this to happen. Had it not been snowing, we never would have taken 1081; I can tell you that. I'm almost positive. Then what would have been the outcome then, I don't know. Maybe we could have taken it coming from the north somehow, I don't know.

But I had a Marine with me named King D. "Tiny" Thatenhurst. Ever know him?

**Simmons:** Sure.

**Barrow:** Tiny Thatenhurst deserves a comment or two. He was a World War II Marine from Alabama, stood about 6'6", and weighed about 240 pounds when I knew him. He was [very] much a man, physically: big hands, strong, a big man. He had wanted to stay in the Marine Corps, but he sustained wounds that precluded that from happening. But, anyhow, some time after World War II he talked himself back into the Reserve. So he was in the Reserve unit in Birmingham [Alabama], which was an artillery outfit. I'm told by his officers that he was a key feature in their success during the post-World War II buildup of that Reserve unit and keeping it disciplined and well organized, because he was simply a tiger. Demanded a lot and gave a lot, himself.

When that unit was called to active duty, he didn't have to come to Korea because two Purple Hearts disqualified you, if you wanted to do that. I think that was put in by that time. Tiny Thatenhurst had seven or eight Purple Hearts. He was on Peleliu [Island in Palau] in a company in which, when they finally came back to the beach, he was the company commander, the sergeant of about a platoon-minus size, number of troops.

I never met anyone I liked better or found more valuable as a friend and as a comrade in arms than Tiny Thatenhurst, who joined us after we were in Korea, and who later, I might add while we're talking about him, was commissioned and retired as a lieutenant colonel and died four years ago. Much a man.

Anyway, the two of us together sort of started up that hill with everybody else, single, double file kind of behind us. That's the only way to do it. We got up to the top of that finger which was, maybe, more than three-fourths of the way in elevation from the valley floor to the mountaintop. If a day was clear, you could have looked down and seen this very steep

mountainside going down to the road and then, beyond the road, a much shorter but steep mountainside going down to the valley floor. If you looked the other way, you could have looked up and seen the top of this bare, sort of rounded-off dome-shape mountain peak called 1081, if you could have seen that. Of course, if it was snowing you couldn't see anything of it. But I knew when we got to the southernmost part of that finger—that ledge at the top of 1081—I knew where we were. I had properly deduced that there probably was enemy in strong points between us and the mountaintop.

Meanwhile, Tiny was bringing forces around behind us on the southernmost part of that finger—they were all kind of clinging around on the sides of the thing, some still coming—when I gave the order to how we were going to attack; not knowing what we were going to be attacking against, but that we were going to go in an attack formation. The platoon would be the maximum front we'd have, and he probably would have about one squad on the actual crest of this finger and one squad hanging on each side sort of thing [inaudible].

Fortuitously, as we sat there in small groups contemplating all this and looking in the direction of the ridge without being able to see anything, it stopped snowing but only momentarily. But it stopped long enough for us to see a lot of people on that ultimate objective, which was still quite some distance, and several strong points, just as we thought there might be, on this finger leading to it. They hadn't heard anything, hadn't seen anything, so they were like those people we ambushed when we ambushed the ambushers. They were just . . . there they were walking around in their position trying to keep warm because it was cold as hell.

It was at that point that we again tried sort of an innovative use of supporting arms. I had the FO [forward observer] from the [inaudible] with me by the name of Sergeant Meyer, and we picked that [artillery] as the weapon to use. Because we could not see the target—it had started snowing during that period of fighting, a momentary thing—that we had decided to adjust by sound. We started by firing on the ridgeline over to us in a kind of axis of west to east. We fired on that ridgeline with not too many rounds and then walked it up so we had a pretty good idea, a rough idea, of distance to keep going north of that. In other words, we had an east-west line and fired by sound due east of us, and then you walked up. Then he walked it over onto the ridgeline that we were going to attack, and then he started walking it down.

We never saw an explosion, but they were out there in front of us. We walked it in close enough that you could get the vibrations. They were very muffled because it was in the snow,

snow on the ground, and so forth. We gave it a pretty good prep, but it was all done without ever seeing where any of it went and no adjustments by any means other than just sound.

Well, we did all we could do. There wasn't anything to do except head out. Don Jones and his 2d Platoon headed out. We had some people wounded but we took the . . . I say the first objective. It was really kind of the first two objectives. You called it one because it was kind of two strong points in one area. They were kind of tied in. It is now approaching nightfall, and so we knew, in attacking Hill 1081, we had to eliminate another objective in the strong point in the approaches and in the final assault on the hill. We wanted to make maximum use of supporting arms just as we would have done if we had a clear day, and we were hoping that that's what we'd have the next day. In any case, we weren't going to continue the attack that day because night had come, and we wouldn't have a chance to use supporting arms. So the only thing to do was to bed down, which we did.

That was the beginning of, I guess it was two or three nights, whatever it was, we were up there. Two nights? Yes. I was as cold as I've ever been—colder than I've ever been in my life. I guess somewhere back in the recesses of one's brain you remember some things. We'd never had any cold weather training, but you did read about such things. You'd remember that it was essential that, if you had extreme cold, to keep the troops moving. Don't let them, if they were cold and subject to being really frozen, as indeed we were, don't let them sort of bed down and go off to sleep and wake up a frozen corpse. So I spent virtually the entire night just going around from one cluster of Marines to another in their defensive positions—which we had to have because we were attacked that night, I might add—and making sure that everybody was either warm or crispy or just no threat to his life because of that extreme cold. Similarly, before we did anything else that night, we had them change socks. Take the wet, damp socks off and put them inside their uniforms, cold weather gear, to warm them up and dry them. Rations were frozen. We didn't want to build any fires, and we couldn't eat any rations, so we just didn't eat anything that night. We were attacked and they were beaten off without any problems. So we spent a night of just extreme cold.

The next morning, when daylight really came upon us in full, it was going to be one of those beautiful, clear, crisp, bright, sunny days. Every man in the company from some position was clinging on one side or the other of that finger, or along the back of it, could look up there and see 1081 and a clear definition of what we had to do. The first thing we did was test-fire all

our weapons, and some of them had problems from being frozen, so that had to be worked on. It caused the battalion [concern]. And they said, “My God, you’ve got another firefight?” I said, “No, we’re test-firing our weapons.”

I gave the 1st Platoon, [First Lieutenant William A.] “Bill” McClelland, the main attack, the main effort. You couldn’t deploy more than a platoon in your approach, but we had another platoon right behind, and you know, you were just going to feed them in there so you’d have two or three, that way you could spread out as you went into the final assault on 1081. We were still in the approach, which was that narrow ridge, finger. Well, he no sooner jumps off than he encounters stiff opposition. I went up there in the vicinity of the lead platoon with the forward air controller, a fine aviator who always . . . we only had one in the battalion, and he always stayed with us, and he was with us then. His name was [Captain Robert B.] Robinson, “Robby” Robinson. He did a masterful job of calling in air strikes against 1081 and some of the parts of the approach to it. He was facilitated by having a couple of high-wire electrical power poles in the vicinity of this topographical stretch of 1081. It was like having an aiming stake. We’d tell the pilot, “You see that?” It stood out in the snow. I mean, everything was white and you’d have this big, black pole standing up there to the side. So he had an aiming station, and he did as good a job as could be done.

I might add, we did have one airplane that hit us, however. [Inaudible] of Bill McClelland. It didn’t occur to us to do something we probably should have done, but we sure in hell did it after he made one pass at us, and that is we broke out an air panel and identified who we were so it wouldn’t happen again. McClelland had a squad leader named [Sergeant Henry E.] “Hank” Noonkester, who distinguished himself that day, and he had a platoon sergeant named Humbal [?], who was stalwart and who was killed that day. Noonkester got a Navy Cross and retired as a warrant officer. He’s in Bristol, Virginia.

The assault by the 1st Platoon, which later on we joined up most of the company, was a classic final assault under the most difficult conditions of the terrain, snow on the ground, entrenched enemy, cold, and one of those rare incidents in war when, out of desperation, occurred as we were commencing our final assault after the initial objective had been taken that second day, and we were in position to spread out more in a kind of something more than just a platoon front to start up that hill. You could then look over to your left front—we were at that point in terms of elevation and not being certain—and see the bridge that wasn’t there, to be put



in. If you looked further, you could see the lead elements of some sort of column inching its way down the mountain road. Now this was several miles away, a couple miles, I'd say. But the purpose of what we were doing . . .

**Simmons:** Became very obvious.

**Barrow:** . . . every man saw it and, sort of as one, let out yells, cheers, whatever you want to call it, and there was no stopping them. Hand grenades, throwing their own hand grenades back at them, potato masher [grenades], and just made the classical final assault on that Hill 1081.

Once that objective was accomplished, immediately after taking it, we immediately did sort of by the book, we organized and pursued by fire because there were other elements that maybe didn't have anything to do, specifically, with 1081 but they were within small-arms fire moving back and forth further north. We engaged them by fire, and anything we saw that looked like it might have been further out and bigger, we engaged it with supporting arms, particularly air strikes. Then, not knowing whether somebody would try to dislodge us, we organized that position for ourselves.

Then we had the difficult task of how to deal with the wounded and dead that we had. We had 24 wounded, as I recall, and about 8 dead. So, we had about another 75 (and some of this was not then, but during the next few hours, accumulative for what we did on 1081) about 75 cold weather casualties. We had just about half the company were made casualties from dead, wounded, and cold weather. I will never, never, never be critical of those who were cold weather casualties. You know, like some people say, "Well, they ought to have taken better care of themselves." Every effort was made. We just were inadequately clothed. I am told that someone down in battalion, down in the valley at battalion command post, had a thermometer which some time during the night, that second night, registered minus 25. Well, if it was minus 25 down there, the windchill was no telling what up there where we were, 1,081 meters up. We're not too far up from the sea, mind you. It's only about 50 or so miles down to Hamhung at sea level. So you get an idea of the valley floor up there. Most of the 1081 elevation is, in fact, right there.

**Simmons:** Yes.

**Barrow:** The wind that came sweeping down there from Siberia, I'm telling you, it was cold. So if there were any casualties, you can't say, "Well, the guys didn't take care of themselves or something." The extreme cold, the inadequacy of the cold weather clothing that we had, it's forgiven.

I, myself, I never was evacuated [inaudible]. My hands were in such bad shape that, weeks after, I was still losing skin. To this day . . . I finally had this confirmed by a cold weather expert, a doctor in Alaska. When I described my condition he said, “Well, sure, your nerves have been traumatized, and you’ll always experience cold more than you otherwise would.” So if I pick up a glass that has ice in it, I can’t hold it. I have to put it down, even things that are hot. My whole nerve endings are sensitive. So that’s mine.

We had people, of course, that really suffered from serious frostbite, and we had wounded that, no matter how you tried to keep them comfortable, suffered. A relief column was sent up that second night by Buck Schmuck to evacuate our wounded and dead and to bring up to us ammunition resupply and rations. That little relief column was headed by [Captain William R.] “Bill” Hopkins, a lawyer down in Roanoke, Virginia. His father was a [inaudible]. He, himself, was a lawyer and was the senator in the state legislature in Virginia for about 30 years. He was reserve and got called up with the Roanoke unit and he was the H&S [Headquarters and Service] Company commander at the time of the battle for [Hill] 1081, and so he lead that column up there. They did a masterful job, because to evacuate the wounded off of there, and we’ve talked about it many times since, it was just an amazing feat as they were lowered down inch by inch.

Anyway, the next day it was another bright, sunny day. We were pleased with ourselves for having accomplished our mission, and we spent a better night, in many respects, than we had the night before because we were occupying some of the bunkers and what not that the Chinese had created. I remember I got me a fairly good night’s sleep, and I thought that my lower extremities were a little bit warmer than I expected them to be. The next morning Thatenhurst said, “Who is your friend, skipper?” And I looked down at my feet and there was this [interruption in tape] so my lower extremities had been a little warmer than I might otherwise have expected. Ben says, “Who is your friend?” There was this thin and infrequent wisp of breath in the cold air coming out of this hole where I had put the lower part of my body. It was a Chinese, sort of a crushed-in bunker, and I had sort of eased my feet down in there. He had moved around sometime during the night and positioned himself across my feet. The poor fellow, when I got up out of there and we reached down and pulled him out and sort of exposed him to the outside cold air, he really just died. He just succumbed right there. He was probably in his death throes. I mean, he was just barely living but he was, to some extent, keeping my feet warm.

**Simmons:** I'm going to interrupt you again. First, I'm going to ask you to describe how you were personally dressed, from the skin out.

**Barrow:** I don't know if I can do that. I had on long johns, regular utilities, and I think I had some sort of sweater. But a parka and those doggone . . . what do you call them?

**Simmons:** Shoepacs.

**Barrow:** Shoepacs.

**Simmons:** You had the Navy-style parka, the long parka with the pile liner?

**Barrow:** Yes.

**Simmons:** And shoepacs. Did you wear a helmet?

**Barrow:** Wore a helmet.

**Simmons:** Did you have one of the winter caps to fit under it?

**Barrow:** Yes, we had that too. Winter caps to fit under it. By any measure, inadequate.

**Simmons:** Let's speak a little bit about the Chinese, now. How were they uniformed, and what was their physical condition?

**Barrow:** I can tell you more about them than I can about us, in a way, because it reminded me of my World War II experiences. It looked like coming home again when you saw those poor devils. They had cotton-padded uniforms, which is a big, pantaloons-like set of trousers that fit all sizes. You stepped in them and had a drawstring to draw them around your waist. And you put on a cotton-padded coat that matched the trousers in the way it was constructed, and the color, and everything else. Well, it was a pale gray. A lot of those devils had just plain old boots with ordinary socks. They didn't have helmets. They had a pull-down, earflap kind of—what's the word—hat. There's a word for it, what they called it. Comes down around . . . you can leave it up or you can pull it down around your ears and down around your neck a little bit. Whatever suffering we thought we experienced, theirs was much, much worse.

**Simmons:** Do you recall the appearance of their hands and their faces of some of the prisoners?

**Barrow:** Yes. Frostbitten, blue, blue-black, and no people in the world are more, seemingly, inured of discomfort and pain than the Chinese. No complaining, no whining. They just sort of accepted their fate.

The weather was our worst enemy, but also best ally. People talk about the extreme cold in the Chosin Reservoir operation and how much we had to endure. That's true. But had it been

warm weather, the Chinese would have been more comfortable, of course, and maybe he could have done more things than when hampered and kept from doing by the cold weather. But the Chinese would have benefitted, in some respects, more than we would have if the weather had been favorable. That's the one area they would have had less. They had cold weather casualties as much as anything. Astronomical. Not to take away anything from what we did, because there was still a lot of fight left in them, but they suffered.

**Simmons:** You talk about this one wounded Chinese who, in effect, surrendered and died. Did you pick up any other prisoners?

**Barrow:** No prisoners. No prisoners. A lot of the casualties were inflicted by supporting arms. They had crushed-in bunkers. The whole hill took on a different appearance. It was blackened. All the supporting arms had hit it. The snow, well, the dirt had been turned up and blasting powder, and one thing and another. The whole hill just took on a different look. It was tranquil looking when we first saw it, the first day, you know. It was uninterrupted; you could see what looked like bunkers, and you'd see Chinese moving around. But after we finished with it, it was pretty scarred.

**Simmons:** What other evidence did you see at that position as far as their housekeeping facilities?

**Barrow:** Minimal. Most of their eating was done dry. They had utensils there and some evidence of cooking, using the snow, I guess, as a source of water. But I think a lot of them just ate dry rice and whatever else they carried with them.

**Simmons:** How long do you suppose they were on that hilltop?

**Barrow:** A week, and the thing they did best, they took care of everything, except their personal comfort, first. Somebody had disciplined them into doing their job well in terms of creating a defensive position with infantries controlling that bridge and the approaches to it by fire—good positions, machine guns, etc. And they would have been successful in doing it, no questions.

**Simmons:** They must have had some hand tools. They had something to work with.

**Barrow:** Yes. Oh, yes, they had hand tools, and they had some cooking utensils. They had a lot of hand grenades, those old potato mashers. They had automatic weapons. They had boxes of ammunition that had been hauled up there. They had some ration bags. But they surely were not in anything resembling first-class shape.

**Simmons:** By ration bags, do you mean that small, sock-like thing that they used to . . .

**Barrow:** Yes.

**Simmons:** . . . carry around their neck?

**Barrow:** Right.

**Simmons:** Which we believed to carry five to six days of rice.

**Barrow:** Yes.

**Simmons:** That was our understanding of what was in it.

**Barrow:** Yes.

**Simmons:** Well, for your actions on 9 and 10 December, you received the Navy Cross.

**Barrow:** Yes. I don't think I was any more deserving of that than some other medals I've gotten, but those kind of actions often . . . rather than recognize the performance of the unit, you recognize the unit commander or whatever.

The next day, we watched all day long the patches of 1st Marine Division down below us, steadily going south to the sea. Finally, late that day, we took ourselves off the hill. I will tell you this that we didn't leave anything up there worth having. As difficult as it was to get up there, it was difficult, also, to get down. But we carried all the weapons that our people who had been evacuated as wounded or dead or frostbitten; almost every man that went off there had two or three weapons which he carried off with him.

As we went down, of course, the 1st Battalion sort of brought up the rear as the last element coming out going to Hamhung. It was an uneventful experience for us. We plodded down the road. We spent a very brief time there in Hamhung and then over to Hungnam, as I recall.

Some people picked up Army parkas that were there in excess of their requirements. That time we were going to the extreme South Korea where it was cold, but we would have liked to have them earlier. Not parkas, they were not parkas, either. The thing I'm thinking about was . . .

**Simmons:** Those heavy trench coats.

**Barrow:** Yes, trench coats with a liner.

**Simmons:** Right.

**Barrow:** They had something that you unzipped that . . .

**Simmons:** And dropped down.

**Barrow:** . . . dropped down around his legs and they were like leggings in there.

**Simmons:** [Reserve Captain Eric S.] "Scotty" Holmgren always used to wear one. Remember Scotty?

**Barrow:** Yes. What a character. Well, we all got aboard ship and went down to Pusan [South Korea].

**Simmons:** Do you remember which ship it was?

**Barrow:** D——n, I don't remember.

**Simmons:** USS [*General E. T.*] *Collins* [AP 147], wasn't it? I think the whole regiment went on the *Collins*. I know our battalion went on about midnight, after many delays.

**Barrow:** I remember as we were coming down the road—again, I was with Thatenhurst walking down the road—saw these Army troops that had been dispatched to go north to “help us on our final leg into Hamhung.” So I said to one of them, I said, “What outfit are you?” And he didn't answer me. So I said it again, and he didn't answer me. I then somewhat lost my temper.

Thatenhurst intercepted me, and he said, “Skipper, he doesn't understand you. He doesn't speak English.” They were from the [Army's] 65th Infantry [Regiment] from Puerto Rico.

**Simmons:** That's exactly right.

**Barrow:** [Laughter] I thought to myself, “You guys from sunny Puerto Rico up here in North Korea, they'd have the biggest body shock that anyone could possibly have.” [Laughter] I wonder what they thought of that.

**Simmons:** Luckily, they didn't have to go too far north. I don't think they went farther than about Sudong-ni [North Korea].

**Barrow:** Yeah. Anyway, we went to Pusan, and from Pusan we went over to what's been often referred to as the Bean Patch—Masan. We went into a kind of regimental bivouac. Everyone was so glad to be there and be alive and get word about their friends and their comrades; [you] spent an awful lot of time reading mail, letter writing, trying to determine the whereabouts of people that you knew something had happened to them, visiting with other units, eating.

By the time it was Christmas, the Marine Corps, which was never noted for being very forthcoming with things like turkey or one thing or another, made a supreme effort to provide turkeys for that Christmas. At the same time, the naval brothers, being somewhat sympathetic and admiring of our performance up north and one thing and another, and feeling sorry for us, they came forth with turkeys, and the U.S. Army, thinking, “Well, these old Marines, they never have anything,” they came forth with turkeys. Do you remember that?

**Simmons:** Sure.

**Barrow:** We had turkeys from every possible source but the [U.S.] Air Force, and so there was an abundance of that kind of thing, eating, a lot of visiting, a lot of talking, a lot of critiquing.

**Simmons:** A lot of people getting sick. Remember? A lot of people came down with respiratory diseases.

**Barrow:** Yes. They sure in hell did.

**Simmons:** The flu and . . .

**Barrow:** A lot of them were having not-so-serious frostbite becoming a problem in getting that tended. [Army] Brigadier General [Samuel] S. L. A. Marshall arrived and started interviews with participants.

**Simmons:** I have copies of those interviews, incidentally.

**Barrow:** Do you?

**Simmons:** Yes.

**Barrow:** That's interesting.

**Simmons:** He's very admiring of the 1st Marine Division.

**Barrow:** Yes, he was. And said so. I remember in his interview with me he wanted real details, like, how did you recall your BARs [Browning automatic rifles]. He wanted to know specifics.

The thing I remember most about Masan was the day that the entire regiment was assembled to be addressed by the regimental commander. I don't know if you were there that day or not.

**Simmons:** I remember it.

**Barrow:** Mindful that the 1st Marine Regiment had suffered a lot of casualties, cold weather and battle casualties, it was not difficult to assemble the regiment in a rather small place, and Colonel Puller was able to address the regiment without needing a loudspeaker; that's how small the formation was. I remember the theme of his remarks was sort of along the lines of, "We're going to next go north and revenge the death of our fallen comrades." That sounded reasonable enough, I suppose. But then he made a statement that caused the officers where I was standing all to sort of look at one another. He didn't mean it like it sounded, but you could put this construction on what he said. In trying to convey to the regiment that we had not been harmed too severely by what we had experienced, he said, "This regiment isn't licked. Why, I commanded this regiment on Peleliu where we suffered 98 percent officer casualties and 95 percent enlisted casualties. And if we could do it then, we can do it again." A few of us looked at one another like, "My God, what does he mean by that?"

We, subsequently, went north, and I probably would have moved to another assignment or something would have happened to me because I had seniority. I may have been the bull company commander in the division, really. I'd been there . . . no, that's not true. It would have to go back to counting my peacetime service in Lejeune. But there were other company commanders who'd been in Korea and still in charge of their companies as long as I, you know, went to Inchon.

**Simmons:** Some of them longer, some of the ones from 5th Marines.

**Barrow:** Yes, that's right. So that's not a fair statement. But I think it's fair to say I had A Company, 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, and then A Company, 1st Battalion, 1st Marines—the same unit—probably longer than anyone else. I don't know what might have happened to me, but I got notification that my father, who had been a very healthy man, a wonderful man, that he was dying of cancer. So I was sent home on emergency leave. It, subsequently, became a PCS [permanent change of station] order. As I left the 1st Battalion area, I turned my company over to a fellow named [First Lieutenant Robert T.] "Bo" Hanifin [Jr.].

My next stop in getting transportation and what not was the regiment. The regimental commander, Colonel Puller, knew that I was in the regimental area, so he sent for me and said, "I understand you can't get out until tomorrow, anyway, so you go ahead and bunk down here with me." So I spent my last night in Korea with Chesty Puller, regimental commander. To his credit, I think he sensed my deep concern and worry about my father and felt, somehow, that he could maybe take my mind off of that by having me there in his tent and having conversation. So we spent a very long time talking, just the two of us, not so much about Korea but about the Marine Corps and some of his past experiences. He went back and talked about Haiti. I must say that, to some extent, he did take my mind off of my worries.

**Simmons:** Was the regimental CP at Masan or had we moved up to Andong [South Korea]?

**Barrow:** We had moved up [to] Andong. I finally left and came back. My father was in fact very ill, but he survived another six weeks or so. I had orders to come to Headquarters Marine Corps where I was assigned to enlisted detail as a monitor of the infantry MPs, NBC [nuclear, biological, and chemical] MOSs [military occupational specialties], obviously, primarily infantry.

We can go through some of this before we conclude for the . . . why don't we just continue.



**Simmons:** All righty. According to your chronological record you had this duty from March of '51 until March of '52. What were your duties, and who were some of your associates?

**Barrow:** [Lieutenant Colonel] Donn [H.] Robertson, Colonel Robertson, was the head of enlisted detail. This is on the first deck, first wing. His assistant was [Lieutenant Colonel Thomas M.] "Tom" Leineweber, a lieutenant colonel, and then the guy who was over several monitors was a recon man, [Major Walter] "Walt" Gall.

**Simmons:** Who had just come back from 1st Division too.

**Barrow:** Yes.

**Simmons:** Had the [1st] Division Reconnaissance Company.

**Barrow:** Yes. There were not many of us back, so we were kind of "celebrities." That is to say, there were constant contacts being made by people from [MCB] Quantico [Virginia] and around Headquarters [Marine Corps] to ask questions about things like this casualty question, but trying to get a handle on some of the experiences we had. So we were among the first back.

I was told, "We want a combat veteran on the infantry desk because, through the years, it's become a little bit of a problem in that there are here and there a lot of infantry staff NCOs [noncommissioned officers] who are holding down assignments outside their MOS, [inaudible], if you want to call them that. And in some instances, have held them down for years and the evidence is that they're never going to move. So you get in there and stir them up. Be the man to get everybody cranked up for this war effort." I had a sergeant major named Smith, who was a super fellow, an older man. Then I had a young staff sergeant, and this one corporal named Kelly, who is now the president of the 1st Marine Division Association, I believe.

**Simmons:** [Edwin F.] "Ed" Kelly. Major Ed Kelly.

**Barrow:** He got to be an officer somewhere along the way. One time I had a young fellow working for me named [inaudible], who also got commissioned. But there were never more than about three or four of us there on this [inaudible]. Most of the detailing, the monitoring, was done with these little tiny eight-inch strips that you slide in and out of a panel. The whole series of these panels were mounted in a swivel arrangement, and you could flip those swivel things and find all kinds of little information about people. Beyond that, there were no computers and printouts and all that. We had to go [inaudible]. So we had stacks of cases, and we just did things. Most of the lists were union grade, lower grade. Enlisted personnel or the infantry-type

were, of course, assigned by quarter arrangements. It was primarily staff NCOs that we were concerned with.

I remember, having taken my direction seriously, I started moving some people who hadn't moved in a long time and found out that that wasn't the most popular thing to do. But I was there for about a year or so, and during the last six months of it, I had been approached by persons over in the Central Intelligence Agency for assignment to them.

**Simmons:** Well, I'm going to interrupt you there, because that's a tantalizing lead-in, but I want to talk a little bit more about your duties at Headquarters and also of your life in Washington [DC] at this time. We haven't gotten you married, yet, have we?

**Barrow:** No. No, not married. But wasn't it fortuitous that the girl I met in Camp Lejeune, and who I was in love with and who had faithfully written to me all during my time in Korea and I had written to her, and interestingly, had started corresponding with my father, whom she never got to meet because he died. But he sensed that I was in love with her. So on his own, he wrote her a letter, and she answered and they started a correspondence.

**Simmons:** She was living where, then?

**Barrow:** In Washington. That's what I meant by wasn't it fortuitous that I was assigned to Washington. She lived over there near Fort Myer [Virginia], and I lived in the Virginian, which was the first high-rise south of the Potomac [River].

**Simmons:** Joe Trompeter lived there, too.

**Barrow:** Joe Trompeter lived there. A guy named [Major Everet A.] "Swede" Hedahl lived there.

**Simmons:** And one of the Hopkins.

**Barrow:** That's right.

**Simmons:** Joe Hopkins [?]?

**Barrow:** The one who had the battalion for a while.

**Simmons:** Yes.

**Barrow:** And did you know Swede Hedahl?

**Simmons:** No.

**Barrow:** He lived there. Sally Jerome's son, Reinburg.

**Simmons:** Uh-huh.

**Barrow:** [Joseph H.] "Hunter" Reinburg, he lived there. There were quite a number. I was only

a few blocks from where Patty lived. So I resumed or really started seriously my courting. We did the typical things that a young couple would do. You know, we went to shows and movies, and ate out some. But the socializing life was not a rich and exciting experience for me, because I was in love with a specific girl and acted accordingly.

I bought my first automobile just before I was assigned there. I want to say that because now an automobile comes as an item of issue with every second lieutenant, but I was a captain before I had my first car.

**Simmons:** And what was it?

**Barrow:** It was a Chevrolet. When I was home on leave and my father was, to be with my father when I came back from Korea, in a little town cars were hard to come by, then. They got tight again. They hadn't really loosened up since World War II. I said, "Well, surely, the Ford and Chevrolet dealer here wouldn't have anything that wasn't already spoken for or on the waiting list." So I shopped all around to buy my first car, at age 29, and to no avail. I was expressing my disappointment to Mr. Fred Wilcox, who owned the Chevrolet agency. He said, "Why did you do all that? Why didn't you come to me? I'll let you have the next car that comes in. I'm not sure what I'm going to get, at just what it cost me in appreciation for your performance and service in Korea." He later had a son killed in Korea, I might add. So I waited and then the next week the first car that came in really didn't fit Bob Barrow's personality. But I took the first car that came in, and it was a bright, yellow convertible.

**Simmons:** I had a bright, yellow convertible when I came back from Korea. I thought it fit my personality.

**Barrow:** So I arrived in Washington, first car, age 29, bright, yellow Chevrolet convertible. I remember I didn't even have a heater in it, and the first winter, I suffered through that. Maybe I was trying to remember Korea or something, but I took care of that problem.

So I did a lot of simple things. Patty had these two little children that I was and still am . . .

**Simmons:** This would be Charles and Mary.

**Barrow:** . . . very fond of. Charles and Cathy.

**Simmons:** Cathy, excuse me.

**Barrow:** They were darling little children, and so we used to go driving in the country a lot. I had my new car, and they would sit in the backseat, and we'd drive all around Virginia on

Sundays; something I still like to do. I'm a Sunday driver. I like to go out and drive around. Don't do it as much. So it was kind of a simple life, really.

I knew that if I went to work for the agency [Central Intelligence Agency] that I probably would have another set of orders overseas. So I was frustrated by what to do about my girlfriend. And, as far as the job in the Detail Branch, I would have been just as happy to have gotten rid of that. Not that it was onerous. Nobody was afraid of hard work, but it was just kind of frustrating and it was not especially rewarding.

**Simmons:** You're still a captain at this point; you haven't been promoted to major.

**Barrow:** Not yet. But I would be that . . . '54.

**Simmons:** [In] '54?

**Barrow:** No, no. No, no. [In] '52, I meant to say. I got promoted in '52. But this was '51, and I was promoted, as I recall, something like . . . why don't we look it up? I have it somewhere. Do you have it?

End of SESSION IV

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION  
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Interviewee: General Robert H. Barrow, USMC (Ret)

Interviewer: Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons, USMC (Ret)

Date of Interview: 3 June 1986

SESSION V

**Simmons:** I see you have some information from your fitness reports you might want to read into the . . .

**Barrow:** Well, as I did the last time, Ed, I brought some of my fitness reports. It kind of helps me keep track of where I was and what my official titles were. In connection with the period we were just talking about. All my fitness reports, as you can see, are blank and they don't say anything except that I was somewhere.

But I do have, not in a fitness report, but in this section of my selection board case a letter from the then-Commandant Lemuel C. Shepherd Jr. written on 7 April 1953. That means it's 33 years old. General Shepherd is still alive and [inaudible] a lawyer. He says to me, this young major out there,

Dear Barrow,

A personal friend of mine recently called on me while in Washington [DC] following his visit to the Far East last month. We discussed the many matters of interest on the situation in China. He informed me of your outstanding activities and the work in which you are now engaged.

I wish to inform you that such reports are a source of personal gratification to me, and I sincerely congratulate you on the fine job you are doing. Although the tasks you are performing are of a most rugged and hazardous nature, I feel certain that the experience you are gaining will be of great benefit to you in the future.

Please extend my congratulations and good wishes for any other of your associates who are working with you in your present venture.

Warm personal regards. Believe me to be most sincerely, Lemuel C.  
Shepherd Jr.

It's all there in my record. It's the only acknowledgement, really, that I have that I was there.

**Simmons:** Interesting. Interesting. We have reached an interesting point in General Barrow's career. General, my first question is as follows. In March 1952 you received a classified assignment and this classified assignment continued until August 1953. I presume that the basic circumstances of the assignment are no longer classified. What can you tell us about it?

**Barrow:** Well, first of all, as we've already agreed to off tape, we will come to some sort of resolution of the problem as to whether it's still classified or not. But for purposes of this interview, I propose to treat it as if it were not. In other words, I'm going to speak to the approximate year and a half service, and at some later date we can determine whether it should remain under lock and key or whether we can put it in the open literature.

What I can tell you about it is that when I was in Headquarters Marine Corps serving in the Detail Branch, as already been spoken to in the previous interview, I was, over a period of several months, wooed and courted by some folks in the Central Intelligence Agency to come to work for them. They wouldn't say exactly what I was to do, and they would never reveal their hand to a prospective recruit. But it was clear that they were interested in me because of my World War II experiences with the Chinese.

You could put several things together and figure out that they were talking about something related to peripheral activity around the China mainland because of the Korean War and the Chinese were in it, and you could guess that that would be what I would do if they were successful in recruiting me.

We must remember—now this is 1952 that they started this and I left in '53 to go over there—that the Central Intelligence Agency, which was a follow-on to the Office of Strategic Services, was still in its infancy and trying to get itself organized into what it is now. There was the usual breakdown in most of those kinds of national undercover organizations of paramilitary and intelligence of all kinds, [inaudible], and technical and so forth. Much of their paramilitary activity, necessarily, was depending on military people. Not former military. Some former military, yes; but they still had license to draw on [U.S.] Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine officers to be assigned over there to do sort of quasi-operational or more operational than quasi. And this was until they built up their own capabilities from young officers who had gotten out of

the military and whatever other source they may have elected to use to get their own organization in line.

In any case, I finally . . . part of the problem was getting released from the Marine Corps. The Marine Corps said, “He’s only been in this assignment for about a year.” But they relented and I went to the Central Intelligence Agency. I went through the usual entry activities—interviews and testing and all of the things to get a good security classification clearance.

They did want me for, just as I suspected, activity in the East China Sea, and after a brief period in Washington, I was launched. I’m not going to go through all the details of the cover that was employed to get me out there. That doesn’t add much to my story and that helps keep some of the classification problems out of this. I went to Taiwan and was there a very brief period of time, literally, a couple of days, meeting some of the principals who operated in Taiwan. But the things that they were doing were primarily on the off-shore islands of Matsu and Quemoy [in the Taiwan Strait] and, what is little known because it didn’t last as those two had, a place called Tachen [Islands], which is really one island in a very large chain of other islands. But it was called Tachen [or Dachen] for simplicity’s sake.

Obviously, they did other things on Taiwan—training. They had communications set up there, and they had all the equipment and weapons and things that one needs. The activities, the operational things, was the off-shore islands. So they said, “You are going out to be in charge of the Tachen group.” I said, “Thank you very much. How do I get there?” That is almost a story in itself about how you got there.

Tachen Island complex is 210 miles north of Formosa or [presently known as] Taiwan, if you will, and just a few miles off the China mainland. On a clear day, you could see the mainland. If you were on the mainland, you could see Tachen. It consisted of two islands, really, North and South Tachen, and to the north another separate island about 40 miles away called Ichon [?], and then, about 60 miles—maybe less than that—south, an island called Pichon [?], and then 85 miles south of that, one called Manchi [?], all of which were in Nationalist hands and all of which were now part of my command. So I had something that ran for about 120-odd miles, all of which were in eyesight of the China mainland and all of which had a little different character, both in terms of topography and who was sitting on it and who was in charge of it—the local types or whether they had a combination of locals or, for the most part, they were people who had been evacuated from the mainland and then were sent out there.

Now the Tachens, if you want to just call that group the Tachens, were kind of historic stepping-stones in China. As I recall, the Japanese landing . . . invasion of China in 1937 when they were going to use part of this group of islands as a kind of stepping-stone to push right into the heart to break North and South China, to go right through the center, almost.

[The year] 1953 was important because several things happened. As you recall, in 1949, the Chinese Kuomintang [political party] under Chiang Kai-shek [leader of the Republic of China] was becoming increasingly less successful in its capabilities to deal with the Communists, both politically and on the battlefield. Finally, he had to abandon mainland China and went to Taiwan—or Formosa as it's been called. As you know, it had been Japanese territory since the turn of the century, and they were not the most welcome people, I might add. They superimposed themselves on the Taiwanese, who are Chinese by ethnic origin, etc., but they had been insulated and isolated for so long on this major island that they weren't altogether Chinese in their outlook on things political and what have you. But welcomed or not, there was Chiang and his whole raft of political types and military types and you name it.

Most of the hierarchy evacuated their families in toto, including their cooks. That's why you have such a great variety of cuisine on Taiwan. There are several reasons. One is the plentifulness of foodstuff (there's a great variety of fruits and vegetables and fishes), and the other is that you had cooks—chefs, anyway—cooks evacuated from every province in China, each of which cooks a little bit differently. In Taipei [Taiwan] you can go across the street and eat, seesaw back and forth and eat 8 or 10 different provincial types of cooking, which would take you a year in China if you had to do it. [Inaudible] to make a point. Anyway, I'm sort of digressing, but maybe it contributes something to this tape. We'll just talk along a little bit.

One must remember that, whereas the hierarchy brought their families and treasures with them, there were thousands and thousands of ordinary soldiers who had the opposite happen. They left their families. If they weren't married, they left mothers and fathers and brothers and sisters. Some of them were married and left their wives and children. They were not all volunteers, either, that ended up in Formosa [or] Taiwan. And it's remarkable that they have maintained a certain loyalty to the Nationalist government all these years. You know, a lot of the Nationalist government was created, conditioned, and induced to act not unlike the Communist government. Let me qualify that. I mean by that, their military systems.

They had the equivalent of the political officers, just like the Communists do, to keep



everybody on the straight and narrow paths, politically right. That's a major position at whatever level, from the highest level of government right on down through battalions or what have you, to be the political affairs office or the political affairs department. You sort of enjoyed almost a co-commander status. The commander of the unit, you could look over his shoulder and determine his fidelity to the cause and loyalty and what he was teaching, etc. So maybe that's what kept all these fellows in line, but they stayed in line and still have been, although they are an aged army by now in 1986. But [in] 1953, they were still pulling their pants up from their loss on the mainland. I'm going to come back to that.

But why was I there? Why was there any American effort? In large part, because there were some who believed that a diversion of any kind along the Chinese mainland would be helpful to our efforts in Korea. I can't quarrel with that because, as we know from my own experiences then and since that, for reasons I don't fully understand, the one thing the Communists cannot tolerate—whatever, Chinese, Russian, whatever variety—is any breach of their security. I really believe that they have a fetish about that beyond anything else. They don't want any physical breaching of their security. So it matters not that we were incapable of really being a serious threat. It was just that there we were in these little islands along the mainland and able to do certain things which troubled them beyond what our real capabilities were.

Indeed, this diversion philosophy as to why we should be there was borne out by the fact that our intelligence revealed—intelligence that I was partly responsible for gathering—that a number of units from other parts of China moved up to the north were, in fact, diverted to that area to strengthen it, because they had what they call divisions that were stepped down. I can't think of the term right now. They were not frontline divisions. They weren't highly regarded. That's what was there, which in my judgment were plenty adequate enough. Though their presence was sparse, they had a lot of ground to cover. Additional forces were brought down and positioned in that area.

So here we have an interesting thing. Chinese Nationalists have been thrown off the mainland, and yet, they suddenly were regarded by the people, who were so successful and did it so easy throwing them off, as a threat because they were still on these little islands. The only thing that was different about the threat was that there was American assistance—aid, people, the things of war—being provided. The fortunes of both were involved because Americans believed that this was a diversion, believed maybe some of the intelligence of the events and the things

going on in Korea, and it was in the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency and the government, the highest of all places. There were still those who believed that we should present as much thorn in the side of the Communists as possible and maybe we could be the beginning of some sort of effort to retake the mainland.

We had people in our government that used the same words that Chiang Kai-shek did about returning to the mainland. Believed it. Impossible, then, and now, and always had been. But maybe that's one of the things that was used to keep those loyal soldiers who had left their families over there motivated, because there was always a promise, "We're going to go home."

In any case, these three parts of the triangle came together: the Nationalists and Americans offshore of the Communists who were fighting the Americans in North Korea. Enter Bob Barrow who had World War II experience fighting in China with the Chinese Nationalists against the Japanese. One of the problems that I had was a lot of the Nationalists leaders I worked with used to tell me unashamedly, "We're not going to waste this ammunition and stuff you've given us, because when this war is over, which you Americans will ensure will be won, our war begins and we're going to need some things to fight it with."

In any case, I'm back over there doing some of the things I had done before. So how does one get out of Tachen? You do it by flying boat, [Consolidated] PBV [*Catalina*]. And the pilots that I rode with almost all the time, there seemed to be about three or four, a guy named Seagrit [?] and one named Peters [?]. Peters had spent some time in an Indonesian jail for running guns to the resistance groups down there. So, you know, they were the kind of characters we were dealing with here. I remember the crew chief was a half-Chinese, half-black American. Anyhow, a strange looking crew, and they had this old PBV. In 1953 it was not, after all, such an old airplane. But we would get in that thing, and you had to have good radio communications with Tachen to find out what the weather was like before you took off. That consisted of someone there in the comm [communications] section of the Tachen group looking out there and saying, "Well, it looks like a pretty good day to me." He had no weather-gathering capability at all. It was his eyeballs only. "Well, how about the little harbor?" "Well, the water isn't too rough. Well, I wouldn't call it smooth, either."

Of course, all these things are critical to the landing of a PBV: what the wind direction is and what the water conditions are. If you didn't land, you could turn around and go home, but if you landed and wind and water conditions weren't right, you couldn't get off, either. That was a different story. You wouldn't want to stay there.

So you flew this 210 miles at a very low altitude to avoid being picked up by radar on the Chinese mainland. The several times that I made that trip—and it was no more than several in the year-plus I was out there on Tachen—you could be sure there was some thrill associated with it. Either weather had changed at the destination or weather en route, or these crazies that flew the airplane would buzz Chinese Communists' ships, or they'd fly over a little too close to the mainland to suit me because they wanted to take a look at it and all that sort of [inaudible].

Anyway, I was sent out to Tachen to be in charge. I'll tell you in a minute in charge of what. I relieved a former Army paratrooper, also ex-Northwest U.S. firefighter jumper. Do you know what I'm talking about? Someone who jumps out of airplanes with a wet blanket and dampens the flames or whatever the hell they did, cut back fires, and did things. It takes a sort of unusual breed for that. I admire people who jump out of airplanes. It takes a lot of courage whether you've been in the U.S. Army or for the forestry service. But the kind of guy who does that is often a fellow who is not ideally suited for a thing like Tachen, which didn't call for anyone to jump out of airplanes, among other things. But it did require a hell of a lot of tact, patience, and understanding of how the Chinese operate, for on Tachen was an infamous man named Hu Tsung Nam, H-U T-S-U-N-G N-A-M.

Hu Tsung Nam was probably the foremost combination area-responsible general officer/warlord in the *Kuomintang Army*. In any case, he was up there in northwestern China, in Penan [?]. And he'd been sitting there so long, opposite the Communists during the Sino-Japanese War, much more concerned with watching them than doing anything with respect to the Japanese who were in that area. His troops had been there so long that they had become domesticated to the area: married to local girls, had their gardens, had little plots of land. So when the "real war," as they called it, started and the Communists, who were less domesticated, moved against them, a lot of those folks didn't want to leave. If they didn't want to leave, the other choice was to go over to the other side. So his army . . . it was a combination of it just disintegrated. Some of it ran; some of it turned themselves over to the Chinese Communists. And he was disgraced.

Now we also must understand that when Chiang Kai-shek left the mainland it would be characteristic, not only of him, but any Chinese leader, to seek what we would call a scapegoat. It's not in them to say, "I made a mistake. I'm wrong and I still want to be your leader." So he

turned to his old friend, Hu Tsung Nam, and said, “He did it. He caused us to have to leave the mainland.” So, with that kind of finger pointing, Hu Tsung Nam loses an awful lot of face. It’s fine of Chiang Kai-shek to say, “I didn’t do it. Somebody else did it, so I can still be your leader.” But what about Hu Tsung Nam? He had to be given an opportunity to redeem himself, and that was to be in charge of the Tachen garrison, which ran from Ichon, 40 miles to the north, down to Matsu, 85 miles to the south, and a few things in between.

He had never worked with Americans in his life. He was a man in his 50s of the old school, which is to say, ruthless. This guy, Barton [?], was about as inappropriate a personality to have trying to work with Hu Tsung Nam as one could find. Sort of a hell for leather sort of a guy, that slapped you on the back, “Well, general, what are we going to do tomorrow? Are we going to kill some Commies?” That sort of thing, and that’s not the way you do it: patience, tact, understanding.

I’m going to get to what I did in a minute, but meanwhile, this is an important part. I reckoned that my principal job . . . because you couldn’t do anything without his blessing, without his resources. Even if it was only advice, he had to listen; you had to have him, Hu Tsung Nam. So I reckoned my principal task was to win him over, not only as a kind of an associate in a common enterprise, but, really, to make him a friend.

I’m going to jump ahead of the story and tell you that I have never heard anything to equal this in my life. This is a guy that at a snap of a finger would have people shot in the back of the head. When I left Tachen, he cried. But it cost me a lot of long hours in unheated rooms—that’s the way he liked it, with his padded uniforms on—playing bridge. Now don’t ask me how a guy liked that learned anything about bridge. I had, at that point, fancied myself to be a reasonably good bridge player. But I have not played bridge since playing bridge with Hu Tsung Nam in 1952–53.

Let me correct something. Several times I have used the term ’53. It was ’52 that I left Headquarters Marine Corps. [In] ’52–’53, I was on this assignment.

Anyway, back to the bridge. In a word, he cheated, openly cheated. He would bid and everyone else would bid. It came his time again, and if he felt like he had done the wrong thing and was in a box, he’d say, “Wait a minute. Wait a minute. No, I didn’t bid that,” and start over again. Or, after the bidding was done and you’d started to play, and he’d put a card down and somebody was going to take his trick, he’d say, “Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah,” and make everybody take

their cards back, and he'd play another card. That really isn't cheating; it's so open. What it is is warlordism. In other words, "I'm in charge of this card game and everything else."

So I sat there. He had an interpreter. He didn't speak any English. He had an interpreter, who was a kindly old gentleman from Taipei, a kind of professor. I think he was a schoolteacher. He played. On occasion, he used to get the local, so-called local, naval officer involved in some of these card games.

If it wasn't that, it was simply sitting and talking to him. But I gained his confidence to the point that the things we were sent out there to do were done well because you needed his cooperation. He had the resources. He had the power to say go or no go. I gained his confidence so well that I'll give you an example. We were having trouble up at Ichon getting the garrison up there to do some of the things that we thought they needed to do in defense of Ichon. So I expressed my displeasure in a very tactful—understanding the Chinese reasonably well as I did at the point—sort of way.

But you must understand, a foreigner criticizing the warlord-kind-of-guy's subordinate is tantamount to criticizing him in a sense, challenging his judgment. So I said some things about this colonel up on Ichon that was as tactful as I could make it but still get the point across that he wasn't doing the things he should do. Hu Tsung Nam had a habit, when he was upset about something, of jiggling his leg, which is not uncommon among a lot of Chinese. They frequently do that as a sign of nervousness and being a little bit upset with what's going on. They jiggle their legs under the table—kind of funny looking. But he would jiggle his legs and also write characters with his forefinger on his knee, which of course you could see the brushstroke but you couldn't see, obviously what it was because it was nothing but his finger writing on his knee. When he did that—jiggle his knees and did his brushstroke on his knee—that was a signal for me to back off.

So I said to myself, "I've said the wrong thing." And I did because he said to me, raising his voice and getting a little bit excited, which was unusual for him, he said words. My Chinese has never been, by any shape or form, good. I do not consider myself a Chinese linguist. But I learned out of mother necessity a lot of Chinese in World War II because I had an interpreter named Henry Chin, who was not Mandarin. We were in a Mandarin-speaking [inaudible] country, Peking language. He was really from Costa Rica and was of Cantonese descent. So he had learned about as much as I did. I learned a lot. A lot of it came back to me so I understood what he was saying, but it was also interpreted for me. And it was, "I will kill him."

Well, you may say that and it's just, you know, a use of words to make a point strongly by saying you didn't like what he was doing. No such thing. He would have killed him. I had to say, "No, general, that's not necessary. As a matter of fact, it would be very embarrassing to me. If you did that, I would lose face." That comes from knowing the Chinese, how you would counter that sort of thing. So I sort of subordinated myself and made a lot out of how embarrassing that would be and he backed off. Anyway, enough of that point.

What did we do? We did these kinds of things. If someone said what's your primary mission, I'd be hard pressed to tell you because we did a number of things with about the same degree of priority, because we had people, both Americans and Chinese, involved in each of them, who were very capable to make things happen. First, not in order of priority but just to tell you what we did, we were an intelligence collection business in many ways—radio intercept, obviously—and we had the people to do that. [Inaudible] beautiful. We sent agents over on the mainland routinely. We met on islands that were neutral by the choice of both governments—never said, never spoken, no sense formal, but that's the way it was—where there was a market that traded in the things that each produced, not that the Nationalists were producing a lot, certainly not on these islands.

But there were some things done on Tachen like no one else, one being dried squid. Tachen is probably two-by-three miles, not a tree on it, and every piece of ground that was vacant from one sea to the other had squid drying on it. It's a wonder the whole island didn't float up [inaudible].

Anyway, there were these market islands where agents—Nationalists and Communists—engaged in intercourse other than trade of goods. We had a good intelligence there, and I'm sure the Communists had a good one against us. It's just the way it was.

Secondly, we were—I say "we," the American contingent. . . . Now, mind you, I had about 35 Americans working for me, and I was a major at this time. I was the only military person and a lot of the others had some military training, a good many of them. A couple of them had been Marines, one officer and one enlisted. We were charged—and I use this term—actually, the Chinese were in charge of these things, but we were charged with making them happen, with the defense of these islands. They were very precarious in terms of being taken. All of them had a garrison of these people who had been pulled off of the mainland, but their method

of defense varied from island to island, not just because the topography might be a little different, but at the whim of the commander. They had all kinds of kooky things. Like the little bit of artillery they had, they were going to have what you could narrowly define as direct fire missions. Nothing that would ever feed back and fire concentration on what would be the most logical beach—in some instances, the only beach. They just didn't have very good defense. So we had the responsibility for arranging for a better defense for these islands.

We had a propaganda mission. We were in the business of creating and making leaflets of all kinds and getting them over to the mainland, some of which was done in such queer fashions as stuffing them in the fish. Stopped the Chinese Communist fishing boats and, while somebody was engaging him in some kind of examination of what kind of cargo he was carrying, somebody else was down in the hold stuffing leaflets in the fish so that the people who buy it at the market get a message. And broadcast, etc.

We had a seaborne guerrilla capability. [Inaudible], which is my way of saying we're going to do some sort of offensive action or our presence here for the diversion part doesn't amount to a tinker's d—n. If you can't defend, then be a diversion. So we made a great effort to improve that capability.

I have to switch over now and tell you another mission, which relates there, too. We had a sea intercept mission, which mindful that the interior lines of communication in China are very tenuous and difficult, and much of their north-south commerce is done by sea, right along the coast—coastal steamers, coastal junks, coastal whatever. And so starting with one, almost a sampan—something of a cross between a sampan and a junk, but not a very big boat—with a few simple armaments on it, like a .50-caliber machine gun, intercepted pirate-style appropriate size and kind of junk that you could do something with from the Communists. Bring it to South Tachen where we had a shipyard, and I don't mean just in name only.

We had a viable shipyard that could do things like refit a junk. We would go out and get one of the kind we wanted and bring it in there so that you didn't have to build a ship. You got so the Communists provided that and you took his cargo, if he had any, and shared it. Put gray Marine engines in some of these junks that didn't have much engine at all, you know some sort of putt, putt, putt thing, just barely creeping along, and steel plate in key places like the wheelhouse, areas not so much for vulnerability of the ship but for some weapons systems, like 20mm we got, and .50-caliber machine guns, etc.

Now what that did was two things. It enhanced your capability to intercept more of these junks and try to, not only find a boat you wanted, but one that had a cargo that you wanted. Like we had a desperate need for lumber, so if we found out somebody was hauling lumber, you go out and take the ship because you wanted the lumber. Never mind, because I've lost count of how many boats we took, but we outfitted . . . like I said, we had one in our inventory. When I left, we had 23 junks of various kinds that—I've got pictures; maybe next time I come, I'll bring them—of bristling with all kinds of armament. So it sort of grew on itself to the extent that you would increase your number, they would get more of these boats.

It also provided transportation and gunfire for your seaborne guerrilla capability you're working on. [Inaudible] what kind of boat you ride on, whether it's . . . a boat is a boat is a boat. So the sea interception program success was contributed to people on guerrilla capability.

We had some raids. Most were modest in size and a lot of them conducted on other off-shore islands, not so much on the mainland. I would never have laid claim to any of them being any model of how to do it or examples of great successes. But they weren't failures, no disasters. We did one down there off of Pichon that came as close to being a disaster. I went along on it. It was done at night, and I couldn't help but think that when we looked out there at one point we had taken in sampans, unmotorized sampans. Trailing them, four, five, or six being towed by a junk who would lay off and the soldiers would get in the sampan, just like getting off a transport and getting in the boat, and they would be rowed in in the assault. Guy standing in the stern with a sweep oar, giving you this, and the soldiers crouched down in the sampan, in some semblance of a wave, a line of departure, the whole business. After all, Marines were involved in this thing so it had to be done a little bit by the book.

I thought about this so many times, "what in the world am I doing out here in the middle of the twentieth century, 1952–53, engaged in a form of warfare that you could turn the clock back and say that's 500 years ago?" [Inaudible]

Some of the activity was also what you would call underwater demolition, [inaudible]. I remember once one of the intercept junks hauled in a very large, very large, British frigate. There was some question about whether there was mistaken identity or whether the cargo on there was attractive enough to take the chance that somebody would give the approval to go ahead and unload it. But it stayed there for a couple of days.

I had a hell of a time, in a sense because I was in charge and wouldn't like to admit that



I've had a hard time doing anything. But, anyway, I had restrained my underwater demolition team people from not going to swim out there, all wetsuits, to put a couple of templates on the side of it timed to go off after it left Tachen. There was strong anti-British feeling because we felt we were fighting a war with the Chinese Communists and they were doing diddly squiddle.

So here we were, these 35 or so Americans living in rundown Quonset huts perched on the side of a hill on North Tachen Islands which in the winter was cold as hell and in the summer hot as hell. No trees, no recreation, no diversion of any kind except to read and tell war stories and to work. I did that for over a year and got back to Taipei about three times and on one of those trips went to Hong Kong [China].

**Simmons:** What kind of numbers are we talking about? You described the size of the . . .

**Barrow:** Oh, we're talking about somewhere between 3,000 and 3,500 regular troops.

**Simmons:** And what kind of a civilian populace?

**Barrow:** And a good many irregulars and a lot of ragtags. And a very large civilian population, all interwoven. Fishermen, almost exclusively fishermen. A little marginal farming. I'd say North Tachen probably had several thousand people on it.

**Simmons:** Did these irregulars sort of trail off into pirates?

**Barrow:** Yes. We had pirates. We had a female pirate. Some of them were in it for . . . were, obviously, in it for whatever gain they could get out of cargos that they'd seize. But they knew, they had the capability to do it, they had to sort of come over and contact us. Two reasons: so we wouldn't shoot them out of the water, figuratively and literally. And, secondly, if we liked what they were going to do, what they proposed, we might give them a little assistance, a little ammunition, a little protection, even, up to a point where they would break off and do what they were going to do.

It was kind of a no-man's-land. Some of the fishing people—Chinese, God bless them, I love them but they're so clever—would fish in that water, which was near Tachen so you'd call that Nationalists waters. [Inaudible] They also fished in the Communist waters. And they were forever being stopped by one side or the other to find out, "Who are you, and are you really a fishing boat?" And those clever rascals used to have a little 8-by-10 framed picture with Chiang Kai-shek on one side and Mao Tse-tung [Mao Zedong] on the other. You know, who is stopping me now? We just turn the picture around. So that's the kind of environment it was.

As I look back on it, you know, at the time I would view it as kind of a lark, as kind of a

fun thing to do. I was unmarried. I had some interesting responsibilities. [I] had about 35 Americans, some of them real kooky; they ranged in type and what have you. Chinese, I liked the Chinese and I'm back with them again, it being really only eight or nine years since I'd been with them and some interesting assignments. There wasn't a dull day. My God, somebody was always coming in and saying, "Sir, we got another this," or "We did this," or "Did you hear about what happened down at Pichon?"

We had some guys down there on Manchi, for example, that carried spears and bows and arrows and wore kind of a water buffalo long, hairy topcoat and carried shields. That was a throwback. This island was kind of a throwback to some earlier periods that had never been brought fully into the twentieth century. But we had a lot of interesting things going on. I've already spent too much time on this.

I'll tell you an example of the kind of people we had with me. [Robert S.] "Bob" Dillon, the ambassador to Lebanon at the time of the Marine tragedy of 1983, was one of my young operators. Young Robert Dillon was a young operator assigned to me out there. We don't make a big thing out of it for the same reason this tape is kind of being made like it is. But I still see some of them. Like I just got a letter the day before yesterday from a fellow named Larry Sulks [?] over in the State Department. His son is in the Marine Corps in ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps]. He's doing extremely well.

So I had an interesting group of people, interesting assignment, interesting Chinese. On one of my last trips to Taipei, when it looked like our successes were being too well realized and the Chinese Communists were making noises about taking Tachen, I remember sending a message to my superiors. I thought I was being very clever at the time, but it wasn't very clever at all. I outlined what I saw as a threat and what I saw as our capability to defend, and the conclusions drawn were to kind of keep whatever they had. Now whether their intentions were to use it was some other thing. But, certainly, they could have overrun us, with no question. I remember being very clever saying, "Well, as I am prepared to do whatever my country asks of me, I would prefer not to participate in the Chinese Alamo."

This is about what it would have been like, because you couldn't have gotten any help. There were no adjacent forces or anybody that was going to say, "You can't let that happen." Here, we've been written off because, if they had done it right, you couldn't have gotten any PBVs in there to get you off. So they started on some of the little tiny islands up near Ichon and

[inaudible], and I made the recommendation that we close up shop. Too far to support, 210 miles north is too far.

Well, I'd done my time. I'd done over a year out there, and obviously, it was time for me to come home. I look back on it and I don't mind telling you, I will say some things on this tape that sounds like I'm bragging or patting myself on my back, but I'm just trying to be honest and give my own self-analysis. I made a lot of mistakes in my career, and I will try to tell you about those, too. But the Tachen operation, I'm pleased about it. I think I did a good job. I think what we did was a good job. I'm not saying that, maybe, it changed the events of the Korean War or anything else. What we were asked to do, we did it well.

Anyway, on one of my last trips—near last trips, if not the last one—back to Taipei, I called Patty.

**Simmons:** Who was waiting patiently all this time?

**Barrow:** Well, yes. She suffered through my absence in the Korean War, and then we courted while I was in Headquarters, although I had a competing activity, which was night school. I'll tell you more about that later.

Anyway, I proposed to Patty, long distance, from Taipei, Taiwan. She made me a very happy man by accepting. Then I quickly before I left Taiwan, and I got a ride down to Hong Kong and got a wedding ring and engagement ring. It's a story in itself. It's almost like something out of a novel how this theory of working through the Orient to locate a proper blue sapphire for me. And one was located and they were not easy to find. So I came home in August of 1953, pleased with myself, really. A major, age 31. Patty and I were married on one of the hottest days Washington has ever known, August the 29th, 1953, in the Navy chapel out at Westmoreland Circle. Is that what it's called, Westmoreland Circle? I don't [inaudible]

**Simmons:** Yes.

**Barrow:** Kind of a small wedding. [Charles M.] "Charlie" Cable was my best man.

**Simmons:** Now we're getting out of the classified area.

**Barrow:** Yes.

**Simmons:** We'll end it here and we'll pick it up with . . . [Tape interruption]

This is the first side on a separate tape because it deals with a classified assignment that General Barrow had from March 1952 until August 1953. This classified assignment took him to, amongst other places, Taiwan. And it was from Taiwan that he telephoned Patty. And, perhaps, you'll pick it up from there.

**Barrow:** Well, that's right. I proposed long distance from Taipei, Taiwan, to Washington and we became engaged. I was going to be home shortly. I made a quick trip to Hong Kong to purchase an engagement ring—a blue sapphire—and a wedding eternity band. All of which was done, itself, like a cloak and dagger thing. I put out the call I wanted or was interested in a blue sapphire ring. And the people I had good connections with all said, “There are none in the colony. They're not more expensive than diamonds but they're scarce. So due to the scarcity, in some respect, they are expensive like diamonds. But we'll see what we can do.” To make a long story short, they put the call out and blanketed the whole Crown Colony. Two days later, I showed up and I had a ring for her.

Anyway, I returned in August. We were married August the 29th, 1953, out at the Navy chapel, Westmoreland Circle, by Dr. Glen [?], who was the principal rector of St. John's [Episcopal Church] down in Lafayette Square. We became good friends with him until his death many years later and, through the years, have been members of that congregation. When we were serving in Washington, we attended services in St. John's.

Anyway, we lived over in Arlington [Virginia] in a very modest little apartment. Patty, her son, Charles—I must make it clear I've never referred to my two children who are not blood kin of mine as anything other than my children. That's the way I think and hope I treated them through the years. Charles was 10, would be 10 shortly, and little Cathy would be 5. Both of them were born in November. We were married in August.

So we settled down to a very happy first year of marriage in the modest little house that it was. It overlooked the Iwo Jima monument [the Marine Corps War Memorial], which construction started during that time. Young Charles used to go out there and watch it. As a matter of fact, [inaudible].

**Simmons:** Not far from the Virginian Apartment House?

**Barrow:** This is next to that apartment that's very open and airy looking, the condominium that looks right out on the monument.

**Simmons:** Horizon Apartments?

**Barrow:** No. I can't think of the name of it. [Gillespie V.] “Sonny” Montgomery—Congressman Montgomery from Mississippi—had his apartment in there. Literally, it's only one street. There's no other building in between the monument and this little apartment house. It's a

three-story, a number of them in a little complex. It may not even be there now, with land values being so high. But that's where we were.

I left the agency officially in October. It took me a while to get me uncleared and all [inaudible]. I was then assigned back to headquarters. I always felt—nobody ever said this to me—that people down at officers' detail, I always felt that they thought I had pulled a slick one to get out of headquarters. In those days, not many people really liked serving in headquarters. I don't know why, maybe it's the same now. But no one sought to serve in Headquarters Marine Corps. I have an idea that some of the people thought that I pulled some deal with the Central Intelligence Agency and got taken out of Washington and that I would pay my dues when that assignment was over. In any case, when I came back it was almost like, "Ah ha, now we've got you!"

So I was assigned, starting another tour, I was assigned up in G-3 Division [operations]. That was in October of '53. My specific assignment was not very earth shaking, certainly, nothing like as interesting as what I had just been doing, but I was head of the Training Aid Department of the training section of the Operations and Training Branch of G-3, Headquarters Marine Corps. More words than substance probably.

Training aids, in many respects, was in its infancy or, if not its infancy, was still hanging on in another world of doing it the old-fashioned way. We were just beginning to become mechanized, using things that had electronics involved in them and so forth; making pop-up targets were just beginning to show themselves. I remember we did a lot of work at the Navy Training Devices, which is one time I was up in Port Washington, New York, and later moved to Florida. But we were involved in training aids. A new weapons system and things that came out, we had to make sure we had the right aids to go along and this and that.

Photography, which has been a stepchild in the Marine Corps ever since the first guy stood back and pressed his Brownie camera to take the shot. I swear, it's a sad thing to contemplate how photography in the Marine Corps has been . . . you'd think with the reputation we have for being publicity hounds that the Marine Corps that the biggest industry in Washington would be something called the photographic division where there are hundreds of people running around doing things with cameras and what have you. Nothing could be further from the truth.

I must digress and say that when I retired on June the 26th, 1983, the president of the

United States was present that night at [Marine Barracks Washington, DC] 8th & I and [General Paul X.] “P. X.” Kelley, who was my successor, called the change of command at my retirement “unprecedented.” No one knows of any previous instance in which a sitting president ever attending a chief of services retirement, but he was there. I spoke, P. X. Kelley spoke, and the president spoke. It was an evening full of history, which will be of some value to the Marine Corps in time to come.

I had gone to great pains to make sure the [East Coast] Motion Picture Production Unit in [MCB] Quantico [Virginia], whatever it calls itself, would have the place blanketed and take all kinds of videotape footage of that momentous occasion, which they did, inside the house, the garden party, the parade, [and] the speeches made by the president. It would have been something that the History and Museum Division would have loved to have had in their archives. I retired and went to Louisiana and sat patiently waiting for this long thing that I was going to get that would fill me with nostalgia every few years when we’d wheel it out and show it, and I get something that’s a half-hour called “Dimensions,” in which the Marine Corps hymn [“Marines’ Hymn”] is played and some voice off camera says, “This is Dimensions. We’re going to show you now a little bit of something that happened a couple weeks ago.” And he does most of the talking. And it would show me talking with him explaining what I’m saying. It shows the president talking with him explaining what I’m saying—over voice [voice-over] or whatever they call that technique. The whole thing were little fragments of the event. So I said, “Well, isn’t that something. I wonder where the rest of it is?” So I called Headquarters Marine Corps and I said, “I got this little half-hour tickler that makes me want to see the full thing because there’s some good footage there.” Dead silence. They said, “That was given to you, sir, because we wanted to get something out quickly.”

Time went by. I asked again—dead silence. Finally, I’m talking to my friend, Ed Simmons, so it’s on the tape. I hope it’s a lesson learned here somehow. I don’t know if he knows this story. Finally, someone shamefacedly said to me, “Do you know that they had all of that down at Quantico and after they made this little half-hour thing called “Dimensions,” that because there was an order out,, the old penny-pinching Marine Corps . . .

**Simmons:** To reuse the tape.

**Barrow:** . . . to reuse the tape, so they erased all of that great, I’d say historical event—not because I was involved in it but because the president was. It just absolutely, even now, three years later, it just saddens me and frustrates me.

**Simmons:** You were speaking of your assignment as assistant training officer in G-3. Who was your section head, do you recall?

**Barrow:** Well, at the outset, a fellow named [Lieutenant Colonel Howard J.] Rice. And he was subsequently relieved by a [Lieutenant Colonel Henry H.] “Hank” Reichner, from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, an artilleryman, sort of a feisty little guy, very smart, very intelligent fellow. I think he left the Marine Corps as lieutenant colonel or colonel; I’m not sure. Always liked Hank. He lives up in Philadelphia.

Then we had some other characters in that section. [Major] Gildo [S.] Codispoti was in there. He was a schools assignment officer. His assistant was [Captain Gilbert R.] “Gil” Hershey, who was the son of the famous [U.S. Army] General [Lewis B.] Hershey, who was the director of [the] Selective Service [System].

The training section was under the Operations and Training Branch who, at the time when I arrived in October of ’53, was Colonel [Raymond G.] “Ray” Davis. That was really my first exposure to him. You will certainly hear more about him as this oral presentation goes along. The general who had G-3 was [Brigadier General Thomas] “Tom” A. Wornham, who had commanded a regiment on Iwo Jima in the 5th Division, 27th Marines.

So life went along in the remaining three months or so of ’53 and well into ’54. We learned that a couple weeks before her delivery that Patty was going to have twins, which we found to be an interesting experience when the twins were born in May of ’54. That sort of put us out of that little apartment we were in. I went house hunting and moved over to 1100 South 20th Street, which is right off of Aurora Hills. The rent was right; the house was not anything to brag about. I spent a week’s leave working up to midnight every night—repainted the house inside and all those kinds of things that a nest builder does in his early parts of his marriage.

But, in addition to have gone from a bachelor to a father of four in less than a year, I also was heavily engaged at the University of Maryland night school, one of the other things I’m pleased about. As you know from my earlier tape, I didn’t finish college at LSU [Louisiana State University], and I didn’t know if I’d ever have a chance to do that. I said to myself, “When I have it, I’m going to jump at it all the way.” I really had started this when I was in Washington the first time around back there in ’51–’52. So I went at it with full vigor and before I finished this tour I had my degree. I did 65 semester hours at University of Maryland, at times going four

nights a week, three hours each night. That's carrying 12 semester hours. Some students don't carry more than 12 semester hours and that's all they have to do. I had to be the father of four children and a husband and I had a job, which I didn't let any of this interfere with—you don't do that. So I'm kind of pleased with that little accomplishment.

**Simmons:** What was your major?

**Barrow:** My major was kind of an interesting one, military science. I think it was a major that University of Maryland cooked up to try and accommodate uniformed personnel trying to get their degrees through the Pentagon night school. Military science, embracing just about everything but things military—history, heavy on the history; languages, which you could relate to military science, I guess; and philosophy. Geography certainly could relate to military science. So that's what I got my degree in.

But it was a happy first year of marriage, and I enjoyed my friends at headquarters. Lo and behold, when we had some changes that were made there in 1954, Ray Davis in June of '54 was replaced by my old friend [Colonel Donald M.] "Buck" Schmuck, the battalion commander from Korea. Really, only three and a half years earlier he'd been my battalion commander. By the next year, March of '55, he moved me from the training section to the operations section. Specifically, I became the assistant head of the infantry unit. He laughingly said, "I'm bringing you up there to reduce the ulcer rate," because the head of the unit had ulcers, and the fellow who had it before him had had ulcers. [Lieutenant Colonel William L.] "Bill" Flake had been in there, as I recall, and then [Colonel Martin J. "Stormy"] Sexton was the head of the infantry unit, and I became his assistant and friend and admirer. He's one of our . . .

**Simmons:** Another University of Maryland . . .

**Barrow:** . . . went to Maryland. I was talking about him awhile ago. I always liked Stormy. He's different but different in an interesting, nice kind of way. At that time he was heavily involved in the [M50] Ontos [antitank vehicle] that [had] six 105[mm]s mounted on a self-propelled chassis and antitank weapons.

When he left, which he did a short time before I left, I felt heir to being a defender of something I didn't believe in. We all do that, though. That's one of the things you do when you come to headquarters. It's sort of poetic justice visited on some people who moan and groan about something out in the field, and they come in there and they have to be the one to defend it.

We also had General Wornham leave in '55, and he was replaced by [Major] General



[Edward W.] “Eddie” Snedeker. [Future-]General [Henry W.] Buse [Jr.] was the deputy of G-3. He was a “refreshionist.” Wherever he is, you know, he keeps things livened up. He’s a pleasure to have to work for.

Anyway, I started there in October of ’53, and I was sprung in February of ’56, less than three years but [a] difference [than] on my earlier tour, which they didn’t make me do three more years. They kind of let me ditch that three and a half years, counting [inaudible]. I was ordered to the 2d Marine Division, [MCB] Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, specifically to the 2d Battalion, 6th Marines.

The regimental commander was a fine officer, a real gentleman, a gracious man named [Colonel Edward L.] “Ed” Hutchinson. I always liked him very much. He’s now deceased after he retired and went to Florida. Later that year, he . . . or was it the next year? I think it was that year; the incident was that year. He was the president of the general courts-martial board that sat on the [Staff Sergeant Matthew] McKeon case.

**Simmons:** I was going to ask you about that.

**Barrow:** I don’t know that that would hurt anyone’s career, but I don’t imagine it’s the kind of thing that would win you a lot of meritorious commendations at one time or another. In any case, he was regimental commander. I used to date his niece some years before, who was his sister’s daughter named Dolly Clark, Admiral Clark’s daughter. I already knew him, in other words.

The battalion commander was [Lieutenant Colonel] George [L.] Webster. I think he’s a classmate of [Louis H.] “Lou” Wilson [Jr.]’s. George Webster’s from Florida. His wife is from Mississippi. Big man, had the biggest hands of any person I’d ever seen, and I liked George Webster. He was a good battalion commander, although he wasn’t there very long.

I did not move in. If I said I was the XO [executive officer], I didn’t mean at that time. I just said I went there with the intent that I would be XO after I did a brief spell as the battalion S-3. We were getting ready to go to Vieques [Puerto Rico] and went to Vieques where I was the battalion S-3. The battalion XO was from my old regiment in Korea, named [Major] Carl [L.] Sitter, who, of course, was your battalion head.

Carl was the XO, and I was the S-3, and George Webster was the CO. It was a good battalion. Then after Vieques, George Webster left and [Lieutenant Colonel] Andrew I. Lyman, “Andy” Lyman, took over.

His father had been a general in the Marine Corps so he was no stranger to post and

station life and things Marine and what not—very fine-looking man, a very nice man, and gave me some of the most glowing fitness reports I've ever received.

I became his XO about the time he became CO. I had a feeling that he was a little bit concerned about taking command of an infantry unit. He had been antiaircraft artillery in World War II and hadn't really managed in some time, and he was a little apprehensive about that. So to the extent that I was to be helpful, maybe he appreciated this. We also had a change of regimental commanders and [Colonel] Max C. Chapman became the commander of the 6th Marines.

Let me say that this peacetime Marine Corps was not necessarily at its best. I'd been in the 2d Division twice in peacetime. One time we were suffering from the pangs of poverty, both in people and other resources, back in the '49-'50 time frame. Now this is '55, '54-'55. Wait a minute, '56 rather, 1956, and it seems to me we do this. It's a cyclical kind of thing. We end up in a given command. I don't know whether the tone is set from on high or it just so happens the luck of the draw puts a bunch of the same kind of folks in the same place.

But there was an awful lot of interest in picking up pine cones and having squared-away, neat looking areas, never mind whether there was much training going on or how vigorous or how appropriate or how long or what the quality was, etc. I remember, it seems to me, spending an awful lot of time over what I would call police matters and other matters in early 1957.

[The] 2d Battalion, 6th Marines, with Andy Lyman as the CO, and Bob Barrow as the XO, and [Major] John [A.] Daskalakis as the S-3 departed on a so-called Med [Mediterranean] cruise, deployment to the Mediterranean. In those days—I'm saying this for the audience and not for you, Ed—the quality of deployed forces were, obviously, mostly infantry as opposed to now you have a very sizeable . . . you have a helicopter composite squadron, and you have a very sizeable logistic capabilities to give you a little more sustainability. We went out as battalion landing teams and that's just about of minimum size, at that. We had an artillery battery; we had a tank platoon; we had the usual things that you find in a battalion landing team. But we did not have any of the extra kinds of things that you find now.

We had the same kind of mission—evacuation of American nationals, precursor force of something that might occur in some part of that troubled world. Furtherance of the mission that started, as I recall, in May 1948. I harken back to FMFLant [Fleet Marine Force Atlantic] days [inaudible] to draw Med defense commission, but the Med commitment of Marines goes back to May of 1948.

So we launched out on the USS *Mount McKinley* [AGC 7], an AGC, amphibious communications ship. We had an old hard-bitten, demanding, authoritarian commodore named Hanson [?], H-A-N-S-O-N, who seemed to strike fear and terror in the hearts of his very ship captains, although they were all captains and he commodore by virtue of his position.

Andy Lyman, knowing he had to work for this fellow for the next several months, rightly or wrongly—and I, of course, like to say it was rightly—gave himself the primary mission of winning him over. It's one thing for him to be difficult for him to get along with for the Navy captains, but the Marines who had to work with him, his landing force . . . well, the landing force of that team ought to be in as much harmony as possible to make things work right. So Andy Lyman spent just one hell of a lot of time with Commodore Hanson socially, on the bridge, [and] ate with him in his mess. And it worked. He thought the Marines were super, and I think a lot of it had to do with the way he regarded the battalion CO.

What that meant was that Andy Lyman trusted me to do one hell of a lot of the battalion business while he was paying court or being attentive to this guy he was going to have to work with. So I did a lot of that, in addition to the normal things like being head of the enlisted promotion board, general courts-martial board, summary courts, and all that sort of thing. I did one thing that I volunteered for that I have no regrets about. The big hue and cry sort of was in character with that earlier comment I made about the police of the area of Camp Lejeune seemed to be of more importance to some people than anything else. Any of those things that one could do in peacetime that could be measured, anything that was quantifiable. You know, most tactical successes are not quantifiable. You can count dead bodies, I guess, and you can say that you seized a hill and even tell you how high it is, but in many respects it's not quantifiable. You win or you lose; you make progress or you don't.

The American people and the military, especially, it seems to me like to be able to count things, tidy up things. So one of the great determinants of whether you had a good Med cruise or not was how many shore patrol reports did you get. That was absolutely overriding. That was more important than how many pinecones you had in your area back in Lejeune.

Well, Andy Lyman, nice guy that he was, was also a fellow who worried a lot. He would agonize easily about things. He would say, thinking out loud, kind of, "What are we going to do about the shore patrol thing?" Lo and behold, he found a partner in the same kind of concern in

Commodore Hanson. "I'm not going to take this amphibious squadron in the Mediterranean and have it come back with a lot of black eyes on shore patrol report incidents." Different ways to categorize everything—major incidents, minor incidents, numbers of arrests, etc.—and it was all published weekly in the [U.S. Navy] Sixth Fleet and then was sent back home, you see.

So I heard enough of this. So the old fire truck horse, I guess, hearing the bells or something, called on his shore patrol experience in Shanghai [China]. You remember that now?

**Simmons:** Yes.

**Barrow:** Right at the end of the war, the Sixth Fleet put ashore between 3,000 and 7,000 sailors a night in a city that care forgot—all that back pay and no inhibition. I said to myself, "You know, if you could run one section of the shore patrol, which was in charge 24 hours of Shanghai, this will be a piece of cake." So I raised my hand. I said to the commodore and the colonel, I said, "Do you want this thing to work right? Make me the shore patrol officer for every d——n liberty port."

I don't know what they do now, but typically, it was a job no one wanted and it was passed around. It would be a regimental; it would be a battalion 3 [operations officer], a battalion S-4; it would be a company commander; it would be this guy; it would be that. And you had a bunch of rotated guys. Each one learned, "Well, how did you do it?" And, "What was your experience like?" And each [inaudible] so-called nuclear traffic was really temporary.

So they looked like they could have just about died of appreciation. "Gosh, Barrow, that's good. You mean you will do this every night?" I said, "I will do it at every port. I just want some conditions. I want some people assigned to me permanently. I don't care what their regular duties are. They could be from other ships and places, but I want to do some screening. And I want a small cadre who know how to go into a place and set up the communications, get a little motor pool going, and to learn the layout of the land, liaison with the local police, [and] learn what places are bad and which are good, and we have a little set procedure. It all happens like that and you don't have to educate people. And I'll be in charge." I don't know why I'm dwelling on this . . .

**Simmons:** No, it's very interesting.

**Barrow:** . . . except it was a d——n success. We came out of the Mediterranean with, at that time, the lowest shore patrol incidents—12, to be exact, and I don't mean any of them were major; they were minor, for the entire cruise. We got a lot of accolades. Of course, what we did

was what anybody who'd think about it would do, and that is we got a lot of experience. We knew the way to deal with these people—particularly if you had the experience of dealing with them before you know this—is to not wait for the guy that's got some beer in him to be a problem and then you end up having to fight him or separating him from some problem that he's deeply emerged in; [the way to deal] is that you blanket this whole community with shore patrol. These are folks who like they've had too much to drink, which is the root cause of most of the problems, then you cart him back to the ship.

You help him instead of . . . so the shore patrol, we were looked upon as friendly cops. Those guys wanted you to not get in trouble. They wanted to get you back, but do what they asked you to do. So the climate of helping out other people not involved, “Yes, they'll get him back.” So we had practically no problems. So that was a kind of nice experience. I didn't do it because I relished the idea of being the honcho of the shore patrol. But it seemed to bother them so much, I volunteered and it worked.

We made landings at Crete, Sardinia. We made liberty ports in Izmir, Turkey—that's a great place for liberty—Athens-Patras, Greece; [and] Bari, Italy—that's around the east coast. That's not such a hot place for liberty. And we went into Genoa [Italy]. Also Málaga, Spain—that was kind of nice. Saw my first bullfight and that sort of thing.

When we were in Genoa, we sort of went to the wind. I was getting ready to go to Rome [Italy] when, on about the second day, we got whistled up to load out for the Eastern Mediterranean, which was Lebanon. It really didn't have to do with Lebanon; it had to do with trans-Jordan, King Hussein [bin Talal]'s kingdom. I've forgotten the specifics of it. And we had Marines and sailors being tie-lined from one ship to another for the next month or so, called back from liberty and taken up here and there. We went to Lebanon.

We were in Lebanon in 1957; stayed a week in Beirut. I mention this because we all know what's happened in Lebanon. It was one of the cleanest, prettiest, most charming cities I'd ever been in. You could sense that there was a certain culture about it. It was a cultured place; that kind of culture is what I'm talking about. And that there was a high living. You didn't see a lot of poverty; you saw people who lived well. There was, obviously, a moneyed upper class and there was a large middle class. Peaceful, well cared for. The beaches were pretty. Cosmopolitan, charming. Did you ever see it?

**Simmons:** No, I haven't. It's been described to me and, of course, it was called the . . .

**Barrow:** It was called the Paris of the Orient.

**Simmons:** . . . Paris of the Orient. Yes.

**Barrow:** And going back there, as I have since then, including my last trip in May of 1983, and to see it all devastated, it's just a tragedy.

But we came home. I received a letter while I was out there.

Incidentally, my family, my four little children and Patty, were living in Swansboro [North Carolina]. I was a major, fairly senior major, but there were no quarters in Camp Lejeune. So I had a rental in the little fishing community of Swansboro, which is between Camp Lejeune and Beaufort, North Carolina, on the White Oak River. We rented our house from a colonel who was still on active duty, named "Stud" Stallings [?], now retired and lives in New Orleans. His wife [had been] married to Ed Condra—before they were married she was Ed Condra's wife.

I had a piece of correspondence from the infantry officer monitor at Headquarters Marine Corps who happened to be a fellow named [Lieutenant Colonel] David William Bridges, who had been my battalion S-3 in Korea. He said, "Dear Bob, we're going [to] short tour you in the FMF and you're due for some sort of civilian component job, and that could be anything from recruiting to Naval ROTC to Reserves." He said, "But very specifically now that you have your degree," I must have because I had just gotten it a short time before, "you are very qualified to be a Marine officer instructor. As you know, I had a tour," says "Bill" Bridges—"Dave" Bridges, "in ROTC, Tulane [Louisiana], and that's first class, not only that kind of duty, but that particular school. How would you like, since that has opened up, to be the Marine officer instructor at Naval ROTC, Tulane?"

I wrote him back and I said, "Count me in." Simple as that. I had a degree, which I never would have gotten to that school, otherwise, or that assignment. And I had a friend there in the monitor who was interested enough to write a letter and spell it out in a little more detail than suddenly being surprised.

You know, this business of negotiating with your monitor that goes on now so much, some of which I disapprove of, didn't exist in those days. Indeed, there's a whole cult of officers who took great pride in the fact that they never talked to their monitors and they never saw their cases. "I have never been to Washington. I have never looked at my records. I have never talked to my monitor, because I'll go wherever they send me." Of course, that's right down the monitor's alley because if everybody would be a non-complainer you could send them just anywhere, you know. [Laughter]

So now they negotiate. One of the first things you do in your new duty station is to start negotiating for your next duty station. It's the d——t thing I've ever seen. "We have this for you. We have that." "No, I don't want that. What about this?"

But in this case, I had a friend in that job and so I went to Tulane University after two weeks' charm school at Evanston, Illinois, Northwestern University. I arrived down at Tulane.

Patty and the four children had a hell of a time finding a decent place to stay within my means but found one very near the campus. It was the upstairs of a duplex. You know, all kinds of duplexes and most of them are sort of side by side. In New Orleans, you have a lot of duplexes that are one over one. We had the upstairs of a duplex, and it wasn't very far from campus. The children were put in good schools, good schools. I don't think you have that situation down there now.

I threw myself into my work in Tulane, which was the fourth oldest Naval ROTC unit in the country. It goes way back—long, proud tradition and interest in things Navy and Marine Corps. I often felt sorry for the Army and Air Force units on campus because they clearly were not in it, really. Anyone that went to Tulane, particularly the local boys, it was almost like joining the club. They became a member of the Naval ROTC, probably contract as opposed to scholarship, only no obligation for regular service.

You, Ed, my interviewer, have been on that duty. As I recall, you were at Ohio State [University].

**Simmons:** Right.

**Barrow:** If you must go on independent duty (and it seems all ground officers seem to get one crack, sometimes two, at that), that's a pretty good way to do it, at least I've found it. There's something about the climate of an academic community. It's so different from what we experienced in the Service. It had a very tempering and mellow effect on you. It sort of gives you a little pause, gives you a little chance to stop and think there are other things in life besides charging up hills and leading troops and keeping a clean barracks, and all that kind of stuff.

Yet you had a military responsibility there because I was the officer in charge of the midshipmen battalion, as well as the Marine officer instructor, which meant that I taught the junior and senior students who had opted for the Marine Corps. The military usually did that after your sophomore year. Now you go in as a freshman knowing that you are going to be a Marine.

The Marines handle their own one-sixth, or 16 and two-thirds of the total pot of naval midshipmen, something I take a certain amount of pride and pleasure in having negotiated with the then-head of Navy Bureau of Personnel, Jim Watson [?]. Bob Barrow and Jim Watson kind of negotiated that. The Navy seems to like it. It took them awhile to get used to the fact that sometimes some places we had more than 16 and two-thirds, which is the aggregate, but it turned out that way, and some classes were more. But if you took this at all four years, it's no more than 16 and two-thirds so don't worry that this year the seniors may be 18 percent because next year it may be 14 percent. [inaudible].

Anyway, my duties were not onerous, by any means, and so I was able to sign up, after, I think, the first semester, to do some graduate work. I did that in history. Tulane had a good and still does History Department. Dr. Pogge [?] was the head of the History Department. I became a very good student and made some good friends. One of my closest friends that I have anywhere was a history professor at Tulane at that time named Charles Pierce Roland, who is a professor of history at University of Kentucky although, this year, he's at [United States Military Academy] West Point [New York] as their resident professor. He did a similar tour at [the Army War College in] Carlisle [Pennsylvania] as the [inaudible]. Very fine scholar and simply a super individual, a really fine man. I sort of did my work under him, and, if you care to look at my transcript—I found that in there—I have all As.

**Simmons:** Excellent.

**Barrow:** Which one should have, if you're doing graduate work. If you're not an A, you ought not to be there.

I was looking at some of the subjects: twentieth-century Russia, the Civil War, seminar on Southern history, England in the twentieth century, the Old South, the New South, American colonial history, etc. I did not get my master's degree for the simple reason that Tulane required—and I don't think too many other schools did—that for a master's (you understood it to be true always everywhere for a PhD) you had to have a language proficiency. And language happens to be a weakness of mine.

I saw students at Tulane, graduate students, who were current and good in their language go over and take the language exam. They give you a book and open it up and say, "Translate." And they would fail it. So it was futile for me. It was just simply that I didn't have the time to



become a serious language student. It all goes back to the fact that the language department there was very strong and proved it. In other words, “One of the measures of our strength on this campus is if we say you don’t get a master’s degree unless you have a language certificate, and they don’t come easy. So you have to be attentive to us. You’ve got to be a serious language student.” That’s the way it was.

So I did all my course work, did most of my thesis, all the research and did a first draft of it. But I did not . . .

**Simmons:** What was the subject of your thesis?

**Barrow:** The thesis was on the West Florida Rebellion. Specifically—not the rebellion, itself—but events leading up to it and during and afterwards as centered on three rather infamous personalities called the Kaemper [Kemper] brothers Reuben, Samuel, and Nathan. K-A-E-M-P-E-R. They were born in Fauquier County, Virginia. Moved down there in that sort of no-man’s-land. And they were in the Battle of New Orleans and they were in the West Florida Rebellion, and they were moving around fighting the Mexicans in Mexico with some of the people that were crossing over that no-man’s-land around Natchitoches, Louisiana. They were sort of renegades. They were always mixed up in something.

My tour at Tulane was, as I’ve indicated several times, very pleasant. It was only 120 miles from home so. . . . My father had died in 1951 and my mother was still alive, so I was able to see her. She died while I was on that duty in 1959, two years after I arrived. So we gave her some pleasure—her grandchildren and that sort of thing—in her last year or so of her life. My youngest, my fifth child—my youngest and last child Robert, named for his father—was born there on April the 29th, 1958, in New Orleans.

The midshipmen—when I went there I thought, from taking a pretty hard look at some of the ones that were scheduled to be seniors—there only were about five or six, a couple of them just by virtue of their record out of Quantico at the end of their junior year in which they were found unfit but still being kept in the program. Didn’t make sense to me. So I made my debut at that unit by kicking out two guys who had been in the unit for three years and in the Marine outfit for one year, but they hadn’t done well at Quantico. My quick interview with them and the record said, “Well, then, why are we wasting our time with these turkeys?” So out they went. That was the most salutary thing I could have done, because it made everybody sit up and take notice and there was a clamor to get in. You make something hard and sort of exclusive, you attract people. You know, people are learning that over and over again.

In any case, I was kind of hard-nosed about that, just as I was three years later when one of my midshipmen, whom I had thought better of and had confidence in, turned up married. Now I don't think that's important whether he's married or not. The important thing is the regulations said you weren't supposed to be, and he kind of made matters worse by flaunting it, sort of like, "Ha, ha, ha, you can't catch me." Well, we not only caught him, but in an unprecedented thing, all directed by me . . . of course, there wasn't any catching him. He was either married or not. He was. But I ran his case all the way up before the university senate and it became a major cause—pros and cons—on the campus. But they finally took the appropriate action, which was to not graduate him, along with his not being commissioned; give him his hours that he earned, but not his degree. Now at a place like Tulane, a liberal arts school, that's unheard of.

But, anyway, my last class there, I think, had something like 12 or 13 midshipmen in it. We attracted good people.

I might as well tell this story now as opposed to when I was Commandant business and what happened, because it fits at this point. In May of 1983, Tulane University corresponded with me to the effect that I was to be awarded an honorary degree, which I never made a lot out of because I don't know why. I thought that was nice. So Patty and I went down there. President Eamon [M.] Kelly had us all for dinner and the other people being awarded honorary degrees.

So the day came, the night before the day this was to happen—I'm really going back before then. I'd gotten correspondence from one of my former midshipmen who lived in Tulane, lived in New Orleans who said, "Some of us would like to get together with you, sir, the night before for old times' sake." I, one, thought that was a good thing to do; and, two, I certainly wouldn't have said no because, obviously, they wanted to do it. So I said fine, and he said, "Well, we're going to meet at such and such a restaurant," not one of the better known ones, a neighborhood restaurant which was also very good.

Patty and I arrived and right away I knew that there was something more than a few of us. Virtually, every midshipman, not just . . . virtually, all the Marines and a lot of Navy midshipmen who were at Tulane when I was there were there. They came from as far away as California, several from Texas, one from Norfolk, Virginia, one from Washington, DC, one from Tampa, Florida, and all around Mississippi and Alabama and places like that. It was like a great big reunion.

I was as moved—I am right now, as I tell it—by that show of support coming all those years after. Because we’re talking about ’57 to ’60, happening now in 1983.

But also received in that connection [was] Captain Ed Eaves [?] was the Navy captain when I arrived, an old-timer, and he was followed by a man, who’d come from Amphib [Naval Amphibious Base] Little Creek [Virginia], named Richard Gregory [?], a Navy captain. And again, this is not . . . I’m only doing this because we’re talking history. [If] I sound immodest [inaudible] very good. But this is a line in his fitness report, which was puzzling. It says, “It has been largely through his efforts that the unit at Tulane enjoyed this position of prestige on campus.” I find that an incredible statement because it ought to be through a lot of other folks’ efforts, but that’s kind of nice.

So that’s about it on Tulane, Ed. I don’t know if it’s time to break or what.

**Simmons:** This is a good time, or we have a few seconds left. I’ll turn the tape over.

[Break in the recording.]

**Barrow:** . . . anyway, other than things that happened at Tulane on the campus, some of which I’ve discussed, I did go to summer camp, if you will. It was the summer of 1958. A number of us who were Marine officer instructors were sent to Quantico to be observers of the midshipmen. More than 64 units, at least, went through their summer training, the so-called “bulldog training” which happened between your junior and senior year. We would be observers, walk around and sort of look at things. Most of us were majors. I was a very senior one. I made lieutenant colonel in 1959 before I left the unit. A few of them may have been captains.

Lo and behold, again, the Jordan thing reared its ugly head, and Headquarters Marine Corps swept in there and cleaned out many of the officers who were permanently assigned to the Training and Test Unit, which is really the officers candidates group. Someone had to do the job so [Lieutenant] General [Merrill B.] Twining, who was the commandant at Quantico, and a fellow that should be familiar with you named [Lieutenant Colonel] Louis H. Wilson as the CO [commanding officer] of Training and Test Regiment. I didn’t know him until then, I might add, my first encounter.

He said, “Well, we’ve got some guys here that can do that,” meaning these NROTC Marine officer instructors, “who think they can come down here and be observers. We’ll put them to work.” So I ended up getting a company of midshipmen. That meant you were responsible for them in terms of everything they did. You had full control over them. You took them on field marches and you were part and parcel of this. I had some platoon leaders who were

captain Marine officer instructors from various places. So we had a lot of horsepower. The end of it, I'd like to tell you, is one of those things that puzzles you as to how we get like that. But I was out in the boonies with my midshipmen company. It's midmorning and a jeep is dispatched out to bring me back to see the lieutenant colonel who has that Officer Candidate School part of it. [Inaudible]

I arrived and the XO met me and said, "The colonel will not see you now, but you should know that he wants to see you because your billeting area is filthy." I knew it wasn't. That ain't the way it works, you know. You don't have something that is pristine clean, even though it may be old and rundown, one day and suddenly it's filthy the next. It just stays that way because that's the whole around which so much of the pressure and the discipline and the determination of whether this fellow has the will to endure all this Mickey Mouse emphasis on keeping the d——n place clean.

So I said, "Well, I don't believe that, but I'm going to take a look, myself." I went up topside, where my people billeted and went into a couple squad bays. Every squad bay had the sand-filled "butt-kit" turned upside down in the squad bay on the floor. All of the sheets and blankets were snatched off the bed and, similarly, either left on the bed or dumped on the floor. Stuff was pulled down off of lockers. It looked like a cyclone had hit it.

Well, I was absolutely furious. I knew what game they were playing, which is to say whatever may have been the cause for the displeasure of some officer, who it turned out was junior to me and he was a staff officer; he was the S-3, ran his little snoopy-poopy inspection, after we had departed and gone out in the field, and found something that displeased him. He and his assistants, a couple of other dog robbers [officer's orderly] around headquarters, proceeded to trash the place.

Then it was reported to the colonel that it was unsat [unsatisfactory] and, "If you want to, colonel, you come see," and he's there with tongue in cheek, so it's a big game. "Get Barrow back here, his place is filthy." He didn't make it filthy; they made it filthy. I was never so mad in my life. Somewhere in my files I have one of the best letters I've ever composed. I blistered the whole organization from the colonel, who was senior to me, right on down and sent it to Lou Wilson, whom I didn't know from Adam and how he'd react to it, a letter to the regimental commander.

I said, "I couldn't reconcile this with any experience I'd had in the Marine Corps that an

officer junior to me would enter my area without my knowledge and proceed to acquit himself in this kind of dastardly fashion.” You know, I just kind of laid it on. So my first meeting with Lou Wilson was a good one in which he agreed with me. So we had that sort of sour note. But there’s a lesson learned in that thing there; that’s why I told the story.

But Tulane was a great experience.

**Simmons:** Before you go on, that’s a very powerful lesson there. Something like that could have almost destroyed you if you had not handled it correctly.

**Barrow:** Oh, yeah. Yeah. Well, you know, I had a lot of . . . I had to be the senior major. There was another major in one of the other companies, and then we had majors and captains who were the platoon leaders. We had about 10 people there, and they all knew what was happening, or they did, eventually, know what had happened.

My worth as a person was being measured there, too, you know. In other words, is this guy going to take this sitting down or is he going to stand up and be counted? Well, I never looked at it like what do I do? There was only one thing for me to do. As a matter of fact, if I could have physically done it, I probably would have done that, too. I’ll tell you who the S-3 was.

**Simmons:** I think that’s a good place to call it a day.

End of SESSION V

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION  
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Interviewee: General Robert H. Barrow, USMC (Ret)

Interviewer: Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons, USMC (Ret)

Date of Interview: 10 June 1986

SESSION VI

**Simmons:** We left off at the last session, which was a week ago, with the completion of your tour at Tulane. You had left Tulane in June of 1960, and after a bit of leave, you reported in at [MCB] Quantico [Virginia] in August. You took a brief course at the Senior Course, one month long, according to your record. I presume this was the Instructors Orientation Course or charm school. I don't know. If so, what are your recollections of it, and who was teaching it at this time?

**Barrow:** [Laughter] Well, no, it wasn't, Ed. I'm laughing because, as we go through this long oral history, one thing will be revealed. I will reveal it, because it may not be apparent, readily to see by people who read it, that only rarely did I ever execute the first set of orders that I received, to say nothing of the first rumor or feeling out of where I might be going. This is a classic example.

As a matter of fact, we'll go back to one and say that when I was in New Orleans at Tulane, in the late spring of 1960 I was called by [Brigadier] General [James M.] "Jim" Masters, who was then the G-2 [intelligence] at Headquarters Marine Corps. He said, somewhat to my surprise, the young lieutenant colonel that I was to be impressed and surprised to hear words like that to be called by a general officer. He said, "Barrow, would you like to go to London, England?" I stammered and stuttered. "Well? Well, would you like to go?" To my surprise, I said, "Sir, may I take that under consideration?" Which is a nervy thing to do. Either you say yes or no. This was to be assistant naval attaché. He said, "Well, all right. But I'll call you tomorrow and you'd better have an answer." You know how you get kind of brusque when people do that.

I agonized with Patty about going to London. We had five children then, and I thought of trying to get more and more back in the mainstream of the Marine Corps after three years at Tulane. I went so far as to call my friend [Lieutenant Colonel] Ross [T.] Dwyer [Jr.] who was on

the CinCNELM [commander in chief, U.S. Naval Forces Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean] staff in England and ask his advice. Was this a job that had something to it? Some assistant naval attachés' jobs do and some don't. He convinced me that it was not necessarily career enhancing, but it wouldn't hurt one's career, not that I was so worried about that. He told me that, "If I were in your shoes, I would take it. It sounds great."

So when General Masters called me the next day and I enthusiastically accepted the offer, and then started with Patty to read all that we could read about living in London and trips out of London. The only thing we didn't have to worry about was learning how to speak English. Hopefully, they would understand me reasonably well. In any case, that went on for several months before it was revealed to me, finally, that [Lieutenant Colonel Reginald R.] "Reggie" Myers of your old battalion, was assistant naval attaché and his boss, some Navy admiral who was the attaché, persuaded him to extend for a year, which he did and which Headquarters Marine Corps approved. So forget that.

Now I'm on my way to the Senior School at Quantico, Virginia, which suited me just fine. Get that schooling under my belt and off to whatever else after that. So we arrived in Quantico with the understanding [inaudible] into the Senior School that you probably are going to take off for some distant place after that, and you usually just make housing arrangements that are the simplest for 10 months. So I rented a house out on the Dumfries Independence Hill Road. It was a nice house, nice place.

It had one house next door, which was occupied by Lieutenant Colonel [Sidney B.] "Sid" Berry, U.S. Army, West Pointer, retired as lieutenant general, now head of the security arrangements or whatever—police, etc.—in the state of Mississippi. He's from Mississippi. He and his wife, Ann, and Patty and I became quick and good friends. We were both going to go to the Senior School. So, to the Senior School I went.

Colonel [Joseph L.] "Joe" Stewart was the director. I was all assigned to my room. I got my books and everything else. I'm answering your question about did I go to the Instructors Orientation Course or charm school, the answer is no. I went to the Senior School. I surely must be one of the few people who, when assigned to school—it's almost sacrosanct, you don't take people out of the schools—so I must have been one of the few who, in fact, was tapped on the shoulder one day and said, "I will need to see you in the front office."

Well, I thought, what have I done now? They said, "Don't worry about turning in your

books or anything. We will take care of that. You just go report over there to the newly formed Publications Branch, Landing Force Development Center. Thank you very much.” So that’s how I happened to end up where I went. I ended up and did two years over there before I finally went back to the Senior School.

My interrogator knows a lot about all of this—my friend, Ed Simmons—because he subsequently joined this group. The reason I was there, supposedly, is that someone thought that I had some capability for writing. I don’t know how they arrived at that. But why was I singled out? In any case, I was.

This was a group that had been recently formed. Not that someone in Quantico wasn’t, in fact, doing something with doctrinal publications, but it was at best a limited effort. This whole new outfit, people and names, were to give a major thrust to the business of writing documents for publication for the Marine Corps, which has always received short shrift. Usually, someone thinks they need a manual, and so they grab someone who might have had some experience with that subject or maybe the next guy who comes through the door and they say, “You’re going to write this manual on this subject.” He gets very little in the way of resources or support. But this was supposed to be different.

So we formed in one of those buildings sort of opposite the Senior School (we later moved), and we had a writing and editorial section. We had a publication section. All of this was under a hotshot colonel who had just come from being secretary of the Navy’s aide, which should certainly be pretty impressive credentials since he must have been handpicked for that job. His name was George [A.] “Cotton”—being a nickname, Cotton—Gililand. I think the Cotton came from the fact he had light blond hair, which was less so at the time I met him.

So we literally started organizing our efforts, our organization, how we were going to do this, and who was going to do what, etc. So it had some additional growing pains right off the bat.

As for my personal life, then I said, “Well, hell, I’m going to be here for two years at a minimum and then probably go to the Senior School, so I’ll probably be here three years,” which, in fact, is what happened, “so I need to think about some place other than that lonely, isolated house up there on Dumfries Independence Hill Road.” So I seriously put my name on the quarters list and stood by and was very shortly offered a set of quarters, which let me say here: it was the first time in my Marine Corps career as lieutenant colonel with about 18 years



service, my first crack at quarters. Three bedrooms, one hardly qualifying as a bedroom, it couldn't have been more than 8-by-8 [feet], with five children. So we were crowded in a set of those quarters up there by Whiskey Gulch area, Snake Hill; they called it Snake Hill Road.

An interesting aside, I was so eager to accept quarters and be on post that I just assumed that I could get out of my one-year lease without any trouble. But the man, my landlord, said, "No. No, I'm not going to do that. That's your problem. You still have this lease, and you'll continue to pay it." So then I said, "Well, he's a bad guy but certainly there'll be someone who will sublease from me." Because housing was not that easy to find.

Well, one of my would-have-been fellow officers in the Senior School, who shall remain nameless, saw an opportunity to take advantage of the situation and, learning what I was paying as rent, offered to pay about two-thirds of that to me. On the face of it, I smiled and said no. But about a week or two later, after I realized I was going to be paying rent and losing my quarters allowance too, and things weren't getting any better. I took his offer. He was perfectly [with]in his right to do that but there's a little bit of bad ethics involved there, take advantage of a fellow officer to do that. But anyway, that's neither here nor there.

That's where we lived, and we had a happy time at Quantico. The children enjoyed it. I enjoyed it. I enjoyed being in the Publications Group.

**Simmons:** Let me interrupt you with a question or so. You've mentioned Cotton Gililand. You mentioned the fact that I was also in that group. Who were some of the other officers in that group, and what were the specific kinds of publications that you were working on, that we were working on there?

**Barrow:** Well, like so many other pieces of this oral interview, my memory doesn't serve me very well. It doesn't mean I can't scratch my head and probably think of some people, but the only one right now I can think of was a young lieutenant named [Charles P.] "Pat" Roberts. The reason why I remember him, probably, is because he's now a congressman from Kansas.

But we had a young fellow who became colonel later on, what was his name? It doesn't matter. We had [Lieutenant Colonel Donald B.] "Don" Otterson was in there, one of the writers. I just don't remember all of them. Don Otterson, who was someone I had known for a long time and who, as it turned out, had a serious drinking problem.

Everyone is onto this business about alcohol abuse these days. Some of those who would like to pursue that effort of doing something about it would have had a field day back in our

days, Ed, our younger days, in particular, with someone like Don Otterson. It is absolutely true that the *modus operandi* for most commands was to hide these people or to pretend it didn't exist. But I think we took a different view of it, particularly since we were doing his work for him. He was an old friend, and I liked him as a person—smart, very engaging personality, and it would be doing him a favor and, particularly, his wife and family, the children, to do something about it. So that was, in fact, done.

An issue was made to get him to see the psychiatrist people. I think a doctor first and then a psychiatrist. Ultimately, he ended up in the psychiatric ward in Bethesda [Maryland]. That's almost just an issue that was done by those other than his superiors; that was done by his friends and his fellow workers.

**Simmons:** Remember the horseback riding?

**Barrow:** He liked to horseback ride. He also did some bizarre things like in the mid-winter sit on his screened porch in—well, he was dressed in winter clothes but, even so, that's not the place to sit when you can sit in a house and inside it's warm, an open-screened porch in the middle of wintertime. Well, it's kind of pitiful. The fellow is now deceased, and I choose not to say any more about him. There's no need to say any more about him.

Back to the Publications Group. I found myself engaged in several things. I guess I started out working with something called a *Landing Force Manual*, *LFM*, which had some priority to it because it was going to be the doctrinal publication that would become joint doctrinal publication. It was to have been bought off on by the [U.S.] Army and the Air Force, as well as, of course, the Navy. The Navy counterpart document, the *LSM-1* [landing ship medium], and this was to be *LSM-2*, which was an extension getting into more specifics of landing force operations.

It was just an interesting thing to do. I started in on working elements of that, and later I started another publication called—there was a whole family of them—called Fleet Marine Force manuals, FMFMs. I started one of those, which became *FMFM-21*, that had several titles. It started out *Guerrilla and Counter guerrilla Operations*, and then the leader of this group thought that I might be able to make a contribution because of my World War II experiences or whatever. I found that very interesting.

The reason why I got more to do than I had been originally led to believe that I would do and that I was committed to doing was that my friend, Ed Simmons, got ordered out of the outfit

without anyone replacing him. I would not suggest that I replaced him, but I tried to fill some part of his shoes, along with the jobs that I already had. So life was made busy for me.

I became head of the Writing and Editing Section of the Publications Branch, working really for a large part of the time on these two publications, as well as monitoring the performance—auditing the performance of the small stable of writers helping them get through sticky wickets or obstacles that people put in their way from time to time or to look at things that they wrote to give it some sort of critical eye. I never fancied myself an editor, but I certainly looked at it for form, good grammar, and substance.

Anyway, we found right away in this group a third problem. It's one thing to say that we need to have an agency, an entity dedicated to writing documents of publication, and let's staff it with first-class people like Cotton Gililand and Ed Simmons and a few others. But they cannot perform in a vacuum. Their success is only as good as the cooperation of all of the people at Quantico and Headquarters for, not only the obvious things like the resources—people who could type and getting things to the printer and all that sort of business—but I'm speaking of the content of the things to be written. You had to be able to draw on the knowledge, experience, etc., of all kinds of folks—specialists and what have you—irrespective of what the publication might be.

But take one like *Counter guerrilla Operations*. You're really talking about operations. So then you're talking about supporting arms; you're talking about communications; you're talking about transportation and movement, if you will helicopters, etc. So you're talking about everything that you have in any major operation. Whether you deal with it sort of spread throughout the manual or whether you have chapters devoted to it, you have to have access to someone who is a real specialist and who is probably in the Ed [Education] Center teaching that, as well as access to the literature.

This was not the case. The cooperation was not forthcoming. I would not presume to attempt to say why. Whether it's typical that people in the Ed Center—now that would be a different agency from the Development Center, where we were—whether they didn't like having to cooperate and contribute to something that some other agency was doing. But even after we were put over in the Ed Center, we still had the problems. So then I would say it's common to those situations where you are fearful that you're going to make an effort, make a contribution, and won't get credit for it. Somebody else is using your material, your words, etc., and there's no

way that you can . . . well, it doesn't say who wrote the manual. Even the guy that's the primary writer doesn't have his name associated with it. But that's something like that is in the minds because . . . and then if you have . . .

Cotton Gilliman was kind of off on a strange kick—if I may use that slang expression—in which he kind of thought there were those who were out to do him in, to get him for his role as an aide to the secretary of the Navy when a Commandant different from the one that was the expectation of a lot of folks was, in fact, nominated or a general officer. So he didn't seek the cooperative effort. He tended to look askance, look sort of suspiciously at other folks because of his own personal experience. Now I like Cotton Gilliman, but I'm just stating the facts.

In any case and I'm saying all this to my friend, Ed Simmons, who isn't obliged to say anything and may have seen it differently, probably a hell of a lot better, but it's not an untypical thing in the Marine Corps to be a that so-called band of brothers, closely knit, serving one common purpose, one uniform, one set of traditions, and a long history and everything else. The Marine Corps doesn't need to take a bow to any institution in terms of internal jealousies and pettiness. And this was one of them.

If I sound a little emotional, I have reason to because I was caught in the middle of it. It was a day-to-day major undertaking to find out who in the Ed Center (and that could be on the Educational Center staff that may have taught some course like logistics, or it may have been some person in the Senior School or the Junior School or the Comm School) who would be really the fellow who needed to be talked to before you could finally put the finishing touches to chapter 10. Well, it was like pulling out teeth getting in to have an audience with him.

Then, in fact, once that was gained—this is generalization; there were obviously exceptions to this—getting him to be forthcoming. Sort of like an old guy playing cards close to his chest. Peel one off at a time and then you'll go away and I won't have to busy myself by answering your questions.

**Simmons:** I'm going to interrupt just one minute, just to give you some very quick thoughts or perceptions that you can comment on.

The Marine Corps always had a very difficult time deciding whether doctrine should be compiled in the Development Center or in the Education Center. It would swing back and forth, and it would often be influenced by the respective directors. Possibly we've reached a solution to that now with the creation of the separate Doctrine Center at Quantico. I say possibly.

There was also the interplay of some very strong personalities at that time. I'm going to suggest a couple of additional names here. It might be well to mention who were the directors of the Ed Center and of the Development Center at that time. Then we had [Lieutenant] General [Edward W.] Snedeker, who was the commanding general of the Marine Corps schools, and there was Jack Williams [?], who was Cotton's particular *bête noire*.

Everything that would be reviewed by Jack, Cotton would then—I'm taking the interview away from you, but you can either confirm or deny it—Cotton would then go see General Snedeker and say, "If you don't see it my way, I'll retire." About the third time he said that, General Snedeker finally gave him a quiet little smile and said, "Maybe that would be best." But perhaps you could give your recollection of that.

**Barrow:** Well, that all was part of the problem. That's exactly what happened. As I said earlier, Cotton had a burr under his saddle, for whatever reason. But it did not facilitate and did not advance our interest one iota to have that additional problem of the officer in charge feeling that way about people and things.

Anyway, it was not an altogether unhappy experience. Please don't misunderstand. But it was a difficult one. I've had those kinds of experiences before, and I had them later. I guess it's kind of part of human nature, not just the Marine Corps. But it says one thing that irrespective of where something like that resides—Ed Center, Development Center—the key factor is who is in charge. Because Cotton was relieved by a fellow named [Colonel] Oscar [F.] Peatross, a retired major general who now lives in Beaufort, South Carolina.

Although I had met him and known him before, this was my really first experience. Since that time, he and I have developed a very strong and deep friendship. I'm getting ahead of myself, but I was at [Marine Corps Recruit Depot] Parris Island [South Carolina] for almost three years and saw him often down there. He just happens to be one of the world's nicest guys as well as one super fine Marine Corps officer. He had a great deal of experience in World War II. He was on the Makin Island raid. He was on Iwo Jima. I can't recount all the places he served, but he had a very fine combat record in World War II. After this experience we're talking about now, he had a fine experience in Vietnam. He's one of those rare personalities that nothing seems to get him upset or anger him. He's always even tempered. He comes across as being very pleasant and easygoing. To some he might even be—and this would be a mistake to think so—a kind of a country boy when he has one hell of a lot of good old native intelligence, if that makes

him a country boy. He, most importantly, knows how to work with people. And that's what we needed. So things improved very much after he moved there.

**Simmons:** Another few names here I'd like to mention of individuals, strong individuals, who were there at that time, with whom you possibly interacted. [Colonel] John [R.] Chaisson, I believe, was director of the Junior Course at that time.

**Barrow:** Yes.

**Simmons:** Did you have any interaction with John?

**Barrow:** Didn't have much with him, but the few experiences we had were pleasant. I would not say that I got to know him extremely well, but I got to know him reasonably well, and we were neighbors. He's a fellow I thought a lot of, there and subsequently. He's a fine fellow. He's very bright, very capable.

**Simmons:** Wasn't [Colonel Louis H.] "Lou" Wilson [Jr.] then the commanding officer of the Basic School? You had said earlier that when you first met several years earlier at Quantico when you had come down from Tulane [University in Louisiana] or up from Tulane for the summer, but I think this was the time that you really consolidated your friendship or became a close friend of Lou Wilson.

**Barrow:** That's right. In 1958, when he had the Training and Test Regiment as a lieutenant colonel—maybe colonel—I was the upstart major who came in to say that I had had an encounter with a senior, the circumstances of which I found to be exceedingly unattractive and I thought he would agree with me. I told him the story about the inspection of my squad bay area when I was in the field and the turned-over butt-kits and all that nonsense. That was my first encounter and, you know, it went well. I didn't know how it was going to go. It went well.

So Lou moved in down the street, two doors down, when he took over command of the Officers Basic School, this being three years later. Now I don't know where he was. I don't think he remained in Quantico all that time. I think he was Training and Test Regiment and went somewhere and came back to Quantico. But in any case, yes, he's another one I got to know.

**Simmons:** I remember a lot of informal family-like entertaining and gathering, you playing a guitar, and so forth. When did you become interested in music?

**Barrow:** That's a good question. I don't conceal my limited—and I underscore limited—musical talent, but I've never gone around advertising it because I do consider it to be very limited. If my confidence could match my enthusiasm I would probably be playing in some nightclub. The same thing applies to golf.

I started becoming interested in music as a small boy growing up in the country. We talked a little bit about that in the first interview. These were times when diversions and interests such as entertainment and seeing and doing things were . . . opportunities for that were pretty sparse. So if you're out there and you're reared where there are a great many blacks, who always could be counted on having . . . some of them can always be counted on that some of them were going to be musical. So there were blacks who played the guitar, usually an old, cheap beat-up guitar and other blacks would play on the bottom of their dinner pails or clap their hands or sing or do all those kinds of things. As a little boy, I was right in there with them. My mother and father knew I was in safe hands wherever they were resting from their work or the day was over, or whatever.

So I absorbed—that's the best word I can think of. I absorbed an awful lot of fundamental, basic black culture—speech, music, stories, attitudes, psychology if you will. To this day I draw on that. I get along well with black people. I like them. I don't like some of them and some of the things that some of them have done. But I found it not difficult to make the transition from a very rigid, strict segregationist society that I grew up in to one in which all of that was overturned. I was ready for it. That's another story. Maybe we'll come to that later on in this interview.

But that's what gave me my interest in music. So they would patiently teach me things. Teach me a few chords. Teach me some of those black folk songs, most of which is blues. I didn't own a guitar, myself, but had that kind of limited access and had a thirst for it. When I went to college, one of my roommates had a guitar, and I started playing with it again. It was after World War II, I was in San Francisco that I checked one out at Special Services after being fascinated. So by the time I was assigned to FMFLant [Fleet Marine Force Atlantic], 1947, I said, "Well, you dummy, if you like it that much why don't you buy yourself one?" So I went down to the music store in Norfolk, Virginia, and bought a Martin guitar for \$55, brand new, that today sells for about \$1,500. I still have it. I have made little or no progress in my proficiency. But there was some period there in my life when I used to do an awful lot of it.

I had friends who were such good friends that they used to even acclaim it. I think the truth of the matter is that we were all young in those days and had this great fun at parties and partied late, and maybe even sometimes drank a little too much, that some of my friends couldn't

remember the next day whether I had played the guitar or not or how well I played it. But to be charitable, they'd say that, "He played it well." [Laughter] So I'm a kind of after midnight, when everybody has had too much and their sense of music appreciation is very low, that's the kind of guitar player I am.

I tell you in all candor, though, more seriously, it's been at times a great source of pleasure to me. Not playing for friends, I did it for my own amusement. I've had positions, jobs, and assignments in the Marine Corps that were very frustrating. We all did. And there's no better outlet than music. I would come home—I used to keep my guitar under the bed—and as I would sit on the edge of the bed—and I don't do that anymore. I quit doing that years ago. Patty trained me to not sit on the edge of the bed. But I would take off my shoes. But probably before I completely got out of my uniform I would have that guitar out. Strum a few chords, sing a few songs in my best falsetto and, after maybe 15 or 20 minutes, be a new person.

I also have played it, seemingly, for the satisfaction and pleasure of my children. Because even today they will say, "Dad, come on and play for us." That's about the only time I do, which means it's about once a year I still get it out. I still enjoy doing it. A long answer to a question.

**Simmons:** A very good one.

**Barrow:** I needed to get that in there. I'm a music lover. I really do like it. I like martial [military] music. Wherever I've been that I could bring any influence, we had good bands. On Parris Island, places I should . . . well, anyway, that's a different story. Back to where we were.

Yes, we had a very sociable kind of neighborhood. We did a lot of interesting things together.

**Simmons:** You and Lou had roughly comparable backgrounds—he from Mississippi, you from Louisiana—yours probably more rural than his. Did you ever talk about those things?

**Barrow:** Oh, many times, comparing notes. Lou, you see, had some in the country experience but he was really small town, which is also kind of in the country. As I recollect, he worked in a store, a typical country general store, as a young boy—probably for something like 50 cents a day—and had many experiences and interesting insights about customers that came to the store. Yes, even today we're locked in a kind of a conversation. [Interview interrupted by fire alarm.]

Lou and I, even to this day, engage in a kind of off-line conversation that, to many people, would seem strange—the kind of terms we use, the words we use, etc., all of which stem from where we came from and the similar backgrounds that we had. Deep South people who in



our lifetime can remember things like Civil War veterans and the days of segregation and the days of harsh life in the rural areas, the things that people associate with the South—which is the paradox [inaudible] the South, good manners. Obviously, these generalizations are not suggesting that these are to be found in the same person. There's meanness and viciousness and cruelty. Yet it all coexists all in the same culture. The same guy that's a mean person probably has the same deep sense of place and even awareness of history that a more gentle person might be expected to have and who will, in fact, have it.

**Simmons:** You're making me think of William Faulkner now, of course. Have you read Faulkner?

**Barrow:** Oh, I'm an avid reader of Faulkner. I think he, without question, is America's foremost literary giant. Number one.

**Simmons:** He captured the very things you're talking about.

**Barrow:** He did that. I like to read Faulkner slowly, and when I come to a passage that I find particularly appealing I might stop and really sort of reflect on it and pick it up and reread it and reflect on it again. We all know that he is given to writing these long sentences, which in and of themselves would be a paragraph. Would be? Are a paragraph. If you can kind of adjust yourself to that—the brevity of short sentences are not one of his characteristics—then you could enjoy him even more.

**Simmons:** Any other writers who you think captured the South of that period? Thomas Wolfe, perhaps?

**Barrow:** Perhaps. Certainly a subsequent one, I think, maybe attempting to . . . some of them have been Faulknerized, if you will. They fed from that rich offering that he made to the world, coming out of that background of his. A lot of these people that have come along since then have drawn on that. They may have added his own experience, but I think Faulkner awakened a lot of latter-day authors to the fact, "Look around you. You live in a place where there's just an abundance of things to write about."

There's no question there's a Southern tradition of writing that somewhat stands apart, considering we're not supposed to be the most literate part of the nation. But, on the other hand, we probably rank first as storytellers.

**Simmons:** Did you have any contact with General Snedeker in these years?

**Barrow:** Remember he'd been the G-3 when I was there. He relieved [Major] General [Thomas

A.] Wornham back there in '55. Yes, I had to brief him from time to time about the status of some of these publications. He was under some pressure from Headquarters Marine Corps.

There were two things driving this whole effort. One was there was this paucity of doctrinal literature in the Marine Corps, and it needed to be corrected, hence, doctrinal publications and Fleet Marine Force manuals. That was about enough reason in and of itself. But there was also something else at work. I never knew the origin of it, whether it came from the Commandant or there was a body of officers that sort of housed this, or what. But this is, mindful, 1960. "We must get real serious about amphibious operations. And more specifically, we must seek every opportunity to use the words 'landing force'."

I think this is cyclical. We go through this every now and then. We kind of remind ourselves of the main purpose of our existence, and someone says, "Well, isn't that strange we don't have any terms to relate to that so let's change the names of everything." Remember we had Amphibious Warfare Schools, Senior Course, and Junior Course, and then it became something else. And I'm sure somebody along the way there have been those who got out and said we made a mistake. We should go back and call it something that has the word "amphibious."

So one of the things that General Snedeker used to do was—it originated with him or someone else—was to ask those very questions. "Do you have anything in there about the landing force?" I remember specifically, I was working on the *FMFM-21, Guerrilla and Counterguerrilla Operations*, which really became more counterinsurgency. Don't ask me what the title finally became. We would brief him piecemeal on chapters, several chapters, or a section or whatever. And did this with *LSM-0*, too, documents for landing force.

When I was briefing him one time on *FMFM-21*, near the end—I think it might have been the final briefing, as I look back on it—he said, "Do you have anything in there about the landing force in counterinsurgency operations?" In other words, it's not enough the Marines might do it, whether we do it coming from a landing force mode or something else. "As a matter of fact, sir, we don't." "Well, that would be a good thing to have." And you had it. You know, it wasn't a bad idea, because it compelled me then to think about, "Well, how would we use something called a landing force."

In some respects that was the genesis of the special landing force out there in Vietnam. In other words, a landing force conducting counterinsurgency operations by being mobile in two

ways. Aboard ship, a place like Vietnam it's ideal. You had the long coastline that you could transit up and down, picking the time and the place that you might choose to insert yourself. And then we had the tactical mobility, in particular as related to the helicopter, of moving, not just to some beach, but moving inland. So all that appeared in this manual. I had great fun, incidentally, writing that. I used the helicopter part; I didn't get a lot of help from the people over there.

An interesting thing about some of these subjects, people who develop helicopters and who pilot helicopters (I'm not picking on helicopters; this would be true of a lot of different things but I'm just going to tell you about helicopters) don't necessarily see the totality of helicopter value, operational value. They tend to look at it more in terms of a responsibility to get it up in the air and to go somewhere and [to] put it down.

When people who, like myself, who are looking at the operation that the helicopter is only a part of in some support role, we tend to be more visionary, have a greater view of the future and the possibilities of something like a helicopter. I'm sure it's true of even [McDonnell Douglas] AV-8 Bravo [Harrier] aircraft, the guy that flies them. Don't get the advice from him. He'll tell you how to fly it but he won't tell you, necessarily, about the best way to employ it.

So when I came around to writing the chapter—and really more than a chapter on helicopter operations—for that manual, I was sort of on my own. The helicopter pilot, he can answer your question like what's the maximum range of such and such a payload or such and such a temperature and such and such an altitude. They can answer those kinds of things. One thing about it, no one else had written anything on this subject, so I had a fertile opportunity and took the most of it.

For example, I wrote about things like how to extend helicopter-borne operations. Not always working just from some fixed major base or a ship, but for very limited purposes and for very specific purposes you could project your helicopter force to something like the limit en route to something more distant. The limits would be where you would have, its physical limit, where you would have stockpiles of fuel and, if necessary, ammunition, etc., almost making it something you could just place ad infinitum. It was interesting that we did some of that in Vietnam. On a larger scale, Vandegrift Combat Base was a helicopter rendezvous, staging, refueling place that made it unnecessary for the helicopters to go all the way back to . . .

**Simmons:** Dong Hai [Vietnam]?

**Barrow:** No, the other one. Between Dong Hai . . . I'll think of it in a minute. And on Dewey

Canyon operation, we had fuel bladders, helicopter fuel, out on that operation to provide for that situation where you might have helicopters and they . . . well, you know, we parked here to do whatever, get loaded up whatever you want to load up. And we've got just enough fuel to get back to where we came from. About that time you got some call in that someone needed emergency medevac, and for him to go do that would extend him beyond his time, fuel capability, to do that and get back safely. So, "Wait a minute. We've got a call. We'll give you a little gas, and you go take care of that mission on your way home." Being somewhat hypothetical.

But, anyway, I enjoyed . . . I don't fancy myself to be a writer. I might have been afraid of it. I think half of licking the problem of writing is to believe that you can do it and then go ahead and do it and learn as much as you can from publications on the subject. There are people who will help you. Ed Simmons, himself, has helped me in the past on that subject. You just do it. I never have been one who was fearful of picking up the pen.

So I enjoyed my stay there in the Publications Branch. I can't think of anything else to tell you about it. In some respects it was very hard work and put in long, long hours. I did something there, which I have done since and before, too. I've been in situations where I've often wondered what the reason for this was. Were they trying to test me, or what? But there's an urgency to get something done, I mean now. One day, Oscar Peatross called me and said, "Don't panic, Bob, but we don't have a really SOP [standard operating procedure] for this branch." I think somebody had been working on it, doing something with it. Had you been doing anything? Maybe it was updating it.

**Simmons:** I left rather precipitously. I got transferred off into the Cuban business, while your big, white station wagon moved to Washington [DC].

**Barrow:** Anyway, there was a good bit to do, and I've forgotten exactly [inaudible]. But whether it was self-imposed or what not, I reckoned the deadline was the next day, so I worked all that night . . .

**Simmons:** Good grief.

**Barrow:** . . . and put something together adequate enough to be accepted.

Well, anyway, I left that thing, the Publications Branch, after two years. In August 1962, I went back to the Senior School. I'm the only person probably in the history of the Marine Corps that attended the Senior School twice. Once was for about a month, a little less, and once full time.

**Simmons:** Now before we get into the Senior Course, didn't [Brigadier] General [Victor H.] Krulak arrive sometime during this period and take over the Education Center?

**Barrow:** Yes. But, you know, I don't recall having any contact with him, even to see him.

**Simmons:** Well, that was kind of what I was getting at.

**Barrow:** That wouldn't be true of people who worked directly for him over there in the . . . let's get our dates on that. When was he there? I don't recall. He may have put some impact on Quantico. Wasn't it before this when he had everybody writing those Tentative Instructional [Precis] [TIP]. . .

**Simmons:** That's really what I'm getting at. Yes.

**Barrow:** I think that was before we got all this thing cranked up. I believe we got some TIPs we tried to use . . .

**Simmons:** Perhaps.

**Barrow:** I think we inherited those. We got into the business in part because he had demonstrated to the Commandant and to the commandant of the Marine Corps Schools that they weren't . . . in effect, they were saying they were not doing their job. Because he couldn't find any doctrinal publications to issue to his students and his instructors, he would have to start writing them on his own.

So he had them write (his teachers over there, instructors), something called Tentative Instructional Precis, TIPs. A nice acronym. And the word "tentative," you could always say if somebody found fault with it, "Well, we never said it was the final form of it." Tentative.

So that's one of the reasons why the Publications Branch got cranked up because they said, "Well, we can't be insulted like that. We've got to do better." So they ran off [inaudible]. So he was really ahead of us. I'm almost confident.

**Simmons:** I'll check on that. I remember [Captain] John [E.] Greenwood was sort of his editor. As a young captain and major was busy proofreading those things.

Well, as you say, you went to the Senior Course during the academic year 1962–63. Who was the director of the course at that time?

**Barrow:** [Colonel Edwin C.] "Ed" Godbold and [Lieutenant Colonel William C.] "Bill" Chip was the senior man in the class—class president, therefore. You had instructors like [Lieutenant Colonel Samuel] "Sam" Jaskilka was one of our instructors. People like [inaudible] because

faces flash before me, and I can't put names to all of them. I'm getting to be bad about that.

But I don't know if one is supposed to enjoy a school or not, but I've always been one to enjoy going to school. I worked hard enough to be classified as a good student but I didn't put my nose to the grindstone making studying and being a top graduate of something the number one objective. My fitness reports from Ed Godbold say I did well, you know. So that's good enough for me. I don't think . . . [Interruption in tape]

I finished up in May 1963, and I would just like to make this comment. Between writing doctrinal publications for two years and being a student for one year, I was about as prepared to go out in an academic sense, a theoretical sense, and do a wide variety of things in the Fleet Marine Force. I knew how to do things. I couldn't have had better preparation for my next assignment.

**Simmons:** I can make a comparison with your experience in the Amphibious Warfare School, the Junior Course, which prepared you to be a company commander.

**Barrow:** And when I became one, immediately and went to war.

**Simmons:** Right.

**Barrow:** The same is true in this case. After we graduated . . .

**Simmons:** You stayed on for a month.

**Barrow:** . . . I stayed on and was an instructor, picked to be an instructor—I don't know whether that's a compliment or not—in the Reserve Senior Course, meaning that the Senior Course made a month course for the reserve officers who did a little minicourse.

In any case, we left Quantico in July of 1963—Patty, five children, a German shepherd dog, [and] an unair-conditioned station wagon. If you would tell my wife, I daresay a lot of wives these days, “We will launch you clear across country, a family of seven with a German shepherd dog in an unair-conditioned station wagon,” you would have a mutiny on your hands. But anyway, we left to execute my next set of orders, which was to Okinawa [Japan], specifically, the 3d Marine Division. I'm going to mention my personal life because it should be.

I think today we do a better job of taking care of wives who are left behind. Indeed, some of them can stay in quarters. We have the unit deployment [program]. The assurance that they're not staying behind except in quarters or in a community of like people. But in those days, you got orders for someplace, and what you did with your family and where you sent them and all that was strictly up to you and you didn't get an awful lot of support or encouragement to do any

specific thing. So, Patty not having any family and mine being—mother and father being deceased, but owning a place down in Louisiana where I grew up, which was my mother's home until she died in 1959—we decided, and I think it was probably more my doing, but the family would stay there. And, as I look back on it, it was not a good decision. I'm not suggesting it was a bad experience for them. But I asked them to do an awful lot, particularly Patty, who was a neophyte as relates to living in the country.

This was really out in the country. I'm asking her to go out to a place that had not been modernized. The house did have bathrooms and what not, but it was a big house. No insulation, it could get cold in the winter. It was really out in the country, out in the boonies. And with five little children—not so little, but five children, some of them little, and not from there—and I am not there. She's doing all this on her own. She never complained and did a masterful job of fixing up that house, to the extent that one could fix it up and not put a lot of money in it, and never, never, even to this day, gave any indication that it was kind of a miserable experience. But I rather think it was. The children, on the other hand, thought it was something else because they had horses to ride, things that children can do in the country that tend to be pleasurable things. But, be that as it may . . .

**Simmons:** And this house stood empty after your mother died?

**Barrow:** Yes. I had rented it to people who had used it occasionally for weekend purposes. They had horses. Until I went back there after my retirement, my old house that I grew up in and what have you, it had been since really 1960 until 1984 without really fixing it up—24 years of abuse by a succession of abusive tenants.

Anyway, I arrived in Okinawa. The thing about it, I left Patty there with five children, having to cope with living in the country, trying to make new friends, even though that's where I grew up, taking care of five children, experiencing a different climate. It's hot as hell in the summer and not too bad in the winter, but not all that good, either.

I guess that and any number of other similar kinds of experiences conditioned me for a decision I made when I was Commandant about dependents on Okinawa. I witnessed that problem for so long, and I'll touch on it from time to time. I was in Headquarters when the decision was made, no dependents on Okinawa.

But anyway, I arrived out there in August of 1963, and I was met at Kadena [Air Base, Japan] by my old friend, [Lieutenant Colonel Robert P.] "Bob" Wray, a fellow company

commander in 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, in Korea 13 years earlier. I said, “Well, good to see you,” etc. “What am I going to be doing in the 3d Marine Division?” At which he said, “You’re not going to 3d Marine Division. You’re going to Task Force 79.”

Well, I’ll be perfectly candid with you. I knew what Task Force 79 was. You knew it and put what you knew about it in the deep recesses of your mind. Who the hell would want to go to a company called Task Force 79? I say that because that attitude was sort of the prevailing one. It’s a little different now, at least I hope it is. But in 1963, any kind of headquarters, particularly one that presumed to be senior to a division and a wing, was sort of “who do they think they are” kind of a thing, beyond what one headquarters always thinks about the next senior one. A certain contempt, a certain disdain.

Here again, we pride ourselves in something called the Marine air and ground task force, like we’ve had it since Tun Tavern, which we didn’t have either, according to historical accuracy. But if what we have today is a viable, in being ready to go to war communications, real command over the components, all of that what it ought to be, [then] bravo! But it’s pretty much something that’s happened in recent times, even in the last few years.

So when I arrived in Okinawa and told I was Task Force 79, it took me a while to also recollect—or be told that it also was called the III Marine Expeditionary Force. But Task Force 79 was what everyone called it, and that’s meant to do with the Seventh Fleet task force, like [Task Force] 77 were the carriers, and [Task Force] 76 was the amphibious, and [Task Force] 79 was the landing force of the Seventh Fleet.

That was kind of the way people thought that you are the nexus between the wings and the division business with Seventh Fleet. They didn’t think of it in terms of you are our superior headquarters to whom we report, salute smartly, and say what do you want us to do. It was more, if you need to be in existence at all, it’s because you keep Seventh Fleet off our back while we do the things a division does and that a wing does.

**Simmons:** Describe the physical arrangements a little bit. Where were you?

**Barrow:** We were where one would expect Task Force 79 to be, if you follow the thought that Task Force 79 needs to be looked down on. We were at Camp Hauge, properly to be called “Hagi.” That’s a Norwegian name, the name of a young Marine who earned the Congressional Medal [of] Honor at the Battle of Okinawa. But we’ll call it Camp Hauge, that’s what everybody called it, H-A-U-G-E.



Camp Hauge was a pretty spartan kind of place to be [with] aging and aged Quonset huts only, maybe a couple of cinder block buildings—leaky, drafty, hot in the summertime, Quonset huts—for living and for working. The division was at Camp Courtney, and the wing was up at [Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS)] Iwakuni [Japan]. I was assigned as assistant G-3, Task Force 79/III MEF [III Marine Expeditionary Force]. The G-3 was a fellow named [Colonel] Ralph H. “Smoke” Spanjer, S-P-A-N-J-E-R, an aviator who I had known since he was a captain. He’s now a colonel; I’m a lieutenant colonel.

I learned right off that there was much work to be done [and] that we had an organization virtually in name only. So there were opportunities unlimited for someone to reach in and grab a hunk of this thing, and you could do what you wanted to with it. How fortuitous for me to have come from that experience I spoke of earlier. I knew all about this doctrinal business and how to make things happen. So I became a kind of a key player.

Now we had some interesting characters there. There were people like [Lieutenant Colonel James A.] “Angus” MacDonald [and] [Major James H.] “Jim” Orr. Most of them left shortly after I got there. [Major Alexander P.] “Pat” McMillan was the later brigadier general of Marine Corps recruitment. Pat worked for J. Walter Thompson [?]. Now he was in the G-2 section.

**Simmons:** Who was the chief of staff?

**Barrow:** The chief of staff was [Colonel] William A. “Bill” Wood. Bill Wood, now deceased, died about 18–20 years ago.

**Simmons:** Bill always had the reputation of being one of the Marine Corps’ deep thinkers or doctrinal thinkers.

**Barrow:** Deep thinker, doctrinal thinker, bright, good sense of humor, hard working, smoked too much, [and] from Houston, Texas. His wife, Nell, was originally from Louisiana. They both went to Rice University, a super school. You had to be a good student to get into Rice. Did well there. And I liked Bill Wood.

**Simmons:** Who was the commanding general?

**Barrow:** [Major General] James [M.] Masters. “Jim” Masters. He was double hatted. He was the commanding general of the 3d Marine Division and commander of Task Force 79/CG [commanding general], III MEF.

**Simmons:** How much time and attention was he able to give the Task Force 79/CG, III MEF?

**Barrow:** To his credit, he was mindful of his responsibility and reasonably attentive to them. But I never heard him in anyway denigrate—that would be, of course, a terrible thing for a commander to do—what we did or how we did it. And the fact that he assigned . . .

**Simmons:** Good people.

**Barrow:** . . . good people. Leave myself out of it, he assigned some pretty good people to it would tell you what he thought about it. We saw him . . . I'm sure Bill Woods maybe saw him in some lineup maybe daily. I saw him probably once a week, particularly after I became the G-3. So he had a kind of good respect for it. He felt responsible and one thing and another. I can't shortchange him there.

His brother, [Brigadier General] John [H.] Masters was the assistant division commander for a while, and he was relieved by [Brigadier General Raymond G.] "Ray" Davis, who once again reappears in my life. Interestingly, they lived in Camp Hauge. Those were the best set of quarters at that time. They were about the only ones worth a darn. But the assistant division commander and the division commander lived in some spruced-up Quonset huts in Camp Hauge, so we could see them socially. He'd pick up the phone and say, "Barrow, what are you doing?" "Well, I'm not doing anything." "Get over here."

Jim Masters is a social animal. He liked people. He liked to have people around him, and he liked to listen to stories and engage in repartee and chit-chat and one thing and another. For some reason, he used to like me, and so I would get summoned to come over there and just be a part of . . . didn't belong to the mess. Did not belong to his mess. I would come to his house, his quarters.

The kinds of things that I thought were unlimited and which I will talk about at the risk of sounding like I'm patting myself on the back, Task Force 79/III MEF was, in fact, a major player with Seventh Fleet. A nexus, if you will, between 3d Division and the wing as relates to exercises, fleet-sponsored exercises; as relates to contingency plans; as relates to intelligence; and certain things in the logistics field, aviation orders and that sort of thing. There was a tie-in. There was unlimited opportunity to do things.

We were involved in an exercise program, some of which took us outside of Seventh Fleet. This would be particularly true of SEATO exercises (not all of them, some of them). [The] Southeast Asia Treaty Organization.

**Simmons:** Did that take you to Bangkok [Thailand]?

**Barrow:** Took me to Bangkok. And some of those things would have been SEATO things the Marines of Task Force 79 did, would have done. In SEATO, they were really land based, not things amphibious. But some of those too.

An interesting thing that was done in the fall of '63, before I became the G-3, there was a SEATO exercise called Ligtas, to be conducted the next spring in the Philippines. There were six nations, which most were in SEATO. Probably everybody but France participating—Australia, New Zealand, Philippines, Thailand, Brits [British], [and the] U.S. That would be six, isn't it?

On the U.S. side, we had airborne going to jump out, and we had Air Force in support of the airborne, both in the transport aircraft and in certain attack, ground support. And, of course, we had the Marine brigade.

Squig Lee [?], as he was called—[Navy Admiral William] W. H. P. Blandy's son-in-law, Admiral Blandy. Squig Lee was the rear admiral of the Task Force 76, and he had his flagship down there in Subic Bay [in the Philippines]. So for the first get-together, he was exercise director or coordinator, whatever the title was. The first planning conference for Ligtas was held under his auspices. He was the guy controlling the overall exercise. So designated, not by Seventh Fleet, but by SEATO's folks. But you had a strong naval flavor. A lot of it was done out at sea, as a matter of fact. Unlike what is routinely done, and certainly today, he would no more have a Marine unit participating in some combined exercise without having a whole gaggle of folks going to it that would be able to answer every kind of question. I went as a party of one.

I was so busy that, in fact, there were multiple things being done there simultaneously. This table over here was dealing with naval gunfire support matters. This one over here was dealing with aviation. This one over here was dealing with communications. This one was dealing with something about something else.

So I had to run from one table to the other or be available to go over and answer questions. I go back, again, to my experience at Quantico. I couldn't have been better prepared. Now the coup that I pulled off as a one-man show was to get the U.S. Air Force and the U.S. Army and these other five nations, all to agree to conduct any operations in accordance with Navy-Marine Corps amphibious doctrine, which is to say that the airborne folks chopped to the landing force commander, came under his operational control, when they entered a certain airspace as did the transports carrying them, and that's almost unheard of. When they'd get to the ground, they'd salute smartly and say, "Sir, we have landed, and we belong to you and this

brigade command.” So I came back and everybody thought that was great, you know. Nobody had ever seen these people willing to do this.

I became the G-3 in December the first of 1963. I had a very interesting assignment there for my year on Okinawa. I never expected to get out of Task Force 79 and did not. I was a lieutenant colonel, which was somewhat awkward in that I would go to things like Seventh Fleet planning conference representing the senior Marine Corps command of Seventh Fleet, i.e., Task Force 79. Sit there with a colonel on my right and a colonel on my left, and I’m a lieutenant colonel. I never had any of these fellows, either from the wing or a division, embarrass me or in any way make my responsibilities difficult. They recognized that, whereas I may have been only a lieutenant colonel, I was wearing the general’s hat of responsibility and I was his staff officer. Rank didn’t have anything to do with what I had to do.

So we did Seventh Fleet . . . they called them Seventh Fleet scheduling conferences but they really were scheduling and planning conferences. They used those two or three days to fine-tune some of your contingency planning that you were doing that were involved with the fleets of the Navy. And you did a lot of planning [inaudible] related to future exercises. So those were busy times.

Then when we were back at Camp Hauge we did a lot of planning, unilateral U.S. planning primarily for going into Vietnam. Isn’t it interesting that the Marine Corps schools taught amphibious operations going into Vietnam years before in connection with the amphibious warfare presentation team, and it was centered on a place called Tourane, which is Da Nang [Vietnam]. Now I don’t know who picked out Da Nang as the place Marines might conduct an amphibious operation, but it was being taught in our schools in the sense of an amphibious warfare presentation.

We had our first commitment to Vietnam was a helicopter squadron of H-34 Sikorsky [Choctaw] single-engine, [inaudible], limited payload helicopters down there to transport the Republic of Vietnam soldiers around. They were in Da Nang, of all places.

**Simmons:** Did you get to visit Da Nang?

**Barrow:** I did. I continued to plan. Don’t ask me who up at CinCPac [commander in chief, Pacific] at some place said, “All right. We have all these plans, Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marines. Let’s put the Marines in Da Nang.” I don’t know the origin, but it’s kind of coincidental or whatever it may be. The Shufly [Marine task unit] were there, the helicopters. Amphibious

warfare presentation team had Marines going in there a long time before. And I continued to plan.

Anyone who started from scratch might very well have concluded that the Marines, having sort of one foot always in the water, anyway, would be more suited for the delta where we could play around with the Navy. The Navy took on quite a significant role down there in the delta. And, therefore, Marines would be suited for that. Anyone who thinks that is just missing the point. We never, even if we'd been planned by contingency plans to go to the delta, we never would have gone to the delta, because we were too valuable. Our combat capability was more extensive than that which would have been required for riverine operations in the delta, which would be for the most part squads, platoon company kind of things—jumping out of boats in little areas that one presumed there may have been a few enemy.

They needed us where the threat was the greatest and which might, certainly by virtue of the potential, be even greater, which is to say regular uniform, fully-equipped North Vietnamese regular forces. So the Marines were put where they would have been put even if we had not had this precursor experience of Shufly and amphibious warfare presentation team and planning.

If we'd gone the other way, if someone had said, "Wait a minute, get those Marines out of the Mekong [Delta in South Vietnam] and put them up there where they've got their own air and they've got all these other things . . ."

So this looked real, the possibility of going into Vietnam, before it happened. In part, an initiative of mine, a suggestion that since we had a [Lockheed] KC-130 [Hercules] going down every week to resupply from the wing, carry mail, [and] do all the odd things that people rotated to this squadron, this lonesome, lonely squadron there in Da Nang. That ought to be an interesting history; I'm sure it is that we had free transportation and an outstanding opportunity for battalion commanders, regimental commanders, and principal staff officers to go to Vietnam and see firsthand places that they may see for real sometime without the advantage of having seen it before and getting their time and space factors and everything implanted in their heads. So this was bought and we had a very good program. They would go down actually to Saigon [Vietnam] and get briefed on the war and all these kind of different . . . of course, an advisory effort at this point, but you could tell from things happening that there was a good chance of enlarging it and it including us.

Then they would go up to Da Nang in Shufly. They would take them out in the

helicopters and point out major landmarks. Then when they came back and they saw something that said “Monkey Mountain” or some other key terrain feature on the map or in the contingency plan, they had seen it. They knew how to relate to it. They knew that it was going to take more troops to do certain tasks than, perhaps, were included in the orders that they had at their disposal, but that’s the way their orders planned. I thought that was a good program. I really did think that was a good program; to be able to walk the terrain that you might have to fight over and which, in fact, some did.

**Simmons:** From time to time during this period the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade [9th MEB] would be activated and commanded by your friend, Brigadier General Ray Davis, would it not? And wouldn’t it go off on some of these exercises, and didn’t its staff from time to time get to visit Saigon? [Interview interrupted for a short break]

I had asked about Ray Davis and the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade.

**Barrow:** Well, you perhaps have a recollection of the 9th MEB after it had improved itself. I go back to its days of poverty and impoverishment. We had it on paper, and it was generally understood that the assistant division commander would be the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade commander, and that the G-1 [personnel] had somewhere over in his office a breakout of those folks from the division and wing, in addition to those in Task Force 79, who would occupy the billets that made this “a viable MEB headquarters.”

It was, by any measure, a farce. It had never been really exercised. It had never been tested, and was, in any case, incomplete and not current. Any given time, if you had pushed all the buttons, you would have had a substantial number of people who would either have been transferred home, etc. I may be overstating it, but not by much.

But mother necessity has a way of being a good teacher, along with the fact that Ray Davis came in about that time. Not that his predecessor was negligent, not at all. We began to have a succession of incidents in Saigon, which excited people and said, “Who can go quickest?” And it was this outfit.

Now the ground components of the 9th MEB were as good as any ground components of Marine Corps, always are. You know, they’re a first-class outfit. It varied as to who it was—9th Marines, 4th Marines, 3d Marines being in Hawaii, and the air components. We had various levels of readiness conditions, getting up on the steps for something that might happen.

The key to it was the U.S. Air Force had an air division in Japan with some of its forces

in Okinawa that was a big transport outfit—[KC-]130s and [Lockheed] [C-]141 [Starlifters]—and they were our lift to get down there. They used to find out before we did because they were in a shorter chain of command. So we'd get these mysterious phone calls. "Would you guys like to take a little trip somewhere?" Talking around the subject and that would be our signal to get ready. Sometime after that we'd get the message from Seventh Fleet saying, "Get in the starting block," which was to move the elements down to Kadena and to Naha [Japan] for a lift to go to war.

That's sort of what I had walked into. We hadn't had one of those, as I recall, until I actually became the G-3. You can blame me in part for not being more attentive to that subject, but it was just something that had been neglected. I remember it might have been a weekend or, in any case, for some reason I was in civilian clothes, including having on a suit, coat, and tie. I don't know where I was going. Maybe I was going to be in the CG's mess on a personal invitation or something. I was, that's right. I was going to eat in Jim Masters's mess.

The message came in to get sparked up. Well, we had a little recall system there, and I recalled myself quickly to the G-3 office and started doing all the things one does in terms of last-minute, hurry-scurry planning. I remember so well the next morning, after daybreak having punched around all night, remember having the regimental commanders down there, and battalion commanders, a whole bunch of folks talking about what if, and where, and all this. I was still in civilian clothes, and I said to Ray Davis, General Davis, I said, "By the way, who are you taking as your 3?" Because they didn't call for the 3 of Task Force 79. He's another headquarters to go. It was one of those things that had never been tended to.

He kind of gave me that Ray Davis smile, which is to say kind of quiet and sly and chuckled a little bit. He says, "You are." I said, "Well, if I'm going to be your 3, I'd better go home and change and get out of these civilian clothes and pack a pack," which I did posthaste, and got back just about the time we mounted out to go out to Kadena to get aboard the airplanes to go to Saigon, which we did not do. Now, when you say didn't some of them actually go? I think yes, but this was after I was there.

This humble beginning that I speak of got changed in a hurry, and I was glad to be a part of it. I'm not suggesting I drove it to change, but I had a heavy hand in it. Ray Davis was the driver of this machine.

After this and a couple more on the heels of an alert, we said, "This is nonsense. We're

going to be first class,” and we got people named and kept the list current. They came for drills irrespective of being for real. And let’s do that . . . we designated—obviously, needed to—a headquarters commandant who got all the gear that was necessary to have a MEF-size headquarters under tent. They had all the tents, all the comm [communications] gear. The comm officer and the headquarters commandant all tied in about CP [command post] arrangements, etc., etc. And we did medical supplies.

We just became a headquarters in the fullest sense of the word. The only thing we lacked was an opportunity to exercise it with any regularity. Some of that, I see, came after I left, which is what you alluded to. I believe you said didn’t they go down to Saigon and so forth. The answer is yes, but not while I was there.

**Simmons:** Did it exhaust the capabilities of Task Force 79 to mount out a MEB headquarters?

**Barrow:** Well, just like I went as a G-3 at the time I told you, you robbed it. There would not have been a MEF, three MEFs playing pile on. You know, that’s how we went into Vietnam. You were there so you know that in the beginning, as the good book says, we didn’t have the wherewithal for anything. Then we had the wherewithal for MEB, albeit incomplete, but certainly not for something that could grow into a MEF. The proof was in the pudding. When the III Marine Expeditionary Force went to Vietnam, it was a tragedy. It worked, but it worked in spite of the handicap it was given of organization and personnel assigned.

Well, one other thing I did a lot of as Task Force 79, III MEF, was briefing. General Jim Masters liked to show off his command. He’s always been that way. He liked to have somebody who could brief well. So when some visiting Marine general from Washington, or some admiral, or Army general, or civilian government type, whomever, came to Okinawa, as surely as I sit before you, he was going to end up being briefed by me on contingency plans, exercises, and things like ARVN [Army, Republic of Vietnam] programs and a whole array of whatever. I could do this without reference to notes. I could go through the whole array of contingency plans. You know, Contingency Plan 32 says this, and this one says this and go through the whole thing. I was reasonably good at it.

In early ’64 the new commanding general, Fleet Marine Force Pacific came out for his first visit—[Lieutenant General] Victor [H.] Krulak, the “Brute.” I think it’s all right for me to say this. For reasons I don’t understand, there apparently was never a lot of love lost between Jimmy Masters and the Brute, at least that was my sensing when you saw them together. But it



didn't bother Masters too much because, while this was his boss, he was not going to have to brief him and be subjected to any questions that had the potential for embarrassment. Hell, that's what his staff was for.

So I got trotted out as a centerpiece to brief the Brute. I went kind of beyond my normal briefing. I kind of really got with it. [I] went through all the stuff that his WestPac [Western Pacific] Force, not Task Force 79 headquarters, but what the division-wing was doing, kinds of training, kinds of exercises, the whole thing. Then I remember briefing Ligtas, which was then underway, and just mentioned their command arrangements. I didn't say anything about what I had done. He turned to General Masters and says, "Now, how did you work that, the Army and the Air Force coming under the landing force command?" And Jim Masters said, "He did," and pointed to me. "He went down there as a one-man show."

I'd never briefed or been around Brute Krulak.

**Simmons:** This was your first substantive contact with Brute?

**Barrow:** First contact was my standing up there and briefing him, and him asking me a lot of questions and then asking Jim Masters that question about Ligtas.

At this time, maybe like February of '64, I had got some strong inklings, maybe even from the slate itself, that I was going to leave there and go to the 2d Marine Division. I was counting my blessings. I thought, "You lucky devil, you. You were in a major headquarters holding down a colonel's job as a lieutenant colonel, using and exploiting the things you learned in Quantico. Then you're going to go back, and if everything works right, you'll get a tie-in. Gee you lucky devil, you. Maybe make colonel. And if you're really lucky . . ."

I never did a lot of [inaudible]. They [inaudible] like they do now, but it runs through your head. There were opportunities back there in the 2d Division, which you were no stranger to and how nice it would be. What a fool I was. I went along March, April, May, laboring under that thought that presently I would be going to the 2d Marine Division. When my orders came—and it was a bolt out of the blue, electronically ordered—Fleet Headquarters, Fleet Marine Force Pacific.

Jumping ahead, when I finally got to FMFPac [Fleet Marine Force Pacific], I went down to see a major, old-timer, named [Major Carl] Johansen [Jr.] who was the adjutant and who was with Brute Krulak on his maiden trip through the Western Pacific. I said, "How the hell did I end up here?" He laughed. He said, "Now I can tell you. Within minutes of the briefing you gave, General Krulak pulled me off to one side and said to 'Get him in FMFPac'."

So I spent three months not knowing that and thinking something else. But anyway . . .

**Simmons:** You arrived at FMFPac.

**Barrow:** Let me tell you about living in Camp Hauge. I lived in a Quonset hut. You couldn't have put four different personalities together if you tried. Senior people lived in Quonset huts, four to a hut. Four rooms and a kind of little tiny room, a common room, with a couch maybe out in the middle. Someone always had a makeshift bar and a refrigerator. Pretty spartan.

In the Quonset hut, when I first got there, Smoke Spanjer, Carl [L.] Sitter, [Lieutenant Colonel Gerald] "Jerry" Fink, and Bob Barrow. These are primitive, bad living conditions. I remember, on my own initiative, going over [to] the PX [post exchange] in Kadena and getting paint and things, and I painted everything in my room, even the government furniture, which was all peeling and bad-looking, dark mahogany looking. But you couldn't harm it any to paint it, so I painted everything compatible colors. Bought some material and had curtains made and put on my window. It was a showpiece. I felt like I was in *Better Homes and Gardens*. People would come by, lieutenant colonels, majors, colonels. "We want to see your room." And they'd come by and look at it and admire it. But I was the only one at Camp Hauge that had one like that. Nobody else took the initiative. I had to spend a lot of time in that room, why not do it?

I belong to the school that if your living conditions are unpleasant, that's when you leave them and go out and run the hazards, getting into mischief, drinking too much, and partying too much and so forth. So I had an attractive place, and I spent a lot of time in it. I had a nice desk, painted it too, write a lot of letters, do some work, and read a lot.

I left Okinawa as a very rewarding, interesting tour. Had to rethink my thoughts and communications with Patty as relates to our anticipation of going to the 2d Marine Division where we had met. You know, all those little romantic things. And now we're thinking about Hawaii.

I remember making mad dashes to the PX and buying Hawaiian records and sending them home so they could get the spirit of aloha. As Marines do, we became excited about the next duty station, wherever it was, whatever it may hold. And so I went back.

Patty met me in New Orleans, and we had kind of a little honeymoon, if you will, for a couple of days. Then we went back to my place in the country, the St. Francisville [Louisiana] area. I never will forget; so many Marines and others have experienced this, but with an absence

of a year and little children involved, you find that they frequently are looking at you in a kind of sizing him up. Who is this? They know who you are, of course. I don't mean mine were that small. But they were sort of taking you in again. I enjoyed that. That was a reunion with my children up there in the country in the two days we sat there.

Then we got underway in our 1959 Chevrolet station wagon, unair-conditioned. Came across the country, went to Disneyland, on up to San Francisco, and caught the USNS [*General M. M.*] *Patrick* [AP 150]. I was a space-available passenger, because I really was entitled only to transportation from Okinawa to Camp [H. M.] Smith [Hawaii], FMFPac headquarters. I had made it to Louisiana on my own on leave and took the family out to the West Coast on my leave. Patty had the transportation, but she just happened to have space enough in her stateroom to accommodate me. So I was a space-available passenger from San Francisco to Hawaii.

When we got there, we were met in the traditional fashion of—I guess all Service commands do this, but it makes a very warm, favorable impression—just to have a little contingent of people, some you might know and some you didn't. For example, [inaudible] was there; he was [inaudible] brigade at that time. And others that we knew and people that I would be working with met the ship, put leis on everybody, etc.

We lived down at the beach, temporary living quarters, very briefly, and I went to work at once. If you remember who was in charge and what the events were, you didn't dillydally around. You went to work at once. I was assigned as plans officer, assistant chief of staff, G-3. I take that back. I very briefly, very briefly, was the assistant plans officer in the G-3 section. And the G-3 was a fellow named [Colonel Alexander D.] Cereghino. He wasn't there too long, and he was replaced by my boss, who was [Colonel] Bruce [E.] Keith, and as my boss, the G-3 plans. When I became G-3 plans, he became G-3. Great, always in a position to try to second-guess him.

He was followed by [Colonel] Harry [E.] Dickinson, very briefly, and he was followed by [Colonel Henry J.] "Hank" Woessner [II]. So the time that I was there, we had four G-3s. I never understood why General Krulak didn't break out the G-3 plans and call it G-5 [civil affairs], G-6 [communications], or something because we were a separate institute. The G-3, himself, was almost treated as pro forma. In other words, "You work for me, but go on up there and see the chief of staff and the general and tell me what they said when you come back."

I did three years at FMFPac headquarters, and they were three hard-working but

wonderful years in which I proudly increased my worth to the Marine Corps in an almost unquantifiable sense. Whether I may have been, up to that point in terms of potential, in terms of competence, some of the things I had experienced or learned, I was tested and tested in such a way that you had to reach out and do things you did not think yourself capable of doing. That was because of who I was working for, General Krulak.

He is everything that people say he is. By that I mean taskmaster, hard driver, [and] works the hell out of his subordinates. He gives of himself the same way, I might add. The reward is not that you survive, which I will come to in a minute because not many survived. And it was not a pat on the back, “You did a great job,” which he was very free in his comments to do that. He would do that sort of thing. It was not maybe moving on to a better duty station because you did that assignment well.

The reward was a kind of self-done. In other words, you felt good about yourself. You knew that you had fulfilled a difficult task and that you’d done it well. If someone had said so and all that, fine, but you felt like, “I have grown. I have become a better person. I’ve been challenged.” Almost like combat. You know, you getting them through a series of firefights, and you know you did all the right things and mission accomplishment and didn’t take a lot of casualties. That makes you feel good. Well, that’s sort of the way it was at FMFPac.

**Simmons:** What about working hours and working conditions?

**Barrow:** Unbelievable. [When] I first went to work, I was a lieutenant colonel, still, and was selected the summer of ’65, which was the next year, and actually made it early in ’66, put it on. I lived at Foster Village, which is not too far from Pearl Harbor [Hawaii], [the] Makalapa [housing area], all of that. It’s a civilian community. I paid exorbitant rent. The day I was selected for colonel, the landlord called me and said, “Congratulations” and raised the rent to whatever my allowance was and so forth, which didn’t cover the other things.

But the hours were long. And if I told you that on more than one—I’ve only had three, I reckon—but Christmas Day I worked; you would understand. I worked. I had one brief, three-day leave in three years that I was able to do something that I wanted to do. I took my family over to Kailua [Hawaii] and stayed in a camp over there that overlooked the crater. Did it with a party of friends and we had a great time.

I remember one other. The July the fourth, which it came on a Monday or Friday anyway, I could tie it in, hopefully, to a weekend. So I asked for three days, which were really already

authorized, the weekend and a holiday, but I wanted to make sure that I could have it. I had called up to Bellows Air Force [Station] base. The Air Force had beach houses and cabanas, no aircraft, on the windward side of the island not too far from Kilauea [Volcano] and had gotten one of those reserved. This was the Fourth of July weekend of 1965.

I went down there early that morning with family. Checked in, put our stuff away, and I gathered my little children and went down to the beach. I stepped out and I said, “This is life.” Looking out to the sea and having my brood about me. When up drove an MP [military policeman], an airman, in a blue pickup truck. He said, “Are you Colonel Barrow?” I said, “The same.” He said, “Sir, you are to call this number at once.”

A long story short, two hours later I’m on my way to Saigon [Vietnam]. Not unusual. Just like, well, all right, it’s worth a gamble. I didn’t look at that as, “Oh, my God, somebody’s ruined my leave.” There was a mind-set there that you just stayed up on the step all the time.

I made 30-some trips in the 35 or 36 months I was [inaudible]. [I] went to Panama. Almost all of them, other than one to Panama in connection with a planned visit one to Panama, which was a planning conference, one to Washington with General Krulak, and one in connection with an investigation I was in charge of took me to Oakland [California] and one to San Diego. That’s four. All the rest of them took me out to Vietnam.

I saw an awful lot of Vietnam before I finally went there in 1968. I saw it when I was in Task Force 79, III MEF. I’ve been fortunate. Almost every assignment I had it seems like I’ve had some preparation for it. I saw it, of course, then. And in three years of FMFPac, I saw it, theoretically, the things to be planned and played with back there that required you to keep your eye on the intelligence—you know, what’s going on, but also those trips, which lasted about three or four days. One time, I was there for six weeks.

I did all kinds of things in addition to accompany General Krulak . . .

End of SESSION VI

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION  
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Interviewee: General Robert H. Barrow, USMC (Ret)

Interviewer: Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons, USMC (Ret)

Date of Interview: 30 January 1987

SESSION VII

**Simmons:** General, it seems hard to believe, but we haven't had a session since the 10th of June 1986. At that time, you were getting to Washington [DC] every month or so as a member of the Packard Commission [the President's Blue Ribbon Commission on Defense Management]. Before we pick up on the chronological thread of your career, perhaps I should ask you about the Packard Commission. Tell me a little bit about it, its composition, its mission, and its recommendations.

**Barrow:** Well, Ed, I'll be glad to. Actually, I think I've discussed this with you before, but not on tape. I was reluctant to be a part of it, because I didn't think I had the time to devote to it, didn't think it would accomplish very much. So, when I was initially approached, I said, "I'm sorry, no, I can't do it."

They claim it was inadvertence, but whatever reason, my name appeared on the public release as a member from the White House. I immediately called and said, "What are you guys doing to me? I told you I would not serve." They apologized, etc., etc., and then I did the embarrassing thing of sitting down and writing to Mr. [David] Packard, whom I'd never met, a letter of resignation. "I've been inadvertently put on your board, commission, which I didn't intend to have happen, but I feel I should withdraw [in] some sort of formal way."

At that point, I was given a lot of pressure by various and sundry folks to go ahead and serve. So, finally, I did consent to serve. I'm not sure what my contribution was except I guess you would say I had the credibility of having been a member of the JCS [Joint Chiefs of Staff], having been involved in defense, which is one of the first points I would make.

The Packard Commission was composed of about 13, 14, or 15 people. Mr. Packard, himself, obviously, a former deputy secretary of defense. You had [U.S. Navy Admiral James L.]

“Jim” Holloway [III], a former CNO [chief of naval operations]; Brent Scowcroft, Air Force lieutenant general, former national security advisor; Paul [F.] Gorman, who was a lieutenant general, actually ended up four stars in the [U.S.] Army; and the rest were civilians with various experiences in government, some not any at all.

So one of the first things that needed to be done was perceived right away—not actively stated as such but it was obvious to me and, I’m sure, to others—is that these people had to be educated. What is this all about? I’m not too sure that that wasn’t a problem throughout because every time a new witness would appear he would use terminology or talk about things that those of us who had been associated with defense would just sort of understand, and you could see some of these fellows were having trouble with that. Be that as it may, they were conscientious, intelligent men and women, and they were serious about trying to do something to increase the efficiency, not only of organizations in and out of Washington at the highest levels, but also particularly the systems acquisition process.

The second point I would make, if there was one thing that seems to have characterized the work of the Packard Commission and that of other agencies in government looking at, essentially, the same problem—some approaches are a little different than the others—the net result and the result of each of those and the aggregate result was an enormous piece of compromise. No one wanted to go way out on a limb and say we need to do something very revolutionary [or] we need to shake up the system and do this and that. Though there may have been some reform-minded people who thought those thoughts, when it got right down to the nitty-gritty of what can we get done that everybody would be willing to sign their name to, and when you have that many people with a wide variety of views, it necessarily becomes a compromise. The same thing would appear to be over on Capitol Hill to a large extent.

I think the Packard Commission tried to be reasonable in the areas of defense organization, most of their focus being on the JCS and the principal subordinate commands, the unified commands—CinCLant [commander in chief, Atlantic], CinCPac [commander in chief, Pacific], the ones that you know, of course—and their relationship with the secretary of defense and with the JCS. This was the perfect example of compromise.

There were some who thought that the JCS should be virtually wiped out and have a single man on the white horse advising the president and the secretary of defense. It went from that extreme to “Don’t do anything.” I must tell you, I was the school that it’s not necessary to do

anything. I think so was Holloway; not so much the other two Service members at all, for that matter. Holloway was tied up with the task force on terrorism. He was the chief of staff or executive director, whatever you choose to call it, with Vice President [George H. W.] Bush. So he was frequently absent. So I felt, often, that I was carrying that cause alone, and because that was my conviction, and I'm sure a lot of my friends in and out of the military have wondered what I may have done in that forum, I think maybe I'll just touch on it a little bit so that some of my friends will realize I didn't sell out.

I ended up being one of the compromisers, but I went in very convinced that we didn't need to do anything with the JCS organization. That, as with any organization, military or civilian, its effectiveness is largely dependent on the leadership it has and the composition of the people in the body of the thing, itself.

I remember one day, in trying to make the point that leadership . . . that there was no such thing as the JCS as if it was an ongoing, continuing entity, never changing personality or anything else. I pointed out and got up there in front of this group where they had a big sheet of butcher paper, as we used to call it, and some magic markers; and I drew a kind of box diagram there showing the president/commander in chief at the top and off to one side the national security advisor, then down to the secretary of defense, and then down to the JCS, which in the box I had chairman JCS/JCS. I said, and this was toward the middle of the latter part of our deliberations, I said, "Now you have heard from a lot of people that have been in various of these boxes." And that included [James E.] "Jimmy" Carter [Jr.]. It included—I didn't say this—[Zbigniew K.] Brzezinski, who was his advisor; [former Secretary of Defense] Harold Brown; and Dave Jones [?]. I didn't name any names on purpose. I said, "We've heard from one group who was around a few years ago, each of whom said the JCS was worthless, in so many words. Each saying it differently, but throw the rascals out. Their advice is not timely, of no value, and just get rid of them."

In fact, that's what Harold Brown . . . much more than that he said when he testified before Congress. Brzezinski, who had had dinner with us on one of these occasions during the Packard Commission, had said that. Of course, Dave Jones, who started all this nonsense, felt that it needed to be totally changed. I said, "Isn't that interesting that there was a kind of everybody in agreement, independently, in one regime, one administration. But then let's look at it a few years later. Same boxes, but different folks."



A president who was willing to meet frequently with the JCS, who obviously was interested in the military, conveyed an interest and confidence, which in turn made the members of the JCS feel more relaxed about speaking out, who were looking forward to meeting with him to convey problems or tell him about what's going on. A national security advisor—one of whom sits down there, [Judge William P.] “Bill” Clark—who already has said enough about this subject to indicate to me that he doesn't think a lot of change is necessary; a secretary of defense who says don't rock the boat, in a fashion. Finally, [Army General John W.] “Jack” Vessey, the chairman, and the rest of the JCS have said, “We've made some changes in recent years that have strengthened the JCS. Let's don't do anymore.”

I said, “What's going on here? The same doggone boxes but different people.” I said, “There's an old saying that came out of Britain when somebody was talking about organization. It ain't them boxes; it's the blokes that's in the boxes that counts.” That's the point that it's very personality sensitive [and] that it reflects the character of the people that are in it.

Anyway, with that as a kind of where I came from on organization and others to the extreme, we ended up with things like giving the chairman more authority than I thought was necessary. But it was going to be a *fait accompli*, and it wouldn't have made any sense for me to sign a minority paper disagreeing with the findings of the majority. Another thing I opposed but they got was the vice chairman. I laughed when they said that, “Those of you in this group who believe that five men create log rolling and Service parochialism and bickering—none of which is true—but if you believe that, then adding a sixth man is going to increase all that by 20 percent.” I said, “But the fact of the matter is it is going to add confusion and not be helpful, in my judgment.”

So we talked about all of that. Everything had a chance to be worked out. We heard all kinds of witnesses. Dave Packard, fine man that he is, every time that he was in town he hosted a dinner and invited some principal like Brzezinski or whomever to have dinner with us and informally discussed their views. Incidentally, he always picked up the tab. The government did not—Uncle Sam didn't pay for any of that. No one else did pay for it. So much for that, on the organization.

We actually spent more time—and that's very inconclusive, you know, not the whole thing—we actually spent much more time on the defense acquisition side of things, for it was there we believed that much needed to be done, not simply because there had been these horror

stories of \$400 hammers and all of that. We recognized at once that these were anomalies of sorts, or if not, they certainly were a pimple on a situation that spent billions. It was symptomatic of something being wrong but not in and of itself a major issue. We got down to listening to a lot of witnesses in the procurement business of a systems acquisition business, all the way from those who state requirements to those who worked the budget process, and certainly the things in between, the programming process. Without exception, they all, who were then presently involved in it or who had been involved in it, spoke of changes that were needed. You see, things had been made worse during the period we were meeting because of these so-called scandals about high costs of spare parts and so forth by an add-on measure designed to achieve more accountability. [Telephone interruption]

**Barrow:** Congress had added all these accountability measures, and every industry and every procurement office in the Services was overrun with people looking over their shoulder, asking for documents, and checking and double-checking. But that's not the real cause of the problem. That's just a manifestation of how complicated and difficult it has become.

Program managers, whom we've always been led to believe were independent, autonomous kind of fellows who could sit back and pull strings and make things happen, we learned in the Packard Commission, for example, that the average program manager was answerable to something like 44 different agencies. I don't mean bosses, but if he wanted another person, he had to go to this agency himself and make his case and try to convince them that he needed another whatever it was he needed. So it was with everything he did.

That's a typical kind of thing that the Packard Commission recommended a fix on is that he should have a patron saint, if you will. A very senior three star or above flag or general officer type who, in fact, takes all that—not himself, personally—but takes care of those problems through some mechanism he sets up so that these fellows, in fact, are left to do their work and their program management duties. So I would say trying to streamline both in terms of organization and, obviously, the result in terms of time from when a thing is stated as a requirement to when it appears in the hands of the troops, which had been terrible, all of these were Packard objectives. They all appeared in the recommendation.

I think—and I don't want to take up a lot of time talking about this—but the systems acquisition and that JCS unified command organizational recommendation both had, because of the credibility of David Packard and some of the people on that commission, did have an

influence in this final legislation that emerged from Congress, which a great many people would tell you was most unfortunate. Some pieces of it may be all right, but taken in totality it was bad. I would say yes, but if it had not been for the Packard Commission, I am confident it would have been more distasteful to people.

So that sort of is a very thumbnail thing on that. We spent a lot of time over there pushing and shoving on some of these things. But, as I said a while ago, the net result is a big piece of compromise.

**Simmons:** Well, from what you said, then, the Packard Commission did definitely have an effect on the shaping of the [Nichols] Nunn-Goldwater Bill [a probable reference to the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Act of 1986, but Senator Samuel A. Nunn was heavily involved in this also] as it eventually emerged, and this bill, sometimes called the Reorganization Act of 1986, sailed through the Congress with scarcely a dissenting voice or vote, which I think reflected the temper of the times.

It is generally regarded around Headquarters Marine Corps, and certainly it's the personal view of General P. X. Kelley, that the reorganization, particularly the provision which requires the consolidation of the managerial functions of the staffs of the military secretaries and the chiefs of Services, is potentially very damaging to the Marine Corps. Would you comment on that?

**Barrow:** Well, first of all, that was an issue that was never brought up before the Packard Commission. That's congressional action. I'll be candid with you. I did not know until after the bill was passed. I was not privy to . . . living down there where I do, I didn't see every piece of information on things going on, on Capitol Hill. But it's quite clear all of the Service chiefs are going to have some of their authority taken away from them, but when it gets around to being accountable, their responsibilities haven't been taken away. The same Congress is going to look to them for why they didn't do thus and so, and they will not necessarily have had the full authority to do thus and so because some of these areas like comptrollership and public affairs and R&D [research and development] and whatnot. It's just going to migrate from the Services over to whatever entity existed within the secretariats to do that.

I think what has P. X. upset, and rightly so, is that in the case of the Navy and Marine Corps, the Navy secretariat agencies are generally small. The Navy agencies that are going to migrate are generally large. So it's a question of the whale swallowing Jonah there, and then

Jonah has a little companion running along with him called the Marine Corps who is going to get swallowed, too. So I think P. X.'s concern is that—I shouldn't say the Navy because it's still going to be the secretary is going to be responsible for these things and move over to that in that way. But he's afraid he's going to be left, because of the size of the Marine Corps and size of the representation that would go over to that entity, he's going to be kind of left out of things—sort of the redheaded stepchild, if you will. I think it's probably a pretty valid concern.

The Commandant, as we all know, doesn't command, in the full sense of the word, any of those forces out there that are in the Marine operating forces. He exercises command as OpCon [operational control]. Then they move along and part of the organizations calls for the various CinCs to be able to have greater authority over the components that make up a unified command. And the Marines are never a component. It's usually a component of the Navy component. So they get, once again, sort of subjected to being buried a little bit more because of this so-called more authority that the CinCs have over the components. So there he is; he's losing a little bit of that command-less OpCon business because the kinds of things that were identified that CinCs would want to involve themselves in have been those things traditionally not the CinCs' business, other than getting a report on how it's going. I'm talking about service training and exercises. I'm talking about logistics, movement of forces, and that sort of thing.

Now, with those losses on that side of the house, he turns around and finds that the things that he still has authority over in Headquarters Marine Corps, like the things we just mentioned—comptroller, etc.—he's losing those to the secretary of the Navy. So pretty soon, you might say that the Commandant of the Marine Corps, if you follow this to the final conclusion, will have lost a lot of his authority. So it bothers P. X., and it should. I assume that once it's been put in place and it's been recognized as something that shouldn't have been done, that it will be reversed or fixed some way.

The bad part about it is it's like the thing we were talking about a while ago, about the effectiveness or lack thereof of the JCS being dependent on the people who make it up. It depends on who the secretary of the Navy is going to be. You get some guy in there who throws his muscle around without benefit of knowing what he's doing, he's going to do harm, or someone who maybe had some prejudice against the Marine Corps would do harm. Or worse, someone who is so lazy—and we have had some dilettantes in there who were more interested in the perks than they were in the results and their responsibilities—sit around and some other folks will take over and be doing harm independent of his authority.

**Simmons:** A number of things have happened since June that have been very damaging to the [Ronald W.] Reagan administration. In the summer we had the revelation of the disinformation program directed at Libya. Then in the early fall, we had the summit meeting in Iceland, and in late fall we had the revelation of the arms deal with Iran. Do you have any comments on these things?

**Barrow:** The one that I feel most, I guess the word would be emotional, about and know the most about because it's been reported in more detail is the so-called arms to Iran and the Contra scandal. Let me hasten to say I don't know much more than any more than what I've read in the newspapers and heard and seen on TV. I have very mixed feelings about that.

I am a dyed-in-the wool Reaganite, an enormous admirer of President Reagan. I think he's done more good for the country, and certainly for the military, than any president we've had in my lifetime. If one recognizes that, even something as bad as—I, indeed, think it's bad—the Iranian business pales as an issue because the good so far outweighs whatever bad that this turns out to be. So it hurts me to see this happen to him.

I cannot imagine how he or his advisors ever talked themselves into believing that they had something here that represented an opportunity to develop and have some entrée with the moderates, which was the original reason for giving it. If there are any moderates in Iran, I would think it would be most difficult to identify. They're probably deep in hiding.

The other thing, I can understand one element of it, which is probably the driving one, and that's the hostage business. Now forget that he'd never do business with the terrorists and his whole position on terrorism. You have to go back to the Iranian embassy occupation by the *Revolutionary Guard* and that whole business there that went on for 400-and-some days and preoccupied Jimmy Carter and most of his administration and put them almost in a state of standstill.

I don't think people, unless they were as close to it as, to some extent, I was, realize how tortuous it is for a commanding chief or president to have the TV and the press and the public at large pounding and pounding about hostages. "Why don't you do something? Do something. Do something." It was out of that sort of almost desperation that the Desert One thing was cooked off. The people now say that it was a, you know, big mistake. Like somebody just said, "Ho hum. Why don't we just see what we can do." That thing was done—and we'll get to that down

the line here sometime in our discussion—but it was done in large part because Jimmy Carter was desperate to do something. So I think, in some respects, Mr. Reagan was probably desperate to do something about the hostages business. It was on the TV an awful lot and so forth.

But just talking about that part of the problem, arms to Iran, I personally am terribly disappointed [and] appalled at whoever was over there responsible for giving advice on that subject and, particularly, if some of them happened to be Marines, former Marines. For deep in my memory, and it will be there forever, is the fact that—I say “fact”—that after the October the 23d, 1983, bombing of the barracks, so-called Marine barracks in Beirut [Lebanon], it was reasonably well established—at least to my satisfaction and I think it’s been reported on in the press and one thing or another—that two nations had a heavy hand in that, either condoned it, supported it, or sponsored it. I’m talking about Iran and Syria. I remember at the time, down there in Louisiana with no one to talk to, I took a lot of quiet walks in the woods, so to speak, to think about that whole issue and what one could do about it.

I couldn’t come to any definite conclusion, but I did find some little comfort in remembering a favorite piece of poetry that I learned as a boy, written by a Canadian Army captain [Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae] in World War I. It has three verses and the last two are the ones I particularly like and remember. I’ll say them now because it conveys my feelings on that subject.

We are the dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders fields.  
Take up our quarrel with the foe;  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; Be it yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields.

That sort of expresses my thoughts on how we could do that sort of thing; it’s a mystery to me. Having experienced that tragic loss, pretty certain that the Iranians had a hand in it, and we’re over there negotiating with them. Tragedy.

Now put that over here off to one side and let's talk about something else, a part of it and beyond. And that's young Lieutenant Colonel [Oliver L.] "Ollie" North. He may be a very complex personality and no one will ever understand all of his motivations for all of the things he did. But I'm a defender of his and I come at it from several ways.

When I was the chief of Manpower back in 1975, I necessarily received a lot of briefings from the staff. And there wasn't a subject in the Manpower Department that you couldn't find an expert buried down there in the bowels of Headquarters Marine Corps, who could tell you everything you wanted to know about it and then some. So it was that about once every two months I had to get a briefing on . . . and I can't even tell you now what the subject was. That's how unimportant I thought it was at the time, I guess. I had to get a briefing on this dull piece of something that I should know something about in case someone asked a question.

A young captain named Ollie North would give the briefing, and I became more fascinated with him than I certainly ever was with the subject, because he would do it with such enthusiasm and obvious devotion to it, commitment, sense of duty. You could see here was a young fellow that whatever you gave him to do, even though he may have found it distasteful, he was going to do it.

So it was that in 1982 . . . or was it '81? The spring of '81, I had been up to the Naval War College. After talking to the college, I met the Marine students for lunch, and there he was. It sort of made me . . . I felt good in seeing him. I said, "Well, there's Ollie North." It was a short time after that that I was meeting with the secretary of the Navy, John [F.] Lehman [Jr.], and he said, "The National Security Council wants another Marine, wants a Marine." I said, "Well, what do they want?" He said, "Well, I don't know. I don't think they want anybody too senior." I said, "Well, I would hope not because the more senior you become the less work you're going to end up probably doing, and they probably want somebody who has a lot of operational experience."

I was thinking at the time—not for operations—but who had the kind of operational eyeball to put on papers coming out of [the] Defense or State [Departments], who would by his experience and education would be able to say, "You know, that's not a good idea. We shouldn't do that," or put his endorsement to it or whatever. It's interesting that I thought right there at that time, I said, "I have a major for you." I said, "You know, the usual system is I go back over there at Headquarters Marine Corps and tell the Manpower Department, and they will go through the

whole array of folks who they think are qualified and finally narrow it down to about three. They'll have his picture and a little biographical sketch, and it will be sent over to you over my signature. You'll send it up there, and they will look at them and pick at them and then send for the individuals and interview them and maybe pick out one." Or sometimes they'd maybe send them back and send somebody else we want to look at.

I said, "I don't want to do that. I've got just the guy who would do a super job over there. Make the Marine Corps proud, make you proud, and he'll do great service to his country. He's available because he's up at the Naval War College. I just saw him a couple weeks ago. I don't want to be surveying anybody; I'm telling you, that's the man. The only thing I would say is you should see him, and so we'll get him down here and let you interview him." He bought that, and that's what happened. That's how Ollie North got over there.

Now, I said to John Lehman at the time, Secretary of the Navy Lehman, "He is the kind of person that will make himself indispensable. I'm going to be gone when his time is . . . I will not be on active duty when his time is up. Someone has to look after him and that's you, Mr. Secretary. When his three years are up, you have to spring him from over there because they'll just want to keep him." As a matter of fact, on some three or more occasions, after I retired, I had occasion to remind John Lehman, "What are you going to do about Ollie North?" I did this, not trying to interfere with the sitting Commandant's responsibility, but it was a commitment that he'd given me, and it was something that I was interested in, so I didn't think it was wrong for me to mention it even though I was no longer responsible in any sense. "Yes, yes. We're going to move him." So he was going to go to the 2d Division, and then they said, no, he'd go to National War College. Well, to make a long story short, he did stay there too long. He was there five and a half years. Now, that's a little piece of information that might have some historical value to it, how did he get there.

Now, I can understand most of what Ollie North did, and yet, I don't, by any means, know all that he did. As I tried to indicate earlier, very dedicated, strong sense of duty, a self-starter, doesn't sit around and wait for somebody to tell him to do something. You and I know, and it's a good lesson learned here, that one of the things that sets people apart, makes them real achievers and go all the way kind of thing, is they are risk takers. They don't wait to be told what to do; they are self-starters. This is particularly true in the military. We have a lot of folks who will do a great job, but only when they are told what it is that they are to do, when to do it, and



sometimes they even have to be told how. But not the Ollie North's of this world. They look around and they say, "Well, let's see here now."

At that time, thwarted by Congress, frustrated by Congress's inactivity and unwillingness to address the Sandinista problem in Nicaragua, knowing that his commander in chief had very deep convictions about that, I can see him—on his own—saying to himself, "Mr. President, I'm going to take care of that problem for you, and you will never know about it and no one else unless they absolutely have to. If I'm successful, it will contribute. If I'm not, it's going to be a problem." But he probably never thought much about the problem, which is unfortunate. I believe at that point he, having been over there as long as he had and as well-established as he obviously was, could pick up the phone and call some person he knew in the Pentagon and say, "Charlie, I want 2,000 TOW [tube-launched, optically tracked, wire-guided] missiles, no manifest, delivered to such and such an air base by next Friday." Pick up another phone and call somebody in CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] and say, "Sam, I want three of those mysterious, unmarked aircraft of yours next Monday, a week, to such and such an air base and pick up an unmanifested cargo to go to a point that I'll tell you about later on." That's the way that kind of person operates.

Now you say, well, he pleaded the Fifth Amendment, and a lot of people find problems with that. I don't believe Ollie North was pleading the Fifth Amendment to protect Ollie North, although that's what the Fifth Amendment is supposed to be about, self-incrimination. Nor is he doing it to protect the president because I don't think the president knew about any Contra diversion of funds, if indeed it happened. I think Ollie North is pleading the Fifth Amendment to protect a lot of little guys that are out there in that operation who would have to be revealed in any testimony who could either lose their lives or have serious problems. The remnants of the operation might, whatever value is left to it, might be sacrificed and other kinds of operations like it, and I am not so naive to believe that this is the only thing like that happening. I believe there are other things similar, maybe not quite as potentially embarrassing, but similar. Because once you start talking, if my limited knowledge of the subject is true, you can't say, "I don't want to answer that question, but I'll answer that question." You have to answer them all or do what he's done. He's taking the Fifth for those kinds of reasons as surely as I'm sitting here.

I called him on Thanksgiving Day right after all this happened. His wife answered and said he wasn't there. The command center actually did this, and they passed that to me. So I

hung up, and within minutes he called me from his lawyer's office. His lawyer's firm, the head of the firm, Edward Bennett Williams, happened to be a friend of mine. When his wife called to say that I called, Edward Bennett Williams said, "You call General Barrow. He'll have something good to say to you," which I did. He called me and I felt he needed a kind of . . . a little bit of support. So I said, "I don't want to know anything. I'm not calling to find out what you did or anything else. I'm just calling to pledge my support of you and that extends to you calling on me in any way that you think I can be helpful." After a month, I also wrote him a letter saying essentially the same thing.

It's a tragedy. It certainly isn't helpful to the president or the country. But it's a tragedy as far as that young man is concerned, motivated out of a sense of duty. If they don't want those kind of risk takers, hard chargers over there, then quit sending the Ollie Norths. Just go get some old bureaucrat. Go down in the Department of Interior or someplace and find some guy who is safe, and send him over there and let him shuffle papers.

It was too long an answer, Ed, but that's . . .

**Simmons:** Not at all. Not at all. We still have a little room on this tape. Now there are other present and former Marines who have been in the limelight during much of this—Chief of Staff Donald [T.] Regan, Secretary of State George [P.] Schultz, former National Security Advisor [Robert C.] "Bud" McFarlane. We've never been strong before in the executive branch. Our strength was always in the legislative branch. This has been something unique. We've been in the councils of the great, so to speak, and now it looks like this might . . . well, let me phrase it a different way. Do you have any comment on this and do you think this will be damaging to the Marine Corps in the long run?

**Barrow:** Well, it's certainly going to give us a name; what kind, I'm not sure. You know and I know that, wrongly, but there are people in the other Services particularly and maybe some civilians too, who—and I wanted to say wrongly—but they nevertheless hold the view, looking down their noses, that Marines really aren't cut out, intellectually or otherwise, to do anything like be in a high place in government. What are they good for, they charge up the hill and take the high ground, this sort of thing.

Certainly the appearance of the ones you named, and we could add to it [James A.] "Jim" Baker III over at Treasury [Department], and [Terrel H.] Bell in [the Department of] Education, and a lot of people at the second tier of things who were former Marines. All of that speaks loud

and clear to something that you and I know, that Marines not only bring the same intellectual capacity that you can find in any organization to these jobs but they also bring a hell of a lot of dedication, loyalty, [and] sense of duty. I'm not saying others don't, either, but they're men of substance and could be men of influence, which many of these have been.

Having said that, maybe not everyone else would see it that way. They'll say these military men, Marines being a personification of a type of military man who, among the laymen, might be perceived as a bull in a china closet. "They ought not to let those military men," some would say, "over there on these sensitive issues because they only want to go straight ahead to the objective." This is wrong but there will be those who have bought that criticism. [Tape interruption]

You were saying earlier that we have historically been strong in the legislative branch and only in this current regime have we made a significant appearance in the executive branch. Other than having a sense of pride about that—some of which we touched on just a moment ago—given my druthers, I'd rather see us strong in the legislative branch, as far as the Marine Corps is concerned. Never mind the reflected glory that one in the Marine Corps might have from a former Marine being secretary of state and all these other things, because Marine Corps lives and breathes on things called authorization and appropriation, which comes out of the legislative branch. I'd rather be strong over there. That's where the real help comes.

**Simmons:** What are your personal feelings with respect to covert operations in general and the U.S. capability to conduct them and conduct them well? You've had quite a bit of experience yourself in the course of your career.

**Barrow:** Well, the answer to that question has many parts. I think one of the most difficult things that we would experience, or do experience, and will always experience in this kind of covert operation is assurance of the covertness of it, being an open society, etc., and probably of all open societies in this world, one that has more people poking in and trying to find something that is of a covert nature. So we are handicapped by having to do things with extraordinary operational security as an absolute.

You cannot do any of these things and let the security be as loose as our normal security is because these are, in fact, covert operations. You need covert planning with covert operations. So, to the extent that you make an extraordinary effort to keep it under wraps, you penalize, to some extent, the operation itself. That means you restrict some of the flexibility you might have because you don't want someone to know about it. That's the first thing.

The second thing, if we're talking here about peacetime covert operations that might relate to advancing some national objective that would not be possible to advance under overt circumstances, I'm all for it, even to the point of the president having enough authority to do it, knowing that if it was overt he would get congressional disapproval of sufficient magnitude to make it impossible to continue to do. Put another way, I think the commander in chief, president of the country, who has the responsibility for national security, etc., and foreign policy, should have the flexibility to conduct covert operations.

I always smile when people like I heard the Democrat's response to the president's message the other night saying the legislative branch and the executive branch are partners in these matters. Well, that may be, but one partner has a hell of a lot more responsibility, although weakened authority from what it used to be in these matters, than the other. That's obviously the president. If anything goes wrong with the partnership, congressmen, the senators and congressmen, don't get fingers pointed at them. It's the president of the United States. So if he's going to have those kind of responsibilities, he ought to have the authority to go along with it to do whatever is necessary to achieve certain—not all, obviously—but certain national objectives that can only be achieved through some sort of covert operation.

Now who does that? Historically and in recent times, it's been the CIA. If we would recognize that that's something they should do and keep that capability in being, that's probably as good a place as any for it. But what's happened is various presidents and heads of the CIA have thought that maybe that's something they shouldn't be doing, and so they destroy a capability that's taken a couple generations to build. The people have been given other assignments or retired or moved out. Then somebody comes along and says, "We'd like to be able to do this," and have to start all over again and make mistakes and stumble and carry on.

I don't think the Services should be involved in covert operations. They should be involved in things that are akin to it, like the special forces, whose primary mission is to train irregular forces, guerrillas, persons who would become guerrillas, or regular forces in event of a country being overrun, or who would go in after a country is overrun and find such folks and train and equip them, and so forth. Any capability we have presently is in the JSOC [Joint Special Operations Command], I guess, to deal with this terrorist problem. It's akin to covert operations, but not really. I think of covert operation as being more offensive in nature, whereas

those things are sort of . . . something's happened. We've got to now address it, deal with it, rescue hostages, or whatever. But the covert operations I think you meant were the kind in which someone says, "We need to deal with this situation in country X, and it looks like the only way you can do it is through covert operations."

I think I've already answered [and] given you my views on that. I think it's appropriate. But no one is going to have a blank check on doing it. The Congress is made up of enough people who will squeal and moan and drip blood over the fact that it shouldn't be done. That you either won't do it or you do it in a very high-risk fashion. The high risk is not that you're going to get the operation. The operation is going to fail on the scene of the operation; it will fail in Washington. That's a high risk.

**Simmons:** In other words, you think we should have a national capability for covert operations, but you think that the role of the armed forces in such operations should be severely limited?

**Barrow:** I think probably so. They can be a part of it. You know, when the CIA was more involved in this sort of thing, they had a sprinkling of uniformed personnel in that part of the CIA, paramilitary part of the CIA, that made a contribution.

**Simmons:** Leaving that and going back to our last session, we ended the last session with your arrival at Pearl Harbor on the first of September 1964 to join the staff of FMFPac then commanded by Lieutenant General [Victor H.] Krulak.

As we ended the session, you commented on how fortunate you were that each assignment you had seemed to prepare you for your next assignment. You also commented on the many trips you made as plans officer, G-3, during the next three years. Let's go into your duties as plans officer in a little more detail. Who was the G-3 at this time?

**Barrow:** Well, when I arrived there, we had Colonel [Alexander D.] Cereghino was the G-3. He was followed briefly by Colonel Bruce [E.] Keith; who was followed by [Colonel] Harry [E.] Dickinson, briefly; who was followed by [Colonel Henry J.] "Hank" Woessner [II], who was there for a somewhat longer period of time. He left about the same time I did. I have to reverse that. Anyway, none of them were there for what one would consider a full tour. But then that was kind of typical of that headquarters. A lot of people were reassigned for whatever reason. We had four chiefs of staff when I was there. We had [Colonel] George [C.] Axtell. We had [Colonel Regan] "Deacon" Fuller. We had [Colonel Charles F.] "Chuck" Widdecke, and we had [Colonel James A.] "Jim" Feeley [Jr.], who came up from G-4, FMFPac, to be chief of staff.

I have never worked in any job in the Marine Corps that I've thought was more demanding of my time, whatever abilities I had, than my assignment at FMFPac. Having said that, that is not a comment of any criticism, whatsoever. I thrived on it. I was so busy that I met myself coming and going, and I loved every minute of it. I'm not sure what my reward was except that I was in an area that I enjoyed working in.

I was plans officer, G-3 plans. There wasn't a G-5. I wasn't the plans officer, separate general staff section. I was buried under G-3, but really a kind of autonomous subordinate section of the G-3. Now there was a G-4 plans. John [H.] Miller had that for a while and then retired lieutenant general. We worked together and you worked, necessarily, with everyone depending on what you were doing in the area of plans—communication officer, etc., etc.

But the G-3 plans at FMFPac, as General Krulak saw it, was a kind of generalist, utility infielder, designated hitter, whatever you choose to call him, called upon to do just about anything. I guess my reward was the diversity of things I was required to do exposed me to a lot of things. I got a lot of satisfaction out of seemingly doing the things I was told to do pretty well.

I was looking at some of my fitness reports. (We discussed this earlier. I'm not breaking out these fitness reports to try to impress anybody who is reading all of this business that I was some kind of a special person or something. If they happened to say good things about me it just happens to be a way of relating some of the things I may have done.) Here is Colonel Keith reporting on me. I was a lieutenant colonel, you see. I made colonel, selected in '65 and actually made it in 1966. But he's reporting on me for a two-month period, 4 January 1965 to 28 February 1965. He said—and this is a partial answer to your question, “what did I do during this period”—and this is a two-month period, “Lieutenant Colonel Barrow has represented this headquarters at a U.S. Unilateral Planning Conference in WestPac,” and CinCPacFlt [commander in chief, Pacific Fleet] had a SEATO Planning Conference in Bangkok [Thailand]. I mean, not just FMFPac, but I represented CinCPacFlt. I was the senior officer at that thing and went all the way over to Bangkok. “He is the primary author and staff coordinator of the Fourth Whiskey I MEC.” That's the Marine Expeditionary Corps. That's before we had changed the word “expeditionary.” “*OP Plan 4/6-65*. In addition, he served as CG, FMFPac's representative to a U.S. CinCSeoul Planning Conference in Panama,” which is a far cry from Bangkok in WestPac. “He has represented this headquarters at numerous CinCPacFlt planning conferences and participated similarly in CinCPac meetings.” So I had [an] enormous array of unilateral U.S.

and some allied kinds of plans that I was responsible for keeping up to date. You know, like the SEATO thing, which we all know SEATO virtually disappeared in time, but at the time it was still active.

Separate from that, every idea that General Krulak had on how the war might be prosecuted probably ended up on my desk for filling out the blanks to it. “Give me something. Give me a paper on this.” This ranged from amphibious operations in North Vietnam. I put a lot of effort into what I thought was a hell of a good plan. This was toward the latter part of my tour there; I think it was in early ’67 or late ’66—that would have had a major force landing around Vinh [Vietnam] and taking a wheeling action, turning south, and sort of going to be the hammer and anvil business. They wouldn’t take the Marines out of where they were in northern [South Vietnam] I Corps. They would be the anvil, and the forces moving south would, theoretically, push whatever was ahead of them against the anvil. Amphibious raids in North Vietnam. We had all kinds of . . . I spent a lot of time working on targets, looking at all the intelligence data on potential targets for amphibious raids in lieu of bombing everything and getting a lot of pilots captured.

I worked on the command arrangements for the special operating forces, the float Marines who never belonged to [Army] General [William C.] Westmoreland, but who were available to him and who were probably the most misused Marine entity in the war. But I worked on the thing that had to do with that.

As you recall, [Major] General [Lewis W.] Walt in ’65, I guess it was, called General Krulak and said, “General Westmoreland wants a campaign plan for I Corps Tactical Zone. I don’t have anybody to put on a campaign plan. Everybody I have is involved up to his eyeballs in day-to-day operations.” So General Krulak said, “Well, I’ll send somebody out there.”

Well, that was me. I went out there, and you, Ed. I’m saying to you, because we got together again. And, Jonas [M.] Platt was there and [Colonel] John [R.] Chaisson, he came a little later. He was there, I guess.

**Simmons:** He came in in February.

**Barrow:** Yes. That’s right, he was later. But [with] General Walt, we flew around and I listened to his ideas and talked to the staff and sat down and wrote something. I don’t say it was any great shakes of a document, but it was something that satisfied his requirements for a campaign plan, and then took it down to then [Army] Major General [William E.] DePuy and briefed him on it

and gave it to him. It got his blessing, so it was good enough to at least get approved. As to its execution, that's another matter. But I stayed out there longer than probably I needed to because I was kind of enjoying being there. After I made my submission, I was still hanging around. General Krulak called and said, "What the hell's he doing out there? Isn't he through? Get him back." So I went back.

But I did that sort of thing. If you recall, when Brigadier General [Melvin D.] "Mel" Henderson had his unpleasant experience, which brought about . . . unpleasant, that is, with his commander over some operational activity. I don't want to go into it, but he was relieved, and he was sent back to Okinawa. The Commandant of the Marine Corps tasked General Krulak to investigate that, get to the bottom of it as to, you know, what were the circumstances of his relief.

I remember the day I was called into General Krulak's office, and General [Sidney S.] "Sid" Wade was in there, and the chief of staff, I think that was Axtell at the time. They were talking about this and asked me to sit down [and went over] the need for the investigation. I was sitting there thinking, well, I'm going to be a briefcase carrier for somebody, I guess. General Krulak turned to me and said, "And you are the investigating officer." General Sid Wade spoke up and said, "Now, you know, the investigating officer ought to be senior to the person being the principal party of the investigation. I'll be glad to go out there." He says, "No. Colonel Barrow is going. He represents me; that's all the horsepower he needs."

Well, I found myself launched for Okinawa. The 1st [Marine] Division was temporarily there because they had been moved from the West Coast and hadn't been ordered in country. [Major General Lewis J.] "Jeff" Fields was there. [Colonel Louis H.] "Lou" Wilson [Jr.] was the G-3, and so forth. So I was in that mess. But every day I had to get my little machine like you're taking this oral history with and go over and meet with General Henderson. I tried to, before I left, I did like a solicitor in the British legal system, I prepared a very comprehensive brief, read into the whole thing to the extent I could, and then worked up a whole array of major questions. Unless it included subordinate questions, which might flow from these, depending upon the answer, and I had this format to follow, sort of like you doing me, I guess.

But anyway, I was so uncomfortable about this thing I was about to do that I asked to see General Krulak. "These are some of the questions I'm going to be asking this general, and I'd like for you, general, if you would, to kind of run over that." There were pages of them. He said, "All right, Robert." He did, and he said, "Fine. That's fine. I can't think of anything to add to



that.” So I feel like, well, my homework to get ready for this is probably pretty valid, and so I was comfortable about that part.

But General Henderson, I did feel sorry for him because there’s a certain sympathy there. It’s an embarrassment to him to have had that happen, and then here’s some colonel asking him some pretty tough questions, the kind of questions that you’d normally expect under a hard-hitting prosecutor when the person is under oath and he’s bound to testify or something. So sometimes he’d say to me, “Turn that machine off.” And I’d turn it off and he’d say, “Well, now, let’s you and I just talk about that a little bit and let me think about it.” He’d walk up, pace up and down, and form his answer. Then he’d say, “All right. Turn it back on. I’ll answer it.”

So we labored through this. I also had to interview others like [Colonel Michael R.] “Mike” Yunck, who lost his leg in that operation. He was back in the Oakland Naval Hospital [in California] recovering from an amputation, and I went back there.

Well, I didn’t mean to get caught up in that except these examples. I was on Operation Log Train, lasted for about three weeks in Bangkok. It had nothing to do with plans but I was launched out there to be, really, the G-3 but ended up being the principal person involved in that. Then there was a follow-on operation, Ligtas, which was a SEATO exercise and represented some six nations. I ended up being the senior rep for that thing. It wasn’t Ligtas. I’m thinking of one that came out of FMFPac. Let me just review a couple of things I have here in the way of notes, and I did have a few notes.

Aurora, that was it. Log Train was the I MEF [I Marine Expeditionary Force] exercise in which I was the G-3. And in ’67, Exercise Aurora, in which I was the commander. This lasted for about three weeks, and that had very little to do with plans. You know, I was out there operating a big CPX [command post exercise] out of Bangkok, up the country in Thailand.

So my job description is pretty hard to put a handle on. I had General Krulak call me in more than once and say things like, “Robert, I’ve got to have a memo in a half-hour for [Navy] Admiral [Ulysses S. Grant] Sharp [Jr.] on such and such a subject.” And literally would go back and do it in a half-hour. I had the good fortune of a male corporal named Wilkinson, who was kind of a sleepy-eyed looking fellow but who made a typewriter sing. I would write in longhand and pass it to him while I was continuing to write. He would type it up in pretty finished form and that would be the memo.

In 1966, [Commandant] General [Wallace M.] Greene [Jr.]’s first trip out to WestPac,

General Krulak said, “I want you to put together a briefing, which would include everything that FMFPac was doing—manpower, personnel things, everything, plans, how you win the war, the whole business.” So I was the honcho for that, and I pulled it all together. Started out with slides and everything, then went up to meet the first time with General Krulak to see if I was on the right track for his briefing of General Greene. I said, somewhere in the conversation, I made some statement like, “Sir, are there any more slides that you think you want for your briefing that I haven’t got here?” Something like that. He said, “It’s not my briefing, Robert. You’re going to give the briefing.” Well, I did. So I not only pulled the thing together, but then I ended up giving it to the new Commandant, General Greene.

So I guess these are all reasons why I kind of liked the job. It was diverse. It was challenging. It was demanding of my time. I worked on Christmas Day and didn’t think anything of it. I remember that I didn’t take [or] I don’t remember taking any leave during almost three years that I was there.

I remember one Fourth of July in 1965, I guess it was, I figured I had a day off, Fourth of July, and gathered my family, which then consisted of a 16-year-old daughter, twin 10-year-old girls, and a 6-year-old boy. My older son being at school in the states. We went over to one of those beach cottages at Bellows Air Force [Station] base on the windward side of the island, not too far from Kaneohe [Bay] [Hawaii], [an] Air Force recreation area. I was then living in the leeward side in civilian houses, Foster Village, rented. We went early so we’d have a full day, deposited our things in the beach cottage, and I gathered my children about me and went down to the beach and stretched out. Within minutes, an Air Force blue pickup truck with two airmen in it, air policemen in it, came up and said, “Are you Colonel Barrow?” “Yes.” “Sir, you must call this number at once.” An hour later, I was on the way to Saigon [Vietnam]. I made something like 31 or 32 trips in something like 34 or 35 months, almost one a month.

I made colonel while I was there. Made colonel, as I said, in ’66 and moved over to Kaneohe where the brigade had left quarters over there, and that was very nice for my family, I think. I used to drive across from Kaneohe to Camp [H. H.] Smith [Hawaii] in a little Volkswagen Beetle, which was called shooting the Pali. If you’ve been over there, I’m sure you have. You go through the tunnels and you go across the high mountain range on [Hawaiian Island] Oahu. With a little Volkswagen, the wind would catch you sometimes and you felt like it was going to blow you off the side, but it was pleasant enough.

The only comment I would make about my experience there which would be negative was I probably was not, I know I was not a good father. So what's new? A lot of Marines have not been good fathers, if you mean by that, not being able to devote a lot of time during those formative years, whether boy or girl, of growing up. But I didn't spend a lot of time with my children doing things that, typically, a father would do—go away for the weekend and picnic or go to the beach or hike or do things like that. I just didn't have time for it. So, thank God, I had a wife who was not only a wonderful mother, but one who could pick up many of the things that a father would normally do in a more normal situation. We had a situation there in which survival was kind of important because, as I indicated earlier, a lot of colonels and others who were men of good reputation, as a matter of fact, good colonels, for whatever reason would get moved about. Sent to Guam, sent out to Louisville, [inaudible], sent someplace. So the attrition rate was pretty high.

You understand, I'm an admirer of General Krulak, but he was a taskmaster and he was caught up in this thing in such a way that he wanted to . . . he wasn't going to be some conduit passing personnel and supplies through FMFPac, which might be something that a normal post commander would normally do. He got into the operational aspects of it on both ends. He went frequently to the Republic of Vietnam and always, as a matter of courtesy, called on General Westmoreland. But also, not just as a matter of courtesy, would convey to him how he thought the war was going in the I Corps Tactical Zone where the Marines were and how, in fact, it should be going differently, which would be doing General Krulak's way and not General Westmoreland's way.

Now General Walt and the people who worked for him, I'm sure, smarted under some of this external influence on how they should be fighting the war. I'm not saying that they were in disagreement with him, but I'm saying that when he hit country, he acted almost like an operational commander, and you can only have one. So the III Marine Amphibious Force has ComMACV [commander, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam], who was General Westmoreland.

I'm not saying anything ugly. I'm just saying the powerful personality of General Krulak, the intellect and everything else, was such that he was just determined he was going to have something to say about how that war should be fought, and it was different from Westmoreland's. It was more in the area of so-called pacification or working with the villages

and villagers and bringing some sort of stability, political and economic stability, and security to those villages that had been or were subject to being taken over by the VC [Viet Cong] and to kind of bring the civilians around to the South Vietnamese government's position; that is to say, be supportive of them, be anti-VC instead of either neutral or pro-VC. Well, it was a worthwhile objective, and I must say that in some areas it was very successful.

I think some people misread General Krulak and thought that that was the only thing he was interested in, the so-called pacification or winning the hearts and minds, or however you want to call it. He knew that there were elements of threat in South Vietnam that were so regular in character. I mean by regular in the sense of being like an organized, very identifiable military force. And it's name was North Vietnamese. That war was a regular war, if you could ever find them, fix them, and get around to fighting them. So it wasn't a question of either fight it this way or that way. It was some of both. But he had heavy emphasis on the pacification part of things and probably a pretty valid way of doing it—a lot of activity in that connection and other things that I was involved in.

He went out there in a KC-130, which had a little interior capsule that, theoretically, they could take in and out if you needed the aircraft for refueling. But I'm sure it never came out. So it was like a little living quarters inside the KC-130. He had a head and his bunk off to one side. And there were accommodations for, I think it was, four forward.

I frequently went on those things, and we'd vigorously pursue all kinds of questions that we would go out with in Okinawa. And then, when we got into Vietnam, we scattered to the winds and collected information and looked. Then we had to put the whole thing together on the way home. We'd write and eat and get very little sleep all the way from the Western Pacific back to Hawaii. When we got off the airplane, we didn't say, "Well, I'm going home and freshen up a little bit. See you tomorrow." We went straight to FMFPac headquarters where, awaiting us in a set of rooms set aside for that purpose, was a battery of typists and admin-type supervisors ready to start putting together the trip report, which would be out within about 24 hours and got wide distribution. Then, of course, he also put out his own version of how the war was going with all the graphs and charts that showed progress in villages and how many good things were happening here and good things happening there. But General Krulak, just to kind of talk about him a little bit here in a positive way, was a very influential figure in that war, whether everybody was on his side and agreeing with him or not was out of the question. I know that he

talked often to the people on the scene, which must have troubled them because he was asking them questions, operational questions. And message traffic not all of which, not much of which, I'm sure, ever went through MACV or even an info copy. So he was, on the one hand, getting a lot of stuff different from MACV in some instances, some of it just amplification of what MACV had.

Then he was in the same building as Admiral Sharp of CinCPac, who thought the world of him. You know, if a guy works hard and is competent and is ready to undertake anything you can think of and stuff that you haven't thought of that you should have, you're going to like him. So General Krulak, just naturally, not really trying to do so, ingratiated himself or whatever word you want to use with Admiral Sharp. So he leaned on him heavily for advice and got it. Didn't need to lean on him, really too much, because he could get it anyway. Now, that's CinCPac.

He was on the phone, I'm confident, every day with General Greene, who was the Commandant, talking about what he knew about what was going on from the conversation or message, what have you, from I Corps Tactical Zone, often talking with Admiral Sharp, and I'm certain his own opinions about things. So he was like a grand conduit but one that had a lot of valves and checks and things that he could turn off and on—a lot of his juices flowing through that same set of pipes.

So that's what I mean when I say he had a lot of influence. He had influence out in WestPac to some extent. Certainly got information from out there. He had influence with Admiral Sharp, and he had influence with General Greene. I bet there weren't many JCS meetings that General Green didn't go to that he hadn't, within the previous several hours, talked to General Krulak. I'm just making that statement without any facts to support it. That was the impression I had.

**Simmons:** You mentioned his own report on the war without fully identifying it. This was the FMFPac monthly report on Marine operations in Vietnam. It was very elaborate, as you know. Did you have anything to do with that, the compilation of that?

**Barrow:** Not too much, no. That was a Dalby [?] [inaudible] product, who was also in charge of the command center, which is kind of a depository for these facts. They would come in there by various forms, messages, telephones. They'd call for additional [information]. "Well, we don't understand this. Give me more figures. Don't you have this?" So it was a command center that was more to receive information than it was to command anything, if I may draw that distinction.

I may have participated from time to time, but this was more of a report of things that have happened. Most of what I did was looking to things that ought to happen, or what have you.

**Simmons:** It has been said that this report was slanted to fit General Krulak's preconceptions on the war.

**Barrow:** Oh, I think that the report, naturally, reported on those things that he was most interested in, and that part about . . . is that word pacification still a valid term? Or if it was then, that sort of became an acceptable term to me.

**Simmons:** It did later on, yes.

**Barrow:** Trying to get the people on the side of the people you are supporting. He very, very much believed in that approach to the war. So that's really what he did report. He didn't pass up other things like Starlight, one of the first major regimental actions. It had full coverage in this report. But he was so caught up in the other part that he really put a lot of that in there. You're right on that.

**Simmons:** One thing he was insistent on was the sanctity of the amphibious doctrine when it came to the employment of the special landing force.

**Barrow:** Yes.

**Simmons:** He was taking the larger view. In-country people took a more parochial view. General Westmoreland sort of regarded this as a ritual fire dance the Marines had to go through before they would land a reinforcing battalion. There were several conferences that took place on amphibious doctrine and on employment of amphibious forces. Did you have any part in those?

**Barrow:** Oh, yes. I had a major role. Unlike some things I went to where I could "wing it," I made sure that what I was going to say at that kind of a conference would receive the blessing, and I went fully armed to defend the ritual to General Westmoreland—that you just alluded to.

I think it probably was valid in the sense of preserving doctrine and being concerned about what harm it might do Marine Corps doctrinal things in the future with respect to amphibious. But it didn't do us any good with respect to proper and good employment. I think General Westmoreland and company sort of thought of the special landing force as, well as not worth the hassle you go through to get them.

Whether that's part of it or they just didn't want Marines, in some instances, to be involved in some things or whatever, I do believe that the mal-employment of the special landing force as a general proposition was a major deficiency of the war, as far as Marines were

concerned. We can all cite an example or two where they landed someplace and did a good job. But generally speaking, they landed against an empty bag, the target had disappeared either in bad intelligence, no intelligence, or intelligence that was compromised. They never were landed as deep as I thought they could have been landed. They always tried to land them against a coast someplace.

You know, when we worked on those manuals at [MCB] Quantico one of the things we came up with was the helicopter gave us a whole new dimension. Some of us later proved in Vietnam that you could leave your operating base—in this case, ships at sea—and go some distance inland where you were least expected to be. But they, in my judgment, stuck too close to coastal targets which were alerted to the fact that they were potential targets and, therefore, alert to anything that might resemble an operation against them. They'd disappear. They were those kinds of targets, on troops for the most part.

Yes, I participated in several of those. I remember we had one at [MCAS] Futenma [Japan] once where people from the Seventh Fleet, from MACV, and from CinCPacFlt, FMFPac, and . . . [Tape interruption]

**Simmons:** . . . your tour at FMFPac.

**Barrow:** Well, at the risk of sounding like I'm tooting my own horn, I must close out FMFPac having worked my tail off. One of my rewards was a glowing fitness report from General Krulak, who was a taskmaster, who taught me a lot, but who was also appreciative of people who worked hard for him. I won't read you the whole report, but I notice that some selection board, as they are wont to do, has underlined this statement. This is my last report. He said, "During three years preceding this report, I am convinced that I enjoyed the services of some of the Marine Corp's best colonels. Of this group, Barrow stood out as the finest."

I never knew that I had that report until headquarters, after I retired, sent me my whole package of official records. In going through it, to kind of view them as a chronological guide to this interview, I found that, and I said, "Well, isn't that nice?" He said something very nice, and that's part of my reward, I guess.

We left FMFPac this way. I was supposed to have gone . . . at that time we're talking about '64, '65, '66, '67. The war was really getting in high gear. Most of us who had seen it from trips out there and studied it from afar, wanted to be part of it. You say, "Maybe I'll get sprung and go out there and get a job in country." But I was on the National War College list for 1966,

and I didn't think that was all that bad, because that meant I wouldn't do three years. I'd do two years, go to the National War College, and then I really would be free to maybe go out there.

Well, General Krulak had my orders cancelled. I said, "Well, that isn't too bad, either, because now I won't have to go to the National War College. When I finish here, I will have done three years and he'll work his bolt to get me to go out there." So I figured I wasn't going to lose either way.

End of SESSION VII



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION  
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Interviewee: General Robert H. Barrow, USMC (Ret)

Interviewer: Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons, USMC (Ret)

Date of Interview: 30 January 1987

SESSION VIII

**Simmons:** This is Brigadier General Simmons, and this is session eight of my oral history interview with General Barrow. Today is Friday, the 30th of January 1987, and again we're meeting in the senior visiting officers' quarters at the Washington Navy Yard. We left off at the last session, general, just as you were leaving FMFPac staff after a three-year tour, and you had been selected to go to the National War College. This was the second time you'd been selected to go to the National War College. [Lieutenant] General [Victor H.] Krulak had set aside your first set of orders, and I remembered a more colorful version of how he told you that. Maybe you'd like to repeat that for the record—when he called you in and said, “Your name is on the list for the National War College, but don't worry about it. I've already taken care of it. You're off the list.”

**Barrow:** That's right. It must be noted here that General Krulak never attended a top-level school, and whether that conditioned his thinking on the subject, I don't know. But in any case, he had—and probably still has—little regard for top-level schools. He thought it was kind of a waste of time. So he thought he was doing me a favor to take me off it.

That's why the next year, I thought that the last thing that would happen is that I would be put back on, because knowing how he felt about it and the fact that I had missed it once, I would then surely be moving to WestPac and hopefully get in a regiment or whatever was appropriate for my rank.

But instead, I was ordered back to go to the National War College in 1967. What I had anticipated as a kind of personal bright spot to that movement back home was to put my family (that I had not spent nearly as much time with as I should have) on the SS *Lurline* for one of the last sailings, I guess, to come back to the West Coast. I must tell you, I have never been so bored

in my life as being on a so-called luxury liner. It's not one of the big fancy luxury liners, but it was confinement with a lot of food. [Laughter]

We came back. Of course, finding a place to stay was very difficult in Washington, and I ended up renting an apartment in the River House Apartment Complex, which one doesn't think of as a place you could move to with four children—well, then three children. My two oldest were then in college. But it was convenient to Fort [Lesley J.] McNair [in Washington, DC], where the National War College is, and it would only be for 10 months. So it was pleasant in that sense.

The National War College, you were there one or two years prior to that, so you know a lot about it, Ed.

**Simmons:** Just one year prior to it, actually.

**Barrow:** That's right. My classmates were [Colonel Bevan G.] "Bev" Cass and T [inaudible], who subsequently died, Roy Dwyer [?] and Jess Owens [?]. I'll think of the others in a minute.

I'm not an enthusiast about the top-level schools. I'm sort of in agreement with General Krulak on that. Here the war was raging out there in Vietnam, as far as I could see. You might remember I had been witness to it on frequent visits. I'd kind of say, "What the hell am I doing back here in this school, which is committed to the study of geopolitics sort of thing, a lot of abstract, unreal-world State Department high-level, etc?" But I leaned into it and tried to get as much out of it as I could.

We had, for the one year that he was there, [Army Lieutenant] General Andrew [J.] Goodpaster, who was General [Dwight D.] Eisenhower's chief of staff when Eisenhower was president, and a very scholarly, highly respected class of the 1939 [United States] Military Academy. He was a kind of bright spot. He knew more about the kinds of things that the National War College was committed to teaching than probably anyone else. He'd worked in the area of diplomacy and security at the highest level. We became, to the extent a student could become a friend of a three-star general, we did become friends. He knew who I was and always made me feel good when we would meet and have been since. He went out of his way to visit me in Vietnam when I was in the most isolated place, when I had the 9th Marine Regiment. We now serve on the advisory committee to the president of The Citadel [in South Carolina], and we've been friends and associates of one kind and another since then.

The 10 months at National War College was a pleasant experience—don't get me wrong.

I just was frustrated that I felt like, “Why am I doing this when there’s something else I think I can do well and I ought to be doing it?”

I looked at, as I’ve done several times in talking about this, my fitness reports for the period, signed by Goodpaster, and they gave me a high mark on my individual research project, rated “outstanding,” and said that I graduated in the top 32 percent. I think they had a kind of cagey way of grading people and giving them class standings without actually saying so. There were 140 in the class. You take 32 percent of that, that would put you at 45. So I think I was probably 45 out of 140. [Laughter] But be that as it may.

We had some interesting personalities in there. Brent Scowcroft, the national security advisor under President [Gerald R.] Ford [Jr.], was a member of that class, and you had a lot of fellows like Brent Scowcroft. I’m not saying that in a denigrating term, but people who had spent most of their career in this kind of geopolitical world of high-level policy related to security and diplomacy, etc., etc.

It’s interesting. The National War College had an annual trip divided up into about five groups. You took off to go to various parts of the world and had good access to the top leadership in the country you visited, civilian leadership, often meeting with the head of state and certainly all of the top military people, and [you] get a pretty good quickie sort of feel for the country you visited. Well, now, this ought to tell you something about my kind of makeup, strange as it must be. You would have thought that I would have eagerly looked forward to going to Europe, the Middle East, Africa, [or] South America. No. I put my name down to go to the Far East. [Laughter] Having spent most of my career in the Far East, why did I want to go back to the Far East? I never have figured that one out. But we went to Australia, and we went to Indonesia and Korea, and it was sort of revisiting old turf, so to speak.

We came back. The night we arrived was the night of the day that Martin Luther King [Jr.] was assassinated. As we drove in from Andrews Air Force Base [Maryland], it looked like Washington was burning. When I got to my River House Apartments, those of you who know the place I’m speaking of, it overlooks the Potomac [River] on the Virginia side, has an unobstructed view, and I was on the eighth floor. So we spent much of that night, my wife and I, looking at what appeared to be Washington burning. It was kind of an ugly scene, to say the least.

I had orders to go to Vietnam and had to find a place for my family to live, so I bought a

house in what's called the Aurora Hills section of Washington and moved my family over there just at the time I also got my specific orders to move to Vietnam. So I never stayed there, but my family did while I was in Vietnam.

I learned I was ordered to go to the 1st Marine Division and that a Major General Carl [A.] Youngdale was to be the division commander, and somehow the word was passed to me that he'd like to meet me. He was about to depart two days ahead of my departure. So my wife and I went out to call on General and Mrs. Youngdale, which was very pleasant, and he explained to me that his thoughts were that I would be his G-3 [operations], which was all right. That's a good assignment. I thought, "Well, I'll try to do the best I can. Maybe I'll be fortunate enough to get a regiment." I think everyone would be a little disappointed if you wouldn't start out with a regiment first, but I was going where I thought I should go and where I could make a contribution.

So I left Dulles Air Force Base, and I will not forget, as we who serve our country all have similar experiences, telling my wife and three youngest ones goodbye. It was, for me, a kind of sad experience. And away we went.

My first stop was, as all colonels had to do going to country, to Vietnam, was FMFPac, where, among other things, you got some briefings over a two- or three-day period on how FMFPac perceived the war to be going, etc., and you always called on the commanding general, who was then [Lieutenant General] Henry W. Buse [Jr.], General Buse. I didn't know him well, but I did know him.

So I went in to call, which turned out to be a cat-and-mouse game, which General Buse has a great sense of humor and likes to do that sort of thing. He said to me, "Well, where are you going out there?" I said, "Well, sir, I'm going to 1st Division, and I think I'm going to be the division G-3." And he said, "Oh, you are, huh?" Well, I thought, "Well, something's up here." He says, "Well, you're not." He let me dangle for a while, and I thought, "My God, I'm getting some job that's not very good, probably." He said, "I just came from out there, and I was up visiting [Major General Raymond G.] "Ray" Davis in the 3d Marine Division area. We were flying around in a helicopter." He was explaining to me how he would fight the war in that area. He said, key to it, since he was going to free up a lot of these troops that were pinned down in some of these static positions and have at least a regiment that wasn't tied down, and that regiment would be what he would call a swing regiment, ready to go anywhere and do anything,

anywhere in the division area of operation. Then he said, “And the guy I want to have that regiment you’ve got going down to the 1st Marine Division, Bob Barrow.” So I told him, “Well, I can fix that. So that’s where you’re going. You’re going to take the 9th Marine Regiment.” Well, needless to say, I was pretty happy about that.

So I arrived at Da Nang [Vietnam], then on up to Dong Ha [Vietnam] where the 3d Marine Division command post was located, this now being the first week in July of 1968. It so happens that the 9th Marine Regiment was colocated with the division; its CP was colocated with the division CP. They, too, had a bunker complex, needed to have a bunker complex; it was subject to being hit with artillery rounds, the other side of the DMZ [Demilitarized Zone].

**Simmons:** Is this at Dong Ha?

**Barrow:** Yes. General Davis had a practice of all lieutenant colonels and above—he may have missed a few, but certainly anyone who was going to be a 3 [operations officer] or battalion commander or regimental commander or anyone like that—he would put them on his helicopter, and he made daily helicopter visits to all the units, sometimes dropping down to even company-size units, and it gave him a great chance to get a good look at the terrain and friendly situation. So I spent about three days doing that, more than most, and much of the time was spent in the helicopter and in his quarters talking about what his expectations were with respect to this swing-regiment business.

I must pause here to say some things about then-Major General (later retired Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps) Ray Davis. We all know that he had a distinguished record in World War II and certainly one in Korea, for which he won, during one specific act, the Congressional Medal of Honor. I had known him when I was the G-3 of the old Task Force 79/III Marine Expeditionary Force in Camp Hauge on Okinawa, when he was the ADC [assistant division commander] of the division. So we were acquainted. But much of what I learned about him came during my tenure as a regimental commander, which lasted about nine months.

He was different in his perception of how the war should have been fought in that area. He was not neglectful at all of the need to do the pacification business, to ensure that the civilians in the populated areas near the coast were protected, [and] encouraged to have good government, good schools, [and to] try to keep their economy viable, good crops and all of that. But he was very much of the opinion that we had, sort of over a period of time, gotten very static with our forces in the area.

Mind you, 3d Marine Division was under an intermediary between III MAF [III Marine Amphibious Force], namely [the U.S. Army] XXIV Corps, which had the 101st Airborne [Division] and, at one time, also 1st AirCav [1st Air Cavalry Division], and a lot of other independent regiments. The [XXIV] Corps commander was [Army Lieutenant General Richard G.] “Dick” Stilwell, Lieutenant General Dick Stilwell. These are two men I admire very much. Stilwell may be controversial in some quarters, but from my experience with him, I could not help but admire him. He and his subordinate, Ray Davis, seemed to think alike, which would have made it good for Davis that that was so, which is to say that there was a need to get away from the static kind of commitment and do what he told General Buse he wanted to do—try to meet the enemy when he was sticking his logistics nose in the country before he married up with his equipment, supplies, and was upon you before you knew what was going on. So that’s pretty clear to me what we had to do. We had to be mobile; we had to be aggressive; we had to be very skilled in helicopter-borne operations, because we were going to be making those kinds of movements.

I want to digress again, a digression within a digression, if you will. Having been out there before, as I’ve already reported during my time in FMFPac, I came to appreciate the most difficult, arduous, dirty, psychologically bad situation that confronted those who fought the kind of war that was necessary to fight down in the Da Nang, southern part of I Corps Tactical Zone—more populated, a lot more VC than we had in the northern I Corps Tactical Zone. Those Marines who went out day after day after day, conducting, as they indeed had to do, combat patrols almost knowing that somewhere on their route of movement they were going to have some sort of surprise visit on them, either an ambush or explosive device, not using the word “booby trap,” although some do. I think that’s the worst kind of warfare, not being able to see the enemy. You can’t shoot back at him. He was kind of helpless, and he needs to become fatalistic, as indeed I think a lot of our young men did. I take my hat off to the commanders and the troops who had to put up with that kind of situation that existed in the southern part of I Corps Tactical Zone.

A marked contrast to what my experience was in northern I Corps Tactical Zone. I was never out, except for a few days on a regimental movement or two, on the coastal area. I was in the inhospitable mountainous jungle hinterlands, where anything that moved, you could shoot, because he was the enemy. You did not have to separate the armed threat from the civilian

population. That, too, had its difficulties, much of which was physical, like humping the mountains and putting up with difficult terrain, and you had a lot of large-caliber weapons that were fired at you from safe-haven places, DMZ and Laos. But it was an easier war to fight. It was more conventional. It was what we sort of train to do in that sense. I've often thought that to draw an analogy, it would be like the Army fighting the Japanese in New Guinea—inhabitable mountains, jungle terrain, [and] the enemy being not little guys in black pajamas, but little guys in well-made uniforms and well equipped and well led and certainly well motivated.

I will not attempt, unless you want to ask some questions, to rehash specific operations that we went on. I'd rather talk to you about some of the things we tried to do. In the first place, I came to the conclusion, having visited the 9th Marine command post there at Dong Ha, that these otherwise fine young Marines, radio operators, S-3 clerks, journal keepers, and all the other folks you find in command posts, deeply buried under the ground in bunkers, overhead cover, with good reason. They'd been there so long, I think they'd been there over a year in that command post, and they had electricity and lights burning, and they had fancy slides that you could whip out in a friendly situation. You could pull another slide on rollers that would show you the enemy situation, all kinds of statistics being kept.

You could hear the radio operators talking to the subordinate units somewhere out there, that they had no idea where, probably. But the communications, that's one of the things, improved communications in Vietnam permitted commanders to . . . some had to be in these kinds of places, but it also permitted them to command from those kinds of places because the range of the radios was good enough to reach most units out there 15, 20 miles, whatever. There was a kind of spiritless performance. You'd see the radio operator with his set kind of cradled in his shoulder while he's reading his comic book or *Stars and Stripes*, not really committed in spirit to what was going on out there with the battalions, companies, and platoons. A lot of the conversation was very light and talked about the mess hall, what was the chow, and what might be the movie that night, and so forth. So I quickly decided that the very first thing that I needed to do was to move that command post, not to get in a more advantageous position from which to command the regiment, but to just shake them out of that situation they had been put in. So I never spent a night in that arrangement. We had a simple little change of command ceremony in a dusty street of Dong Ha, just outside of the 9th Marine command post, which I relieved a classmate named [Colonel Richard B.] "Dick" Smith, now retired, has been for a long time, lived

down in Charlottesville, Virginia. I turned to my S-3, who was then Major John [I.] Hopkins, now brigadier general down in [MCB] Camp LeJeune [North Carolina]. I said, “Saddle up this command post,” and the word quickly passed. “Sir, where are we going?” “Well,” I said, “we’re going to C-2.”

C-2 was one of those static positions out north of Dong Ha, between Dong Ha and the DMZ, in what was called “Leatherneck Square.” No population out there, a no-man’s-land. You could get a fight at the drop of a hat. There was always somebody out there of an unfriendly nature, and it was not jungles and not mountains. It was rugged piedmont, sort of, inward part of a coastal plain. C-2 at that time was virtually unoccupied. There may have been something there, but I don’t recall what it was. So it was a short motor movement, a few miles. [Chuckles] I’ll never forget a friend of mine—I think it might have been [Colonel Martin J.] “Stormy” Sexton, who was the G-3 of the division, someone I knew well—said to me when this 9th Marine command post group got itself together to make this move, having been, as I like to say, domesticated in those bunkers for so long, it was a terrible sight to see, typical of troops coming out of something like that. They didn’t want to throw away anything. So they had their personal radios and little comfort items and boxes and bags and you name it, hanging all over them or swinging from a pole or tied to the jeeps, on the hoods of the jeeps. He said to me, “My God, that looks terrible. It looks like Coxey’s Army!” I said, “I know, but it’ll all be gone when we make about move number three.” [Laughter]

So we moved out there, and we were only there for a few days. It served my purpose. I wanted to break them away, doing none of this independently, obviously, of what General Davis wanted done. I said, “All right, now, next move is to Vandegrift Combat Base.” Thereafter, for the rest of my nine months, I operated out of Vandegrift Combat Base on Route 9, well over halfway from Dong Ha to Khe Sanh [Vietnam]. It was in the mountains, but not too far in the mountains. It was a valley with a stream running through it, and it had served the relief columns that went in to bring relief to Khe Sanh during that siege. It became the forward operating base of the 3d Marine Division and always had a brigadier general in charge of it and the forces that were assigned to it, but not really. General Davis did the operating part, and Task Force Hotel, which was the intermediate command supposedly really ran Vandegrift Combat Base, with particular emphasis on moving supplies that were stored there to the troops as they were needed. It was sort of a forwarding depot for supplies and a place from which medevacs would pause in the wake, in back of it if they had to, or whatever.



**Simmons:** Who had Task Force Hotel at that time?

**Barrow:** When I first got there, [Brigadier General] Carl [W.] Hoffman, for about a month or so. He was a friend of mine, easy to work for. I want to draw that distinction. I don't mean to say that I felt like, "I don't have to listen to what you have to tell me. I work for General Davis," but it was a strange sort of relationship. I was under his OpCon, but most of what the relationship was, was just as I described it. It was to support me with whatever Task Force Hotel and Vandegrift Combat Base could provide. I got most of my orders, if you will, directly from General Davis, and that was probably a little bit peculiar to the 9th Marine Regiment, which really was his swing regiment, meaning we never occupied and defended any ground anywhere.

**Simmons:** Let me interrupt you once more here. Not everyone reading this transcript will have a mental picture of what one of these combat bases was, what kind of housing you had, what kind of defenses it had. Maybe you might describe Vandegrift a little bit.

**Barrow:** Vandegrift Combat Base would be somewhat larger than the same kind of little mini-bases that we frequently put on what we call fire support bases. We'll talk about that later, but fire support bases were never just fire support bases; they were a combination of that and usually somebody's command post and somebody's small cache of supplies and medical capability.

[Tape recorder turned off]

The base was fairly large, and you might sometimes have a couple of regimental headquarters and a couple of battalions in there, one from one or one from the other, or two in one. So you had a lot of units coming and going, and there were facilities that would accommodate a battalion in a quasi-bivouac sort of situation. There were Southeast Asia huts, tents, mess halls, primitive mess halls, helicopter pads, motor pools, [and] always a bunch of trucks because they still kept Route 9 open from there back to Dong Ha.

The way things worked was resupply to Vandegrift from Dong Ha would be by truck convoy, but then from there to where the stuff was needed was usually by helicopter, almost exclusively by helicopter. So I had a kind of permanent command post at Vandegrift Combat Base that I would occupy for a few days in between going off on one of our operations. We just fit in. We just knew how to do it.

I might add that I had an administrative 9th Marines rear back in Dong Ha, which I probably should have visited more often, but I think I only saw it about three times. That was really where they kept all the personnel records, small little admin group things.

**Simmons:** Who was your executive officer?

**Barrow:** My executive officer was . . . I had several. The one who was with me the longest and so much longer that you almost don't count the others, was [Lieutenant Colonel] George [C.] Fox.

**Simmons:** How did you use your executive officer?

**Barrow:** I used him as an expeditor of things that needed to be moved forward to the battalions in the field.

**Simmons:** Would he stay at Vandegrift, or would he be back at Dong Ha?

**Barrow:** No. He might, and if we were deployed out, he would frequently go back to check on something that wasn't happening like it should. He was a troubleshooter. But he also kept abreast of the tactical situation, but he was not cut out of the picture. If I was gone somewhere in a helicopter to visit some unit, and General Davis or General Stilwell came in, he was fully capable of briefing them and discussing what we were doing and taking orders from them as to what needs to be done, etc. He was always abreast of the situation. Our personalities fit. I like him very much.

My G-4 [logistics], [Major] Warren [H.] Wiedhahn [Jr.], colonel retired, during most of this time, he was really the expeditor, and he was almost always back at Vandegrift Combat Base. He and his team of people became absolute experts at loading helicopters and being responsive to radio requests of things that were needed by battalions and so forth, be it ammunition or food, water, whatever.

**Simmons:** Did you have any problems getting helicopters at this time?

**Barrow:** Yes. Oh, yes, we had a lot of problems getting helicopters. Let me just go back. I'll come to that.

General Davis believed that there were not many—at the time we're talking about, when I got there in July of '68—that there were not many enemy forces of any size in northern I Corps Tactical Zone. It was just as inhospitable for them as it was for us, and they didn't have helicopters and things for resupply. They were subject to getting air strikes and various things done to them if they ever revealed themselves as being there. Their concealment was one of the advantages they had, but it would be possible to pin them down.

He believed, and rightly so, that they went about it, in a very deliberate fashion, the kind

of operations they conducted, like Tet [offensive] of '68, and that the first order of business was for them to, surreptitiously as possible, practice as much concealment as possible, move all of the things of war, all of their logistics, forward from the sanctuary of North Vietnam just across the DMZ or from Laos. They would do this over a period of weeks, maybe even months, and cache it. Then at the point in time, the troops would come quickly in and marry up with this stuff, which would be in reasonable proximity to their objective, and then do battle.

So General Davis's whole thought was, "We must not let them get that logistics nose in country. We must do everything we can to find that stuff, wherever it exists, and obviously destroy it. If we miss any of it, we must attempt by vigorous patrolling, radio intercept, signal intelligence, recon [reconnaissance] team inserts, whatever else, to find out when any troops were moving in." Maybe we hadn't found their logistics, their caches. So we didn't want to have the surprise of not knowing, not finding them until after they'd married up and were about to engage you someplace. So that whole western Quang Tri Province became, in a sense, my area of operations. One of the first things we did was to (we had conducted a couple of smaller operations prior to this and met the enemy. There's always some in the area, but I'm talking about major formations) was to conduct an operation called Trousdale north-northwest of Vandegrift Combat Base, north-northwest of the Rockpile, which is north-northwest of Vandegrift Combat Base. That's an identifiable terrain feature characterized by what looks like a large pile of rocks, a very, very large pile of rocks. Now, that is really rugged terrain out there.

On very short notice, we were told that there seemed to be activity. [Tape interruption]

I'm going to pause and say something else about General Davis. You know, [Army] General [Crieghton W.] Abrams, who relieved [Army] General [William C.] Westmoreland, became ComUSMACV, was an old soldier of World War II vintage and whatnot and highly respected as a fighting man, later chief of staff of the Army. He surely must have known in his lifetime a lot of division commanders. He said on more than one occasion that General Davis was the finest division commander he'd ever seen, which, coming from an Army general officer, is quite a compliment.

General Davis was the right man for that particular kind of situation. I don't know how to describe it other than to say he almost seemed to have a kind of sixth sense about the enemy, and while a kind of pleasant, mild-mannered man in many respects, he was also one of the most aggressive personalities you ever encountered, sort of bulldog determination. He would visit me

virtually every day, and he didn't operate in the conventional by-the-book kind [of] commander's estimate via five-paragraph order sort of business. He would come and sit in front of a map board that I had, and he would stare at it, and I would stare at it. Maybe nothing was said between us for several minutes. Then he would get up and, with his hand, gesture to an area, and that fact was preliminary to this operation I'm about to speak of. He'd say something along the lines of, "You know, we ought to take a look at that." I knew him well enough to know that that was his five-paragraph order. I didn't need any more than that. He left it up to me as to how much size force, how you were going to develop the situation, whatever, but he wanted that area pretty well covered to make sure that there was no enemy or enemy caches in it. So from a simple thing like that, I could turn to my S-3 and tell him what I wanted, and he would refine it and would go out to whatever forces we had to work with, one or two or three battalions, and away we would go.

**Simmons:** Who was your S-3 at this time?

**Barrow:** My S-3 was still, for about the first month or so, a little bit longer, John Hopkins, whom I mentioned. He was followed by [Major Joseph B.] "Joe" Knotts, who was followed by [Major Edwin J.] "Jack" Godfrey. I had three S-3s, all of whom made general officer in the Marine Corps. I had one battalion commander and two battalion XOs [executive officers] who made general officer in that regiment. We had *crème de la crème*.

**Simmons:** Who were your battalion commanders?

**Barrow:** I had various ones. The ones who were with me the longest, I guess, would have been . . . [Tape recorder turned off] Okay, so we're back on line here. I had a guy named [Colonel Frederic S.] "Fred" Knight. I had a fellow named [Lieutenant Colonel Edward J.] LaMontagne. I had [Lieutenant Colonel] George [W.] Smith, who made general officer in the Marine Corps, [and] George Fox, who quit being my XO and took over battalion. I had Sonny Lane [?], I had Mike Pollatice [?], and I'll fill in the other names as I think about it a little bit more.

I guess the key to our successes was experience, repetition of doing things. We did not conceive the fire support base concept. As a matter of fact, the Army did. But we refined it and brought it to an art form that no one else had, I think. In every operation, we usually launched out of Vandegrift, by helicopter, and that didn't mean anything coming out of Vandegrift, because we were going to go over a lot of land—some of which might be unfriendly—to wherever you were going, we did with the fire support base concept. I'd have to scratch my head and try to give an account of how many we must have built and left in Quang Tri Province.

Typically, the way we went about that was that the key to it was that whatever forces were operating in some area far removed from other friendly forces, which would have been like Vandegrift Combat Base, had to be operated under the artillery fan and, to that extent, sort of mutually supported by artillery, so that you never had one fire support base, really. If so, it was only a temporary thing. You usually ended up with several, because you usually had more than one battalion in an area. So if you had two or three or more battalions on an operation, you had at least one fire support base for each battalion, only because that fire support base had a battery of artillery and sometimes reinforced battery—might have some 155[mm] [howitzers] in it—that was the direct support artillery for that battalion. One fire support base could cover another fire support base, so if one was under attack, you could call on the artillery or one or two other fire support bases, who could fire protective fire for that fire support base. So there was a lot of that, and it was very intricate fire plans we had for the artillery.

Now, we would typically, not always, but typically select fire support bases, which were key along these lines. I think this is kind of interesting. So like General Davis said, “We need to take a look up there or do something up there.” However he said it, I would sit down sometimes by myself, sometimes with the 3, certainly I would consult the 3, and do an old-fashioned map inspection. I sometimes wonder if they teach that now, you know. It’s a very deliberate technique. You don’t just inspect it by looking at it and turning your head away; you look at it maybe for a long period of time and just look at all the terrain features. In an area like that, where it was very mountainous, there were a lot of very pronounced terrain features and valleys and rivers. Maybe because you taught map reading and I was one of your students or something, I had learned this. I’m a pretty good map reader, and a map that has a lot of contour lines on it, a lot of elevations, [is] almost three-dimensional to me. I can look at it and I see the hills and the valleys and the mountains. It kind of comes across that way. Not everybody has that.

**Simmons:** No, and I’ve found that the people who say the maps aren’t good are usually the people who can’t read the maps.

**Barrow:** That’s right.

**Simmons:** But if you do study the map, you do begin to see the terrain.

**Barrow:** Right. So I would study the area, and I may have already had [an] occasion to look at it and had some general familiarity with it, but I’d study it and I would tentatively pick out what

looked like good fire support base sites, because not every piece of terrain would lend itself to being a good site. I had my little measuring device there, which was to get the kilometers, the artillery fan, so you didn't pick one out that would be out of the fan. You picked the next one. So I had a pretty good grasp of what that thing looked like, and I would have had my artillery battalion commander, who was always on call, to follow on my study to look at it, and the combat engineer of company, Charlie Company, the combat engineer was always a part of 9th Marines. We had the same people all the time.

That was another thing General Davis did, was restore unit integrity. I'm digressing, but I may forget to say this, so I'm going to come back to fire support base in a minute. For various reasons, I won't need to go into that, but the regiments throughout 1st and 3d Marine Divisions were operational headquarters which might have any battalion assigned to it, not one of its own denomination. So there was a kind of constant rotation. The 9th Marines earlier might have 1/3 [1st Battalion, 3d Marines] and 2/4 and 2/9 assigned to it, and the next day it might have two different ones or three different ones. So that they felt like they were, I guess, commanded, by strangers. Every unit had kind of a personality of its own, often reflecting the personality of the commander. So you never got to know who did what best, who would you give this mission to over whom else, and so forth. Well, he changed that, so the 9th Marines had 1/9, 2/9, [and] 3/9 all the time. Now, maybe once or twice we may have let one of those battalions go over to somebody else for a day or two, but I also frequently had, in addition to those three, other battalions assigned. I'll come to that in a minute.

Back to the fire support base. Surely the S-3 is kept up with what we're doing in map inspection. I started it off usually bringing the others in. We'd all kind of agree as to how this area looked, and then we'd get a helicopter. See, you're sparing yourself a lot of unnecessary flight over the area, which, among other things, is a tip-off to any enemy in the area that this kind of single helicopter keeps flying over [means] they're looking for one of these things they've been using called a fire support base. I may be giving them more than they deserve, but I don't think so. So we quickly go in and get out, and you wouldn't get shot at as much, either, I might add.

So we would go from the map inspection to a visual aerial reconnaissance. As soon as we got to the area of interest, there it was, just like we knew it was going to be. All we needed to do was see what kind of vegetation was on that piece of ground we picked out and really was it as

steep as it indicated, or could you kind of flatten the peak off over here and put a battery of artillery. So the artillery battalion commander was very key to this. Sometimes he couldn't go, so the artillery liaison would.

So we would whip out there, and I'd say, "There's that one." And he'd say, "Yep." I'd say, "What do you think?" [Lieutenant Colonel Joseph] "Joe" Scoppa [Jr.] was my artillery battalion commander. I'd say, "You think we could get a battery?" "Yes, sir. No problem." "How about you, Mr. Engineer? You see any unusual problems?" Because all these things had to be cleared off to some degree. He'd say, "No problem." Or he'd say, "That's going to take the better part of a day for us to get all those big trees out of there and try to build a landing pad and a few places for gun sites, but we can do it. I think we can do it in a day."

So we'd pick out those things, and everybody had to kind of look at it and come back, and that would be what we would base our plan on. The whole thing went like clockwork after you'd done it a couple of times. We became literally masters at building fire support bases. Typically, you'd get troops in there to provide security, and quick as a flash, we had combat engineers in with explosives. We frequently would call on an Army heavy helicopter or [Sikorsky] CH-54 [Tarhe], which looks like a bug, a praying mantis, or one of their [Boeing] CH-47 [Chinooks] that could lift a lot of weight and bring in a small-size bulldozer with operator, who would do some pushing and shoving of trees and rocks and things. Depending on what kind of terrain it was, we would have a place for the artillery to go, like that. [Snaps fingers] We always tried to pick the site that not only could accommodate the artillery, but otherwise was very difficult for anyone wishing to attack it.

Once in a while, we would just be delighted with ourselves that we would find one that was just like a cone, so that you were absolutely on the peak. I wish my memory was better. I could run some of those by you. The names begin to escape me. But you felt like, "I don't even need any security." You didn't, of course, do that. You always had some. But it would have been virtually impossible for somebody to start at the bottom of one of those kinds of places and work their way up to the top and attack you, so the defensibility was important. You didn't want to tie down a lot of troops defending an artillery battery, or you wouldn't have anybody to do the operating.

Remember, we had four rifle companies in our battalion. So from time to time, it was necessary to put a rifle company at the fire support base. It was necessary if the enemy situation

was developing that it was subject to attack and it was not as defensible as some other piece of ground. You just couldn't do it with the artillery battery and a few people that were in the regimental command post, if you happened to be my CP. I always colocated whenever. Then that company would vigorously patrol. They were doing something more than just sitting in a fixed position around that fire support base. He'd be out developing whatever the enemy situation might be within the limits of a patrol out of there. But then you had three companies left to free swing it.

Back to your question. Some battalion commanders would put a command post on fire support base, but more often than not, they were with one of the rifle companies. I say to these young officers today, who are mesmerized by computers and all of these things that are supposed to make warfighting easier, that whatever you acquire don't become totally dependent on it. Be able to leave it behind, send it to the rear or whatever, and by shank's mare [one's own legs] and a folded-up map board and manpacked radios, get up in the middle of the night and move for three or four hours to seek a more advantageous position to launch the attack, and you'd better be able to do that. That worries me that maybe we're forgetting some of that. Everybody goes riding along in vehicles, and we're going to fight some wars where we're going to have to hoof it.

So our first major operation—I'm kind of going back to that now—we kind of moved a couple of times. I meant to say we moved from C-2 to Vandegrift, then we moved back to C-2, my command post, because we did conduct an operation in the western part of Leatherneck Square, and one battalion had a pretty good firefight. It kind of got everybody tuned up a little bit better. By the time we launched this thing I'm telling you about, we were a little bit better, and by the time it was over, we were very much better.

We went up there. To develop, the situation compelled us to, one, land a battalion right on the DMZ. I mean, not in it, but on it. The boundary of the south side . . . almost sort of as scrimmages start south through that terrible mountainous jungle terrain. We had another battalion that went from south to north starting around the Rockpile, and we had another one that went sort of east to west. To make a long story short, before that operation was over, the 9th Marine Regiment, located out on Fire Support Base Winchester, which was in the middle of our operating area, had six battalions assigned to it, including the special landing force that had come in from sea. As a matter of fact, a sad story, they had no more than gotten there then they were subjected to a very heavy and costly mortar attack, much of which I was able to see and was



helpless to do much about, getting fire on the source, one thing, and another. We did, but not before they had done a lot of damage.

So we had six battalions, and that's like two regiments or two-thirds of the infantry of a division, all controlled by a major S-3 and a colonel regimental commander and the kind of radios that one finds in regimental tactical nets, admin nets, and so forth, and had no problem doing it. It was not a clean kind of a thing in which you could say, "We'll keep two in reserve and only [make] four of them fight." They were all committed. They were all committed to vigorous patrolling, to either contact the enemy or his caches. So we're talking here about *320th North Vietnam Division*, which were getting ready to come south. I think a lot of that was revealed out at the signal intelligence. It was the 3d Battalion, 9th Marines, under LaMontagne, with Frank [J.] Breth as his battalion S-3 (he's now a brigadier general, has intelligence over here) that started finding the large caches that were in our area of operation. The more they found, the more they found. It seemed like an unending thing. Very heartening.

That was the first time that this theory of General Davis's was proved, that yes because it was not that far from Route 9, where Route 9 curves from going more or less east-west, to swinging and coming more or less south toward Vandegrift Combat Base, not far from the Rockpile. You could see the Rockpile from that big curve in there. This was not far from there, so within a very short distance.

So if the *320th* had come down, as they were probably going to do, and married up with all this stuff we found, they could very well have cut Route 9 and kept it permanently cut. We'd have had to fight to keep it open. That would have cut Vandegrift Combat Base off at the knees, so to speak, certainly in the resupply that was brought out by vehicle, as I mentioned earlier.

That was the operation that [Brigadier General William C.] "Bill" Chip suffered his back injury. He was coming to visit me on Fire Support Base Winchester, and he said, "I'll be right out." He was in a [Bell UH-1] Huey [helicopter]. I gave him a few minutes, and I started walking to the helo pad. I could hear the helicopter coming, and I was going up a set of dirt steps we had created to the helo pad, which was a little higher than where my CP was, in a kind of saddle. I was looking right at the helicopter when it didn't really land in the helo pad; it kind of chug-chug-chugged and was short of it and seemed to have lost power, and just went tumbling over and over and over, virtually all the way down this high and precipitous mountain we were on. Bill Chip was a good friend of mine. I'd been with him in Senior School and served with him in

G-3 training at Headquarters Marine Corps. I know of few things that hit me more than that, to see an old friend whose coming in to see you surely killed. I just didn't think there was a snowball's chance in hell.

Well, it was one of those miraculous things. He wasn't killed. A human chain of making a monumental effort was formed to go down the slopes of that mountain, which were almost vertical, and get him and the other survivors out. I think there was one that didn't survive, only about four people. The poor guy, if that injury was on a highway, you wouldn't have moved him, you would have carefully put him in a stretcher, put all kinds of temporary braces and one thing and the other, because his back was broken. But he had to be moved by human chain hanging off the side of a mountain. He was in the most excruciating pain. By then, we'd whistled in a [Sikorsky] CH-53 [Sea Stallion] and I remember him being put in it and talking to me about how hurt he was. He said, "God!" He was almost out of it he was hurting so badly. Of course, he still has that injury. That's why he lives in Florida, warm weather, but he still has a back problem. I talked to him not too long ago. He said it bothers him all the time.

Anyway, that was a very successful operation, not only because we think we thwarted the *320th Division*, but we polished our techniques. The remnants of that operation kind of went through our battalion as we found less need for them to be there.

That operation was still underway when we were called on to put a cordon around the village of My Lai [Vietnam], which is over the mountain range from Vandegrift Combat Base and on the last part of the coastal plain before you get to the mountain, the closest populated area. It had been determined that we had some number, 20-odd, hard-core VC leaders who were meeting in that village, intelligence said. And to show you, General Davis didn't just like to go out and fight regulars he was interested in. If that being so, he was going to jump on it.

So I was out there in Winchester when he tells me, "I want you to put a cordon around My Lai tonight. Tonight. And I want it to be air tight, because we're going to then clean it out tomorrow." So I left Winchester, turning things over, as I recall, to George Fox, my XO, with a couple of remaining battalions, back to Vandegrift, where I picked up . . . I'd like to consult the records. I think it was four battalions, two of mine and two of some other regiment's. We had a combination motor movement around there, which was designed not to reveal itself until everything else was kind of coming into place, so that you could achieve surprise. You didn't want to drive into My Lai with a convoy, obviously. We planned, in a matter of hours, a night

heliborne lift of that size force to surround a pretty good-size little village. Again, as I say, we had moved enough and done enough then that we thought we could do about anything. The regimental command post went along with one of the helicopters. So we did all we were supposed to do. And don't you know that we, in fact, when the dust settled in minutes of these battalions landing, another one coming in by convoy, we had a man-touch-man cordon around that village. It was something to behold when daylight came—did all this at night, night landing—daylight came, to see as far as your eye could see, Marines physically able to touch the Marine to his right and left, all the way around the city.

The sad part is that the then-careful screening and sweep through the village didn't find anything like what they were looking for. I think they found two or three so-called hard core. But again, that was an experience that, one, revealed our unique competent capability, and built on that so that we would even be better the next time we had to do something like that.

We operated down in the Ba Long Valley for a very protracted period. My CP was on Fire Support Base Dick, named for Dick Stilwell, just to sort of throw him a little compliment. He appreciated that. There's a very interesting painting done by an artist named Lesko [?], a combat artist. What's his name? You would know immediately when I speak of it. It shows a lot of artillery, ammo boxes, and some batteries, looks like steps on a pinnacle, then another pinnacle that kind of goes up. Everything just looks like it's hanging on a thread up on the top of a mountain peak. That was Fire Support Base Dick that overlooked the Ba Long Valley. We were out there for a very long time doing what we called saturation patrolling.

That fire support base, like the others that were in the mutual support of it, were selected along the lines of what I told you, except we knew that was going to be difficult to clean out, so we had a 2,000-pound . . . was it 2,000? More than that. An enormous bomb, one of those big ones. What was the size of it?

**Simmons:** Ten-thousand ton?

**Barrow:** Ten thousand. This was one, yes, that just blew everything. We had one of those delivered on the top of that picked-out fire support base. It didn't hit exactly where we wanted it, kind of off to one side, so artillery didn't get to take advantage of it, but my command post parked itself right in it. It was, in fact, a large crater, and we had the S-3 and the S-2 [intelligence] and everything right in that crater with a tent over the crater. You came in one entrance. You were in with all these radios and map boards, and if you went out the other

entrance, you were on a balcony, a little rim that the bomb crater still had, hanging over what I guess must have been 2,000 feet of the most gorgeous, beautiful terrain you ever saw. I had my map board, my own sort of personal map board, always out there on an easel sort of thing, and my visitors who would come, I'd lead them through this. They'd see the artillery battery, which was impressive, all pushed up on these little subpinnacles, go through this busy command post of the regiment, and then go out the other end and there was this balcony. I've had many people say, "I couldn't appreciate the view for fear that you were going to take a step back and go to the bottom of that thing. You always seemed to be standing right on the edge talking about what was going on."

But we had one of the most interesting techniques at work there that I think I've ever seen. We laid out a very large area to be thoroughly patrolled. We called it saturation patrolling. As the companies reported to the battalions, the battalions subsequently to the regiment, Joe Knotts would plot the patrol activity on the map and keep it there and had the next one the next day. By the time we had finished, it looked like someone had taken the map board, let us say that it was four-by-six feet, something like that, it looked like someone had taken a bunch of templates that looked like spider webs, and just stuck them up on there, all sort of touching one another. If there was ever a piece of ground in the western part of Quang Tri that was searched out thoroughly, that was that operation. We found no caches, which, in itself, was an accomplishment. You don't have to worry that there's any there. We would have found them. We had a few enemy contacts, and we found some Montagnards, one of the few remnants of some tribe that was still there, who came out, who wanted to come out. It was one of the few times I also saw elephants, more than once, and to fly over an area that you knew troops were down there doing their saturation patrol, with all company-size patrols, and within a few hundred yards were two or three elephants grazing, which always got them dirty and ran when the helicopters flew over.

We went from there to Khe Sanh directly. We didn't go back to Vandegrift Combat Base, because we wanted to continue to search. I actually set up my command post in some of the old remnants of positions, if you will, of what was there before. It was an eerie feeling to go out to Khe Sanh, which had the long siege and so much on TV and written about it and everything, to see how desolate it was. We patrolled up to the Laotian border, patrolled up to Tiger Tooth Mountain. Tiger Mountain or Tiger Tooth? Which one is the one in the north?

**Simmons:** Tiger Mountain.

**Barrow:** Tiger Mountain. Tiger Tooth's down south. We patrolled down toward the salient [?], so we were in there doing some . . . started to do what we had done out in Ba Long Valley.

We got called back before that operation was completed, to Vandegrift Combat Base, where General Davis said, "We are going to go to the northern part of the A Shau Valley." Again, feeling that there was something going on down there in the way of the logistics nose being stuck inside the country. "We're going to search out whatever is in that area, the upper part of the Da Krong River." The Da Krong flows north to the Ba Long [?], and the Ba Long then goes on out to the sea. It's a watershed. The water in that area that he was talking about, the mountain range that was in there, the northern part of A Shau and the western part, on the western slopes of those mountains, the water goes to the Mekong River over in Laos. The eastern part flows to the East China Sea. So that was awesome. You didn't have to be a genius to look at a map to see that that was a long ways off from Vandegrift Combat Base, specifically about 30 miles, 50 kilometers, if you went to the ultimate end of it, where we in fact went.

So we had an operation that we knew not much about what was there, except a lot of antiaircraft artillery. That's the one thing we knew was there, a lot of things, which was a tip-off that they were protecting something, everything from light-caliber to medium-caliber antiaircraft artillery and lots of it. We knew that the only way to get there was to do it by leapfrogging fire support bases, and it would be totally helicopter-dependent. You couldn't easily walk out of it or ever expect anybody to just walk in to you.

It was the monsoon season, not over. Uncertain, yet-to-be-developed enemy situation, monsoon season, and the final objective was about 30 miles from the nearest friendly bases. We know it now as Operation Dewey Canyon, which was, by any measure, a great success. I want to pause and say that I still have—and I think I have it right here in my files—the letter you wrote me when it was over, complimentary of the old regiment of the 9th Marines. I got a beautiful letter from [retired Lieutenant] General [Edward A.] Craig, a former commanding officer of the 9th Marines in World War II.

I don't want to go through all of Dewey Canyon, but I'd like to touch on a few things that I think need to be in this history. I'm sure the average person who has read about it and has heard about it would say that, "Well, those guys, it probably took 'em a couple of weeks or a month or so to go into a lot of very fine detailed planning to make that thing happen." We did it in five days, from the time General Davis said, "Do something" until we started execution.

And we had some problems during those five days. One of them answers your question, in part, about did we have adequate helicopters? See, it's human nature that if the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing is located in Da Nang near the 1st Marine Division and the MAF, that the 1st Marine Division is just naturally going to get more aviation support—fixed wing, helicopters, anything else. That's just to be assumed. The 3d Division, way up there, it didn't seem to have the same kind of problems demanding helicopters. A number of the units were in kind of fixed positions, and the 9th Marines was the only real user. We were out all the time, as I indicated. So we would have requirements for 12, and get anywhere from zero to 6, that kind of response, and it was very frustrating when you had everything laid on.

General Davis made such strong representation about this, they finally sent a brigadier general up, who became the AWC [assistant wing commander] of the 1st Wing, and who was [Brigadier General] Homer [S.] "Dan" Hill first, and then followed by [Brigadier General Ralph H.] "Smoke" Spanjer. Both of them did great, good work in first being able to see that there was a legitimate, serious need for aviation support up there that was not being met, and being general officers and right from the wing headquarters, they had set up their own little communication arrangement, not any big CP or anything, just a little mobile, really almost the elbow of General Davis. They were able to improve that situation dramatically. Of course, we had MAG-39 [Marine Aircraft Group 39] down at Quang Tri, which meant we had helicopter support within proximity. It was a question of getting it.

One of the things that delayed—delayed, we did it in five days; we might have done it in less—was that we were told by . . . got a message from 1st Marine Aircraft Wing that they wanted to come discuss this operation. I'll never forget we were at Vandegrift Combat Base, and the wing G-3, no less plus a number of others—he was a lieutenant colonel—experts of one kind and another, his wing intelligence officer, G-2, they arrived.

It went something like this; this is abbreviated. In the tent was General Davis and my staff, battalion commanders, all of whom were kind of figuring out what we were going to do, but we had to have aviation support to do it. My Amphibious—then called Junior School—Warfare School classmate, [is] now a colonel. I'm a colonel; he's a wing 3, Jim Wells [?]. Respected, I liked him. He got up to say, "I understand you all have contemplated an operation in the area north of A Shau. We want to tell you why that's not a good idea." With that, he

gestured, and the cover came off the map he brought with him, and here was the enemy situation as they understood it to be—incomplete, necessarily. But it had all of the AA[A] [antiaircraft artillery] positions plotted on there, because they, in fact, had run an operation and gotten information from the Air Force, too, that every time you flew in that general area, you were going to get shot at and that was in the area of our final objective. He said, “It is a nonstarter, gentlemen. It’s not doable. We wouldn’t have a helicopter left if you launched a heliborne operation down in those objectives you have outlined here.” He talked on.

I got up and I said, “What you don’t understand, Slim, we’re not going to do it that way. Those of us who ride in helicopters don’t like being shot at any more than those of you who fly them. We’re going to leapfrog, by helicopter and fire support base, for days to get down in the near proximity of the final objectives, and whatever the final helicopter movement will be, it’s going to be well short of those final objectives, and we’re going to move the final objective where that AA is, by shank’s mare, the old-fashioned way.” I said, “As long as we’re on the subject, let me unburden something that’s been bothering me a long time. When we pick out an LZ [landing zone], we think it would be wise if you approached it over terrain that has been either secured or reasonably peaceful, reasonably secured, and not make these big circles and lazy-eight kind of movements over an area that no one has been. That includes the daily resupply, that includes the medevacs, and that includes moving, also, to the extent you can, includes new LZs you’re going to, to put troops in. But surely in the day-to-day work, if you move down this axis of a ridge, you’ve pretty well cleared it, and that’s the same route that the helicopters ought to take and not go flying out somewhere else.” [Tape interruption]

I think we, in a word, overwhelmed them. They had no legs to stand on. So the operation got under way, and that’s exactly how we did it. We leapfrogged out of there. The first fire support base was on old one. We reopened it. It was called Tun Tavern. Then we moved to Shiloh, that was another one that we opened up, and then we moved on to Razor, which we named for General Davis, you know. General Jim Masters used to call him not Ray, but the “Razor.” So we had Fire Support [Base] Razor, then Erskine, and we had a whole series of them down there. The one that was the biggest, because we not only had a battery of 105[mm] [howitzers], but it had 155[mm]s, and it had a big aid station. It had what amounted to it. It had a helicopter refueling capability. We had bladders out there. We had radar, ASRT [air support radar team] out there because we knew we were going to be in bad weather, and they could

check there for some of these helicopters. Later, we had to do fixed-wing air resupply, and we had the regimental command post and an artillery battalion CP.

So we had a hell of a lot of people on [Fire Support Base] Cunningham, which was way the hell down there. Took us a long time to get there because of the weather. We were advancing rather smartly when we hit nine days in which nothing flew. We had companies out, probing, moving ahead, always moving. G Company of the regiment was over there on what they called the Coal Rock [?]. What was that thing, that very straight thing that looked like the Pali in Hawaii. I'll get the name right. They were over there farther than anyone else. They had enemy contact, they had wounded, and one of the hardest decisions I ever had to do, in one sense, was to say, "Stop, cease, and come back." But that was the one thing you could do. You could say, "Well, tomorrow's going to be bright and sunny and we'll put reinforcements in there, and furthermore, we'll take out the wounded and resupply with everything." You couldn't predict it. I did this on about the fifth or sixth day, as I recall, thinking it could go a long time. It was a good decision.

It went to nine days, and as tough as it was for them, and they were engaged on the way back to where they could maybe—one of the great feats of airmanship and it didn't go unrewarded, either—they got back to the Da Krong River, which was identifiable like a road. They were on the shores of this fast-running mountain stream, not very big, with their wounded, a couple of dead too, and empty bellies. They hadn't eaten for a couple of days. Some helicopters, two as I recall, with great flying skill, found the Da Krong River miles from where these fellows were and flew. No trees or anything to worry about in the river, flew at almost water level up the river north, up that river, winding and turning around turns and one thing and another, until they found those wounded, dead, and hungry members of Golf Company and took out the wounded and everything. The company, of course, stayed. That's just a little vignette that goes along with the kind of difficulty we found in our movement toward this final objective before we went to Cunningham.

We found a first-class telephone line that had been run by the opposition, to give itself real dependable communications. These were like you were running wires through we're talking about a large area, and they had traversed the whole area. Well, we attempted to listen in on it for a while, and then we finally didn't get much out of that and cut it. Well before we got to the final objective area, we uncovered a very substantial hospital capability not too far from the Da Krong River.



The battalions worked entirely with the companies. The companies had a kind of two-up and two-back you might have typically, and this was sort of typical. You'd have two companies on this ridge and two companies on the ridge just over. The company in the front was obviously "in the attack," and if it got heavily engaged, the other company was a maneuver element, a platoon, such as it were. Otherwise, depending on the severity of the contact and what have you, they may end up being the element that would ensure a prepared and secure LZ on that ridge. So the helicopter would do as I told you, would come in, land, leave off water and rations and ammo, and take out wounded. Then that company would help muscle it up to the one that was in the lead, and they would pick it up and keep going. Then at some particular time, that company in the trace of the other would pass through it, and that company would become sort of the one who would secure the rear, provide a maneuver element if the contact was made and you needed one, resupply helicopter, LZ preparation, all this. It was masterfully done. They just moved that way, and the battalion commanders right along with them. No jeeps, obviously, or any of that nonsense.

I'll never forget George Fox had 3d Battalion, and as we prepared to go out there, he said, "Colonel, one thing I want to take with me, I want to take our 106[mm] [recoilless rifles]," you know, the direct-fire antitank bunker-buster, tripod 106, recoilless rifle. I said, "George, you're not taking those things. They're not mobile enough. You're going to be moving, and somewhere you're going to wish you didn't have them, or you'll still want to have them and you'll leave somebody to be protecting them or trying to drag them around." I said, "I just don't want that." Well, he kept talking to me, and I said, "All right, take the d——n things." So he had, as I remember. We didn't all deploy at once, you know. We went incrementally, one battalion, two battalions, three battalions.

Finally, the battalion out of 3d Marines, after we had a pretty vicious sniper attack on Fire Support Base Cunningham . . . that's another story, a hairy experience. You know, at a regimental command post, you don't expect to have sniper attacks, but you do—could. [Lieutenant Colonel James J.] "Joe" McMonagle, 2d Battalion, 3d Marines, joined us, so we had four battalions. We had a regiment of ARVN [Army, Republic of Vietnam] on our left. With all due respect, they never got much of the action, but they were out there and they were way off to our left. In a sense, they could not be considered as supportive.

But back to George Fox. [Chuckles] Wouldn't you know that it wasn't long after he'd gotten out there, we were talking over secure net [network] one night, and he said, "Sir, if you want me where you say you want me, we're going to have to move fast, and I'm going to have to leave my 106s. I'll have a platoon or something stay behind with them." I said, "No, you're not." He said, "Well, I can't take them." I said, "That's right. You're going to spike 'em. So spike 'em." And that didn't bother me at all. You know, you've always read about if you spiked your gun that meant you'd sort of lost something. But they were a handicap in that situation, so he spiked his 106s. I think he put an incendiary in a breach or something, however he did it.

But anyway, there were so many unique features to that operation that I'm reluctant to try to cover all the ground that could be covered. It's been written about pretty much. I wrote an article, rather a talk I gave that was reprinted in [*The Marine Corps*] *Gazette* a few years ago, which spoke of the terrain, the weather, and how they influenced the operation so very much, the distance. It was highly successful. It was highly successful. Among other things, we probably—and other people are more knowledgeable than I would say this—probably preempted Tet offensive] '69. Whether it would have been done again against Hue or Quang Tri or some other place, there was enough stuff being in there and being brought in that it would have been the guns and ammunition and everything, medical supplies and everything else for major formations to have used, and we scarfed it all up or destroyed it, and we had no Tet offensive in northern I Corps in '69. And I think that's what we did. We thwarted that effort. So that's the first most important part of the operation is I think we succeeded in preventing an enemy Tet offensive.

We had some sort of unique things happening. I would say the weather was bad maybe half the time, and you couldn't count on resupply. We ran low on ammunition at times. I'm not talking about the nine days, but I mean right after that, particularly artillery ammunition. It was either feast or famine. We'd get loaded up and we'd say, "Boy, we're ready to go," and you'd keep working on it and refine it working on it, and two bad days and you wouldn't get any, and the next thing you know, you're right back down to being where you had to worry about it.

We had a lot of enemy activity just across the border in Laos. There's a road, I think it's called Route 920 [922], it runs sort of parallel to the border for much of the area of our final objective. There were 122mm field guns over in Laos that could reach Cunningham, for example, and did. We were fortunate in having Cunningham to face the west. What was unfortunate was it was a slope at the top. It was a ridge. But if you could get on the other side of

that slope, on the reverse side of it, which was very precipitous—and you certainly couldn't get your artillery; the only thing you could get there might be some people—you were home free, because those rounds would go sailing over. They weren't going to drop down on you. But they would give us a pretty good pounding. We had nothing for counter-battery. They were out of range of our 155s. I'm sure of the 105s. And the Army had their . . . what was that big, long Tom they had?

**Simmons:** [The] 175[mm]s.

**Barrow:** The Army had 175s, which were just out there still in the coastal plains, firing indiscriminately on our request, but it had become sort of indiscriminate because at max range, which was about what that was, they were still not out where the 122mm field gun was. You don't have any accuracy. It's just useless firing, as far as I'm concerned. That's why we used them at night, sort of. So clearly, the way you delivered counterbattery on these guns was with aviation ordnance. The aviators, if these guns could be picked out—and they were all camouflaged and protected—but if they could be picked out, would in fact take them out with some success.

We had forward observers from the North Vietnamese who were within close visibility of Cunningham and Erskine and these fire support bases we had there. They were literally somewhere—we never did find where they were—were looking at us and would run these missions on us. Now, there's several things about that that are sort of interesting. You couldn't count on fixed wing being airborne, waiting for you to give them a mission to fire on something that revealed itself, that would be revealed to them, too, more than it would be to you. But we had air AOs [aerial observers] up. [McDonnell Douglas] TA-4 [Skyhawk aircraft] would be one, and they would be used for controlling the fixed wing. We had [North American Rockwell] OV-10 Bravos, Broncos, and we had OE aircraft. Those North Vietnamese were smart enough to know that when we had one of those guys on station, they'd better not fire or he would reveal his position and they would then call in fixed wing and tell them where to hit, because we had done that. So obviously, the counterbattery was a simple thing—always have an AO up. So we had them up from daybreak, because the forward observers, I guess, wouldn't have the visibility or the vision to be able to see where they were shooting at night, otherwise you'd get the night fire, and the proof of it is that on one occasion, one AO and his OE, or whatever he was flying, was up circling the general area, looking into Laos to see if anybody was going to fire, was getting

short on fuel, and had to go before he was relieved on station, and there was about a 20-minute gap. And don't you know, they fired until that other AO came on station?

The other thing is, we were reading their nets. I had a sizable detachment of radio battalions and always did have, wherever I was, and I might add, a big advocate of tactical SigInt [signals intelligence]. Even the Marine Corps, but surely I think this is true of the other Services, had gone through a period in which the interception of the enemy's communications was something that you immediately sent back to some superior in the same chain of intelligence, and you could visualize it being put on somebody's grand mosaic in the Pentagon. Totally useless, except for someone being able to brief someone, did he know what the enemy situation was in place X. I maintained and practiced that all of it had immediate tactical value, a lot of it was very perishable, and before you sent it to anybody else, you'd give it to me, because I want to act on it if it's deserving of being acted on. We had that kind of relationship. I've been very sympathetic. When I was Commandant, I was always supportive of giving them the wherewithal to the extent we could, a little bit more than some other units that we had, because they're capable of good work.

Anyway, among other things, we were on a lot of their nets, and among other things, we were on this fire-request net, these 122mm. So these guys had their little tent that they were hidden in, where they did all this work, you know, intercept work. So the leader of that little group would come out quickly and say to me, "Sir, they're about to fire." He was giving them [inaudible]. So I would pass the word, "All right! Everybody in his hole! Button up!" And they knew to do that, particularly after I did it the first time. So they'd all get in their hole, and a short time later, boom! Brroom! I'm told that people would say, "How come the colonel knows this that they're going to shoot at us?" [Laughter] "How does he know that, that they're going to shoot at us?" Anyway, that's kind of a little funny.

The other thing is, we had arc lights, and we may have been one of the few outfits based on intelligence derived by my detachment from radio battalion out there knew that we had a much more lucrative . . . if, indeed, we hadn't already picked the wrong kind of target than the one that the arc lights were going to be delivered on, arc light being a [Boeing] B-52 [Stratofortress] strike that was devastating. The only thing is that you had to get it on the right target. We had a change en route. I didn't know they were capable of doing that, really; I thought they were so fixed. They put down their string on something other than they planned. They had

so many compromises in the system that may have been one reason why they were a success. We not only moved the strike to something much more lucrative—maybe the other thing wouldn't have been lucrative at all—but we got good bomb damage assessment immediately. The man in the same net, one only, was up out of several who had been talking, and he finally found somebody else way off in another area, switching his channels. I guess we switched with him or something, and in effect, he said, "I can't get Charlie, Sam, Jack. They're gone. No communication. I don't know what's happened to them. Several things just flew overhead and took 'em out." So we had a lot of those things that you don't normally read about when you read an after-action report or some article. The whole operation was full of little things like that that happened.

Of course, we crossed over into Laos, which at the time was very controversial. If you want to, I'll talk about that. It's been talked about by me before. Somebody has it on some oral history.

**Simmons:** Tell us about it briefly again. We do have the other tape, but tell us. That was quite something at the time.

**Barrow:** Well, again, it was 3d Battalion over there that was . . . 2d Battalion. Beg your pardon. George Fox had the 2d Battalion. I go back and correct the other thing, what I said. They were in proximity of the Laotian border and this road, which ran parallel to where the one company was. They had put up with these trucks going back and forth, and clearly they were resupplying the area that was in our final objective, the troops reinforcing, whatever they were doing, with impunity. They said, "Nobody's going to bother us. This is a sanctuary." So I knew that the rules of engagement were that you were not to go into Laos. I hesitate to talk about this, because when I do, sometimes it's brought up in the schools or something, and I have to be very careful that I'm not preaching disobedience or something. I try to tell young officers that once in a while you come to the point where you have to make either a moral judgment or one that relates to the safety and well-being of your troops, that transcends some sort of orders that were issued maybe months ago or some sort of standing directive or whatever, even though it may have grave implications if you violated it, even for the country in some diplomatic sense. You stand the consequences of whatever comes out of such a decision that you might make. And that's what I felt I had to do. Yet, if I went back and said, "These guys are doing these things, reinforcing the battlefield, and we can hit them. I want to do it," the answer would come back, "No, you can't do

that.” It’s easy for the guy up the line to say no, because he isn’t there seeing the opportunity and experiencing the increasing danger to your troops that committed an area. So I said, “We’re going to do it, and then I’ll tell them about it.” So I passed the word, and that company went over there and set up a classic ambush, sprung it, and worked them over. Subsequently, we were in there several times. But after he got through, I then reported back what I’d done. The first person I reported to was Task Force Hotel, which was then [Brigadier General] Frank [E.] Garretson, who had relieved Bill Chip. Well, he hit the overhead. He came back. I have a copy of the message I sent him in my files. I said, “If we can’t go into Laos, we shouldn’t be here,” were my final words. But he came back on the voice and said, “Are you crazy? What are you doing out there? Have you lost your mind?”

Well, it went to General Davis, who took a much more reasonable, for me, view. He kind of smiled and, as I recall, said, “Good. Good.” I knew that wouldn’t be the end of it. It would have to go up the line. So it went to MACV and it went back to CinCPac, and it went back to the JCS. [Navy] Admiral [Thomas H.] Moorer was the chairman at the time, and he chewed on it as to what to do about it, I guess to relieve somebody or do more of it or not acknowledge it or pretend it would go away, or what. I never have known what the debate was. But they did not take away the restrictions, but we did go back in there under a kind of quasi-relief of the restriction. Lifting of the restriction, I should say.

Obviously, it didn’t cost me my career, and I’m sure I’d do it again. It falls in that category of doing something you’re not supposed to do. A different set of commanders, different circumstances, I might very well have been relieved. “Get him out of there. Who does he think he is?” Bambo! You’re gone.

We had some tough fighting in Dewey Canyon. It wasn’t just a matter of going down there and fighting the terrain and the weather and finding a lot of cache. We found some pretty determined resistance, and a lot of that particularly in the 1st Battalion area. That’s where [First Lieutenant Wesley L.] “Wes” Fox got his Congressional Medal [of Honor], company commander, super officer.

In the interest of saving time here, the day is kind of moving on, it was, by all measure, a great success, and I attribute it to the experiences we had had prior to that. Remember I said the other day, everything I had ever done seemed to have had some preparation? We had become, by the end of Dewey Canyon, seasoned first-class mountain warfare kind of troops, especially

building fire support bases quickly, knowing how and where and when to do it and all that sort of thing, and how to work helicopter landing zones and resupply and companies in trace. Working in the jungle and all those things, hell, we got good troops. I'm telling you, the troops were super, and the officers, the battalion commanders, [and] lieutenant colonels out there humping through the jungles and mountains, just like old PFC [Private First Class] Jones. I give them high marks.

After Dewey Canyon, we conducted a few more modest kind of operations. It lasted a pretty good while, much longer than we thought. We went in there on January 19th, as I recall, and didn't get out of there until March. I left the regiment, I think it was the ninth of April. [Major General William K.] "Bill" Jones took over the division. I'd had nine months, which was kind of a long time for anybody to have it, and I went down to Da Nang and became the assistant G-3 for [Brigadier General] Ross [T.] Dwyer [Jr.] and then [Brigadier General] Leo [J.] Dulacki, for the remaining four months of my tour. Nothing particularly unusual about that. I felt like I was far removed from the war when I was in Da Nang in that rather elaborate command post—not elaborate, but well laid-out command post, so far away from so many people I knew in the regiment, was still there. [Colonel Edward F.] "Ed" Danowitz relieved me and did one of the nicest things anyone has ever done for me. There I am, laboring in the G-3 office of III MAF, giving a lot of thought to . . . [Tape interruption; coughing]

. . . first outfit to be redeployed from Vietnam back to Okinawa. So they had quite a big ceremony, the first outfit going home, a big ceremony, lots of South Vietnamese officials there to decorate the regiment, regimental colors. However much of the regiment as they could get there was going to pass and review all the battalion regimental colors. The first class, sort of, bidding you farewell. Ed Danowitz asked me to come, and the division commander was there, General Jones, and MAF, a whole bunch. Then he asked me to take the review.

So that's about Vietnam.

**Simmons:** I have one or two questions I'd like to ask, backing up. This first one will sound quite irrelevant, but for completeness, let's go back to the National War College. What was the subject of your IRP [instructional research project]?

**Barrow:** The IRP was not particularly well written, but it was a good idea. It still is. It was called—mind you, this was 1967–68, so this was a popular term still being thrown around—I called it "Sea-based Counterinsurgency: Another Dimension of Sea Power," and in a nutshell,

what I thought was that there was hardly any country in this world where you would have something like a counterinsurgency going on that wasn't with a coastline proximity to the sea, and that one of the big problems in trying to do something about it is having an in-country presence, which necessarily brings with it a big tail of support, mess halls, and motor pools, and it builds on itself, and pretty soon you have more tail than you have tooth. Whether they're just advisors or whether they're something more than that, it's a presence that is vulnerable and conspicuous and is a kind of commitment from which, if you pull back from it, you have turned tail and run. I mean, you've abandoned.

My idea was that you could have the elements of a counterinsurgency to include all the things that you wanted, very active, combined intelligence, you could have in-country people on ship with you to work the intelligence thing. You'd have medical treatment, maybe like a hospital ship with its task force that would treat. When there weren't wounded soldiers of the country you're supporting or your own people, they'd be supporting civilians, which is one of the things you want to do; make the civilians feel good about it. You would have radio-transmission capability for propaganda purposes, information to broadcast from sea, all the little radio [inaudible], or whatever it's called. And you can just build on this ad infinitum. As far as the pure military part of it, you'd have your helicopters on the helicopter kind of ship that would be the key to connection, the nexus between this capability at sea and what needs to be done ashore, whether it's delivering troops or supplies or medicine or somebody to go visit the schools or whatever. You would have a military capability measured to that which was needed, instead of having it ashore. Instead of saying, "We brought too much," or not having enough, you'd have what you'd think would be enough for most any situation and would apply that which you needed for whatever period of time you needed to. And then they'd come back without the psychological concerns of being terrorized by a mad bomber in the middle of the night in some bivouac area they're in or something, but come back to the relative security of the forces afloat.

This would have the advantage of not only being at sea and secure and complete in all the things that one wants to do in a counterinsurgency, which is more than military, but it would also have the advantage of moving up and down whatever this coastline would be. Now, just think about the countries of this world that have coastlines. The current situation in Central America, you could have such a force, one on the Pacific side and one on the Atlantic side, and you just about could reach, by helicopter, the entire country, from one ocean or the other, with whatever it was that would be needed.



Obviously, there has to be the right kind of political conditions, both in this country and in the country that you're supporting, for something like that to happen, and it wouldn't come cheap. But it's still a concept that shouldn't be tossed out. You base it at sea and not get all tied up, committed, pinned down. You want to change your mind? You can just say, "Tonight we're going to sail this thing away," as opposed to pulling troops out of country, which looks like you turned tail and ran.

**Simmons:** Another National War College question. The selection process for the top-level schools is closely akin to the selection process for promotion, although sometimes there are anomalies in this. All the top-level schools are regarded as equally prestigious, but the National War College is sort of the first among equals. For many years, I think, the Marine Corps' perception of the selection was that you were rewarded for good performance in the past, and you were being given a pleasant year. About the time that you went, this policy or perception began to change a little bit. The Marine Corps began to realize this should be a time of preparation for more responsibility. What was the attitude during your year? You had some very distinguished classmates there.

**Barrow:** Yes, and I think we felt like somebody was sending me a signal that, "Maybe I will, if all things work out right, get more responsibility along the way." I felt flattered, complimented. I didn't feel, as I indicated earlier, I wasn't terribly excited about this school as, "the best thing ever happening to me, and I'm going to learn so much. I just don't know what to do with it." I think, obviously, I learned something, but I don't think you get 10 months' work of . . .

**Simmons:** What was the thing, or things, of greatest value?

**Barrow:** [Chuckles] I guess learning about the limitations of military power, if I had to summarize it. That comes hard for someone who, at that point, had a pretty long career of either fighting a war or getting ready to fight one. As if that's the first thing that you do if you have a problem with a country, you go fight them. I learned that the world of diplomacy and compromise and negotiations and do everything you can before you decide to fight is most important, transcendent, and sometimes overplayed, that this power we have becomes almost muscle-bound.

We are in that situation right now. If you stop and think about it, if Nicaragua is as serious as the president says it is and as I believe it is . . . I'm not talking about as it currently

exists, but what it represents as a cancerous sore that is going to grow and get bigger and, without being an alarmist, some day could very well appear on the Rio Grande in a different form, namely discontented Mexicans who have been well enough armed and have taken over the country, and there you go. You can just carry it on out. If it is serious, then one could ask, “Why are we fooling around with contras? Why don’t we send some Americans down there and get the d——n thing cleaned up?” It might take a good bit of commitment to do that. People are going to get killed. But if it’s serious, then that’s what needs to be done. So you have to say, “If we’re not going to use this very modern and capable Marine Corps and Army and Air Force, what do we need it for?” Because sooner or later, the deterrent value of it diminishes. You have to use it once in a while to prove that it can be a deterrent, and we’re doing that right now. They’re saying, “You know, you can do just about anything. Those Americans are not going to put any forces in there. Congress won’t let them. The American public won’t let them.”

So that’s kind of the other side of that coin that I just talked about, what I learned, at the extreme of what I’ve been talking about. In other words, I learned the limits of military power, and we’re now seeing that in the extreme. I’m not talking about just diplomacy that comes to work first; it’s national will. It’s legislative approval and all these other things that must necessarily be taken in. I don’t know how to say it better than what we’re experiencing right now. It’s a microcosm of what I learned in the first lesson, so to speak.

**Simmons:** While you were at the National War College, you were in a class of about 160 persons who were really divided into quarters, one quarter Department of the Army, one quarter Department of the Air Force, one quarter the Department of the Navy, one quarter from the civilian sector of the government. What do you think that you learned from your association with these other Services and other departments? Was this a beneficial thing? Did it carry on in later years that you had been a classmate of someone?

**Barrow:** Yes. Absolutely. My classmates helped open doors, so to speak, in a figurative sense, in subsequent years, particularly some people in the State Department. [With] [William C.] “Bill” Sherman, who was the deputy chief of the commission in Tokyo, Japan, when I was in [MCB] Camp [Smedley D.] Butler [Japan], it made things a little bit easier to do business there with the things I had to do business with the embassy on. Others scattered around that I encountered at one time or another. This would be true of the other Services, as well.

Lando [W.] Zech [Jr.], who is now commissioner of the [U.S.] Nuclear Regulatory

Commission . . . this is after my retirement now. I happen at the moment to be a member of the board of a major public utility that has a nuclear power plant that was just put into full operation a year ago. That is a real albatross around its neck. It's a great construction success, and at the time it was conceived it was needed; the demand was growing. It wouldn't have taken too long to build, but Three Mile Island [in Pennsylvania] caused all kinds of problems which resulted in added costs. So all nuclear power plants are very costly affairs. I'm kind of saying too much. The point is that that utility exploits, if that's the right word—I don't mean that in an ugly sense—my relationship with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. I feel comfortable in picking up the phone and calling Lando Zech and discussing something. For instance, writing him a letter, reassuring him, getting it from a trusted friend and fellow classmate at the National War College.

Irrespective of the financial trauma that Gulf States Utilities is currently experiencing, which could ultimately bring it to bankruptcy, that the board and I, as a member of that board, pledged that no sacrifice of safety or anything else in the efficiency of the operation of River Bend Nuclear Plant will be tolerated. That's something they like to know, too, I might add. They've got policy papers that say if a utility is in financial trouble, maybe one of the things they want to do is cut corners with the high-cost thing called a nuclear plant in their inventory, and that might affect safety. So I write to him on that. The company appreciates my doing that, to keep them off our back, so to speak. He writes back, and you can tell from the way he said it that, "I believe it because you're saying it." He was an old National War College classmate and, incidentally, someone I admire tremendously. I like him very much.

**Simmons:** Another opportunity you had at the National War College was to see our national leaders, members of the cabinet, the chiefs of the other Services, probably all the military secretaries, not [then-Secretary of Defense] Mr. [Robert S.] McNamara, who never came. How did that affect you, seeing these national leaders almost on a daily basis and having the opportunity to question them if you wanted? Did that leave much of a mark on you?

**Barrow:** No. I don't know why. We were privileged, because General Goodpaster had worked so closely with General Eisenhower, to have had General Eisenhower as one of our speakers. That impressed me for the simple reason he was a former president of the United States and, as retired, would come back and do this at a joint session of the Industrial College [of the Armed Forces] and National War College. But I don't recall any of these leaders who were so outstanding that they left, as an individual, any kind of impression. As a matter of fact, I've had trouble naming who some of the people were at the time.

**Simmons:** While you were assistant G-3, III MAF, were you actively involved in the planning for the redeployment? You touched on this very briefly and the fact that 9th Marines were the first out. Were you actively involved?

**Barrow:** Yes, we were. [Tape interruption]

Exactly 13 months.

**Simmons:** Exactly 13 months. Is there anything else you'd like to say about your Vietnam tour?

**Barrow:** No, I don't want to get in any long philosophical discussion about whether we should have been there, how it should have been fought, unless we want to do that sometime later on. I don't regret one bit having been in Vietnam. I think there was some outstanding soldiering there, that I happened to be in an outfit that I thought did that extremely well. I never saw any of the ugliness that one usually associates with Vietnam—enlisted personnel who were disobedient or engaged with drug use or doing things to harm officers or protesting something, or whatever some of these horror stories are supposed to be about. I never saw any of that. It didn't exist anywhere I was.

As a matter of fact, as an aside, it troubled me that most of what the American public sees as Vietnam vets [veterans] are these characters who walk around, and they must still have a source of supply from an Army-Navy store or something—their jungle utilities, camouflage utilities, with all kinds of patches on them and headbands, and carrying a placard expressing some grievance about having been in the Vietnam War. One, I think some of them probably never went to Vietnam. Two, some of them may be legitimate as all get-out and deserve a little compassion, but a hell of a lot of them were probably misfits before they ever went in the Service, and Vietnam just reinforced that unfitness, misfitness. And here they are, back proclaiming themselves to be representative of the Vietnam vets. The real Vietnam vet is that fellow, because he was not welcomed home, just quietly came home, got out of his uniform, hung it up, and went back to his civilian job. And there are thousands of those all over the country. Now they're beginning to come out of the woodwork, and if they reveal themselves, they will tell you, "I've had a lot of time to reflect on it, and if I had it to do over again, I'd do the same thing. I'd go if they called me tomorrow."

A perfect example is the telephone man who worked on my telephone, a lineman. I had problems. He came out. I learned he's a Marine, so naturally we talked about the Marine Corps.

He said, “General Barrow, I got my citation, but I never did get my medals.” Well, I wrote my friend, a colonel, over in decorations and awards, Fred Anthony [?]. I gave him his social security number and his service number. Fred Anthony did a super job of getting all his citations again, just for my benefit, so I could read them, and all of his medals. He was a crew chief on a helicopter, a [Boeing Vertol] CH-46 [Sea Knight], that repeatedly volunteered to go out to these hairy night medevacs and recon team extracts and one thing and another, and rigging downed helicopters for lift and all this kind of thing. He had a Bronze Star [and] a Navy Commendation Medal, a Navy Achievement Medal, and he had all kinds of things.

So I had a little ceremony and had the telephone officials up from Baton Rouge to attend it in my library. I made a little speech about him, and he made a little speech here. He was with his family; all came. Tykes stayed out of school that day. The theme of his speech was—now, mind you, he’s about 40 years old now and things kind of move along—he said, “I was glad I went there. If I had to do it again, I’d go again.” Now, that’s a Vietnam vet.

**Simmons:** You’re getting at some of the other things I’d also like to question you on just a little bit. About the time that the 9th Regiment was doing some of these things that you’ve described, it was also the time of the bombing halt . . .

**Barrow:** Oh!

**Simmons:** And the beginning of the serious peace talks in Paris. That expletive almost answers my question. Were you aware of these events at the time, and how did they affect you?

**Barrow:** Well, I thought it was like having a, you know, the worst kind of thing. Someone pulling a chair out from under you, except much worse, obviously. When in November of ’68 the moratorium on bombing the North [Vietnam] was put into effect, we were, of course, up near the DMZ. So we knew immediately. They started moving in all kinds of heavy stuff. They had an inventory of 130 guns, and heavy artillery of all kinds and calibers were brought in during that period. They knew they weren’t going to be taken out, so why not put them there, where they could? We expected it. Ultimately, not while I was there but later on, when the conditions changed some, they used a lot of stuff that they positioned in that period of moratorium. It just seemed like a terrible thing for the president to do when he had troops in such proximity to the enemy. It was almost like they didn’t realize that there was a ground war that was cheek by jowl on a thing, something called the DMZ, and that those guys could come over to us anytime they wanted to, and we couldn’t go over there. The only thing we could do was with airplanes, and

now you're going to say we can't do that. It was almost like they were thinking that these countries were separated, that one's way over here and one's way over there. They didn't recognize that there was the proximity of the infantry combat units, ground units, to the enemy. Terrible!

**Simmons:** You left the 9th Marines just about the same time as General Davis left the division. I presume that you did not have an opportunity to observe and compare the leadership styles of General Davis and General Jones?

**Barrow:** No, I didn't. I really didn't. I think there were about just a few days.

**Simmons:** About the time that you joined the III MAF staff, Lieutenant General Herman Nickerson [Jr.] had just barely taken over as commanding general, III MAF. How did you find working for "Herman the German?"

**Barrow:** Well, I had known him before, and I know that he has a reputation of being tough and hard-nosed, and that's all right. Like I said the other day about someone else, a controversial person is obviously only controversial to certain people. If he has been a friend of yours and has befriended you in all these other things that would cause you to have never seen him do anything wrong, then you are a defender of his. And I liked him.

Our relationship goes back to when he was a lieutenant colonel in North China, in the Tientsin area [in China], when I was aide to [Major] General [Keller E.] Rockey. I used to see him around there. He sort of learned who I was. I don't know by what means I may have given him a favorable impression, but he knew me by name and so forth. Then the next time I saw him, he was out there as an observer for the Inchon landing [in Korea]. He was on the USS *Noble* [APA 218], which was the ship my company was on for the Inchon landing. I'll never forget, when I gave my company kind of a pep talk down in the mess deck, I mounted a mess-deck bench. If you mounted the table, you'd hit your head on the overhead, but I could get up on the bench. So I had a little elevation over my assembled troops, giving them a little sort of pep talk about, "We're going to be going in here before too long," and sort of filling them up. I look over there, and there he's standing. When it was all over, he made a very complimentary remark about my remarks to the troops. So I had never served under him or close to him, but we've had these little contacts throughout our careers. It was quite evident that he liked me. You see what I mean? He liked me. So I have returned it in kind. I liked him.

**Simmons:** Two more questions, the second of which you may have already indicated you don't

choose to answer. But I'll ask you, as the first question, would you compare the Marine of Korea, as you perceived him, as a company commander, with the Marine of Vietnam, as you perceived him, as a regimental commander?

**Barrow:** That's an interesting question. I'm not sure I could even come close to being accurate. I'm even hesitant to make a judgment or comparison. I think that our troops that we took with us to Korea—I don't mean to sound unkind—were a mixed bag. They were a mixed bag of high quality to some that were just good, reliable kind of young Americans. That was still the era in which authority was absolute, didn't need to express itself in the way that would remind everybody that it was absolute. There was kind of an inherent discipline in American youth, still a carryover from pre-World War I and World War II, and has lasted for maybe another 5 or 6, 8, 10 years. So there was a lot of willing, natural obedience in those youngsters we took to Korea. I can prove that, in part, by the fact that the two things that a Marine learns in recruit training are not taught but learned, nevertheless. One is discipline, and the other is the spirit of being a Marine. Discipline includes obedience to orders. I had troops that I took to Korea that hadn't even been to boot camp, but they were good troops because they were good Americans. They were good young people. And from the families they came, they knew to respect authority, whether it was a teacher in the classroom or a company commander on the battlefield.

We had good officers for the most part. That was a mixed bag, too, in Korea. But it tended to sort itself out, particularly by the time of [the] Chosin [Reservoir campaign]. Some of the ones that weren't so good, they had gone somehow. But it was a mixed bag. We had a lot of World War II experienced officers and staff NCOs [noncommissioned officers], at least I did in my company, so these troops, who were obedient, not necessarily some of them all that bright in one thing and another, but many who were. I thought they were good troops. Never had any problem with any of them. I never saw one falter or fail.

The troops in Vietnam, if you can generalize, were rather different, a product of a couple of decades' difference—lifestyle and social conditions and greater mobility and less home influence, more TV made themselves more worldly, but not in the classical worldly sense, but more worldly in the sense they were beyond their immediate lives of family [and] school. Inclined to be kind of “show me.” “It's all right for you to tell me to do this, and I'm going to do it, but I'd like to know why.” I'm not saying anyone actually said that, but I mean, you could sense it. But as with all troops, irrespective of whether they were the best the world's ever seen or something less than that, they were responsive to good leadership.

One of the keys to 9th Marine Regiment's success, I've already indicated it. I could pick my officers up to a point. I had George Smith, who was going to the 4th Marines. General Davis was carrying him around on his little reconnaissance orientation helicopter things when he landed at My Lai, that village I was telling you about, to visit us the day after we put the cordon around it. Here's George Smith, whom I had seen once before and knew by reputation. I said, "Where's he going, general?" "He's going to be the CO [commanding officer] of 2/4," or something. I've forgotten what. I said, "General, I just relieved my first battalion commander. He's still up there below the DMZ, northwest of the Rockpile." And it was. It was the last battalion to come out, 1/9. I said, "I need him."

General Davis had a little quiet chuckle way about him. He sort of chuckled and tucked his head down like he does, and said, "All right, Bob." So George stayed right there; he didn't go anywhere. [Laughter] Within an hour, he was in command of that battalion. So we got good officers. The troops . . . nothing wrong with the troops, but with good officers, a good troop became even better. I tell you what, very good.

**Simmons:** I'll ask you the final big question. Could we have won the war?

**Barrow:** Hmm. [Pause] I don't know. I really don't know. I think there are too many subordinate questions to that or questions that are raised by that question. Like how much are you willing to expend in the way of commitment there, manpower, people? Are you willing to take the risk of mining Haiphong harbor [in Vietnam] and doing things that restrain people from being done because they thought the Chinese would actively come in—which I don't believe they would have. I'm saying that now because I've come to that conclusion recently.

But I do think we fought it wrong, in some respects. I'm not going to chastise or criticize General Westmoreland or anybody else. But wherever Americans go, particularly American military, they tend to want to take over, push everybody aside. "I'm in charge here. I've got it. You go over somewhere else." And it's human nature with most folks in this world, particularly Orientals, I think, I say particularly Orientals, They say, "Okay, you want it that way? I'll find something else to do."

I think the so-called Vietnamization of the war should have started back there about 1964. They should have matched us and then some—"and then some" being the key words—in every kind of capability we put in that, before we put that capability in there. In other words, if



you're going to have a well-trained division, we had time to do it. I mean, in the early '60s, before we ever got over there. The advisory effort and one thing and another, that's when it had to have been won, really, to start there.

Forgetting the political part of it, looking at the military, build them up, give them the wherewithal, and then not say, "Well, we need three more infantry divisions, and you don't have any. We'll just go ahead and put three of ours in there. You don't have any that aren't committed." We just put a lull on things until you get that capability in. This is sort of a hypothetical solution; it isn't a solution at all. I'm just saying we didn't maximize; we didn't make effective the South Vietnamese forces to the extent they could have been.

What the hell's the difference between a North Vietnamese and a South Vietnamese? Why were they able to marshal all these tigers that came charging through down the Ho Chi Minh Trail and face all kind of adversity and no airplanes, no helicopters, no quick movement capability, no firepower from the air, [and] short rations and come down there and whip up on everybody? Not always, but frequently. If we could have created in the south something like what they had in the north, and a lot of what they had was created by external arms, Russian and Chinese, they didn't manufacture it themselves, they had the discipline and they had the spirit—the Communist spirit, I guess.

I don't know, Ed. I can't answer that question. I don't think we would sit here and say, "Yes, we could win it if we'd gone all out and mined and bombed and landed forces." Well, hell, who knows? That may have been World War III or such a magnitude of effort that you wouldn't do that. So winning it was something other than "we." If "we" means us and the South Vietnamese, I'd say, yeah, we could probably have won it. That's a bad answer. I don't have a good answer.

**Simmons:** Well, it's probably an unanswerable question, and this is probably a good place to stop.

End of SESSION VIII

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION  
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Interviewee: General Robert H. Barrow, USMC (Ret)

Interviewer: Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons, USMC (Ret)

Date of Interview: 29 January 1989

SESSION IX

**Simmons:** This is session nine of our oral history interviews with the former Commandant, General Robert Barrow. Once again, the interview is taking place in the senior visiting officers' quarters in the Washington Navy Yard.

General, it is now almost two years to the day since our last interview, and in those two years, a great number of things have happened, including the selection of the new Commandant, a rather radical reorganization of Headquarters Marine Corps and of [MCB] Quantico [Virginia], active deployment of Marines in the Persian Gulf and Panama, two new secretaries of the Navy, and just this past week the inauguration of a new president.

Before asking you about these contemporary events, I would like to go back and pick up where we left off. We had finished, you will recall, with your departure from Vietnam in August 1969, and you had summed up your views on the Vietnamese War.

I don't believe we have discussed your promotion to brigadier general. Where were you when you learned of your selection?

**Barrow:** I was in Da Nang [Vietnam], deputy chief of staff, G-3, when I was informed. That was some time in the summer of 1969.

**Simmons:** Who were some of the others in the same year group?

**Barrow:** Charles S. Robertson. Let me think about that.

**Simmons:** I wouldn't want someone to ask me that question. When were you actually promoted?

**Barrow:** I was promoted in August, in the Commandant's office, Headquarters Marine Corps, of course, by General [Leonard F.] Chapman [Jr.], who was then Commandant. I returned from Vietnam to Washington [DC] because my family was residing in Washington at the time, and I

had no idea where my next assignment was going to be, but I had a suspicion that it might be Washington. So in my head, at least, I had those kinds of thoughts about serving in Washington. One advantage was that my family was already in place.

In any event, we were summoned to the Commandant's office for the actual promotion, frocking if you will, and it was at that time that General Chapman, who has a wry sense of humor and likes to withhold little tidbits and spring them on you for surprise, told me where my next assignment was to be.

**Simmons:** And that was as commanding general, Marine Corps Base Camp Smedley D. Butler, Okinawa.

**Barrow:** CG [commanding general], Marine Corps Base Camp Smedley D. Butler, Okinawa, and deputy commander, deputy CG, FMFPac (Forward), which was the title that was retained for some time.

**Simmons:** In addition to your home leave, I suppose there were briefings at both Headquarters Marine Corps and FMFPac as to your new assignment.

**Barrow:** Surprisingly, not many briefings. The things that were going on, on Okinawa, in terms of the base, were not really monitored nor understood back in Washington. All of the funding took place through CG, FMFPac, and even there, I wouldn't describe it as an afterthought, but it was not high on the list of importance, as I look back on it or as I saw it at the time. So to answer your question specifically, I did not get a lot of information from Headquarters or from FMFPac, but, rather, proceeded with wife and three of my five children from Washington, with a short stop in Hawaii and on to Naha, Okinawa.

**Simmons:** What were your particular challenges and responsibilities as you saw them?

**Barrow:** Well, to introduce an answer to that question, I had, of course, served on Okinawa a few years before, which only gave me a kind of superficial understanding of what Camp Butler was all about.

As an aside, I was the first general officer, permanent general officer, to be CG of Camp Butler. There had been COs of Camp Butler, which was a small headquarters, small base command, and some months before my arrival, Brigadier General Frank [E.] Garretson was named as CG, the first CG, of Camp Butler. I often thought that while he discharged his responsibility, as he should I know, but it was more of a kind of holding situation until the permanent one arrived. It was understood that my tour was going to be for probably three years,

which, in fact, it was. I was the first general officer in the history of the Marine Corps—I think this is accurate—to have his family on an accompanied tour west of Hawaii.

Now, we arrived out there. There are a lot of things I don't remember, but once in a while I can remember a date. We arrived out there on the eighth of September and had a very pleasant experience upon arrival, when the high commissioner [of the Ryukyu Islands in Japan], [Army] Lieutenant General [James B.] "Jim" Lampert, an Army West Pointer class of '39, engineer by trade, every inch a gentleman, ideally suited for the role of high commissioner. He was a distinguished-looking man; he had all the poise, good sense, patience, etc., for that kind of difficult task. Here was this brigadier general, brand-new, arriving in Naha, and there he was to meet me. That was a nice touch, I thought. From that very beginning our association, which lasted for over two years, was a very close one, and I admired him tremendously. He, of course, died about eight years ago.

I guess I've had all kinds of changes of command, but none of them more simple than the one involving Camp Butler. It's left to the incumbent to determine what the format will be, and my friend Frank Garretson—and I do mean that; I'd known him for many years and always admired him—he had decided upon a very simple, in-the-office change of command, which was really sort of an administrative paperwork kind of a change of command, with maybe six or eight people in attendance. And that was it. I think it was like 11 in the morning, and he disappeared and left the island almost at once.

So there we were. You would not have to be too perceptive to understand what some of your major responsibilities were going to be. In the first place, Marine Corps Base Camp Butler and most other things on the island, including that which related to other Services, were in a state of turmoil. This was a big staging area, a jumping-off place for Vietnam. The Marine Corps, at Camp Butler, had for example the transit facility, which processed people going to Vietnam and those coming from Vietnam. The transit facility, which was initially located at [MCB] Camp Hansen [Okinawa], would have in the neighborhood of 2,000 transit Marines daily, coming and going.

We had a lot of aviation activity out of [Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS)] Futenma [Okinawa], [Lockheed] C-130 [Hercules] resupply activity going to Vietnam, etc. But looming over all of this was the clear understanding already underway, return of the 3d Marine Division to their pre-Vietnam home, which was Okinawa. Now, there are several things that made this

unusual. It was not a simple matter of a couple of great, small, or manageable units going some place for a year or two and returning, and everyone had the same facilities waiting for them to move back into. The 3d Marine Division had grown substantially in size, filling out a lot of its T/O [table of organization] where people shortages had been. It had grown enormously in equipment and supplies, and under the leadership of the Commandant, who had very decisively put the word out, "We will retrograde everything that's in Vietnam that isn't nailed down." I'm not too sure we didn't un-nail some things, too. So that, on the one hand, that was to be an enormous movement of people and things back to Okinawa, more than the things and people who were there, who left some years before.

Meanwhile, many of the facilities on Okinawa had been put to other use. I gave you one example. Much of Camp Hansen was dedicated to the transit facility. The logistics command on Okinawa had moved into a lot of places for various of the fourth- and fifth-echelon maintenance work being done in buildings that had nothing to do with Marine Corps logistics command on Okinawa earlier, but they were in all the camps. It was a spread out of what was left on Okinawa to every place. Now, part of that was done, I'm sure, to make sure we didn't have any unused facilities that someone else could lay claim to, some other Service.

So the first order of business was to try in every way possible to satisfy the 3d Marine Division requirements for space. [Major] General William K. ["Bill"] Jones was the CG of the 3d Division, and early on he returned for a day or two and was briefed and set forth some requirements we took aboard and made every effort to satisfy. But in any case, that was kind of an overriding responsibility.

That has a lot of less-included parts, and we could sort of move forward, if you will, and sort of make the assumption that the division had, in fact, returned. I don't think I need to go through all of the labor and agony and problems that went with moving units around and trying to refurbish buildings and put them back as someone remembered them being or like they wanted them to be. We'll just say that the division was back there.

Camp Butler had a number of very interesting responsibilities, most of which were done in support of the 3d Marine Division and the air station and [1st Marine Aircraft] Wing over at Futenma. The wing elements, which I will mention later, ultimately sort of was folded under Camp Butler. At least there was a consolidation of function.

But let's talk about some of the things we were responsible for. We had all of the

interface responsibility with the high commissioner and his staff of people as relates to our being on Japanese soil but not really, because the reversion had not taken place until two years after my being there. But already there had been—it really gained momentum about the time I arrived—planning for reversion, which if you’ve ever done business with the Japanese, you will know what I mean when I say it’s rather onerous. They want to measure everything and make all kinds of extra drawings and copies, and it’s kind of a pain. The Marines had all these facilities, some 44,000 acres, 750 buildings (I may be off a few in these numbers), and the reversion included everything being reverted, even though our status in the occupancy and whatnot of those would not, at that time, change. A lot of planning and activity with respect to what was going on. (I’m not stating all of this, by the way, in any order of priority; I’m just doing it as I’m thinking of it.)

A kind of related matter, which took a lot of my time, was working with the high commissioner and really the commanding general of the Ryukyus [islands] in this capacity, because he was responsible for the overall island in terms of the military installations in an administrative kind of way—in other words, in matter of discipline, matters of civilian strikes, anything that might affect more than one Service. I was never, as far as taking care of the Marines and doing things that a Marine commander would do in a job like that, ever had any challenge made or any directions given to me in that sense. But he was the area commander, so he had a lot of responsibility, which I had to be a part of.

Example: all of the Services had a large number of Ryukyuan civilian workers who were, and still are, very much organized as far as the union is concerned. They routinely would go out on some kind of strike having to do with anything from pay to other forms of compensation to reduction in force resistance to the evacuation of chemical weapons, which was done. Anything that they could protest, they would go out on protest. You’ve seen pictures of Japanese groups doing things in a group manner, where they chant, surge, [and] carry signs. It’s sort of an organized compacted group of humanity doing things. Well, that may not be a very good description, but they were threatening. They would get outside the gates of all the installations and threaten to come in. I can tell you at least on one instance they did come in over at Kadena [Air Base, Japan] and burned the U.S. Air Force dependents’ school, for example.

On another occasion, some of these same elements, which would arouse other elements on the island, other than just the civilian workers who may have been protesting something that you could identify, it led other dissident kind of elements on Okinawa to use that as a cover for

them to make mischief. I remember one night I was summoned in the middle of the night to join General Lampert and his staff and other commanders at his headquarters, and they were rioting in the street of Koza [Japan] where, when the dust finally settled, there was something like 58 U.S. cars, always identified by license, destroyed, burned, turned over, etc. So there was an element of violence in all of this.

My responsibility was the various bases on Okinawa, to see that they were not penetrated [and] have some understanding of what might be going on in advance of these things—but while they were going on, in terms of you might say counterintelligence activities—and to do my share of overall security. I'm spending too much time on this, but it's kind of important.

My commanders in FMFPac never fully understood or appreciated the requirement for Marines to do more than just protect Marine property. As subordinate area commanders to General Lampert, I had the feeling that we used whatever resource of whatever Service to meet whatever demands might be placed—who does what best. And let us face it, the Air Force is not geared to have a bunch of security people equal to the threat that might occur. They have their air police and one thing and another, but this was something that was much greater than what air police could deal with.

So General Lampert would ask me for Marines to help in the security of places like Kadena, which really Marines used. That was where we transited when we went to Vietnam or went back to the United States. Our mail service and all kinds of things went through Kadena. So Kadena was an Air Force base, but there was a lot of Marine interest in it. In any case, the Air Force was not really capable of defending against a big mob that might come in through any one of their several gates. So General Lampert wanted the comfort of having a couple of Marine rifle companies, not manning the gates, but being in a kind of immediate ready reserve, out of sight, but within minutes of responding to a threat.

Well, I first had to negotiate with one of my tenants, my CG, 3d Marine Division, who never thought this was a good idea. [Laughter] They couldn't see that, you know. That's funny. Then to make matters worse, they would convince the CG at FMFPac that it wasn't a good idea. On one occasion, I was called and asked what the hell I thought I was doing, landing Marines to defend an Air Force base. I won't belabor this point, but it never was fully understood, and I had to contend with that each and every time we had one of these events, which was not infrequent.

**Simmons:** Let me interrupt at this point, because I think it is very interesting and very

important. I'd like to clarify, if you can, just how the command lines ran. You were commanding general, Camp Smedley D. Butler. You were deputy commander, Fleet Marine Force Pacific (Forward). You had a command line, administrative command line, going back to Hawaii, CG, FMFPac, [Lieutenant] General [Henry W.] Buse [Jr.] at that time.

**Barrow:** That's right. He had two titles. One was CG, FMFPac and commander, Marine Corps Bases Pacific. You know, as he performed those two tasks, they were inseparable. It was only within the staff and the message and letterhead and whatnot that he'd say, "I'm CG, commander, Marine Corps bases." So I reported to General Buse.

**Simmons:** In both of your capacities?

**Barrow:** In both of my capacities. My tenant command, the biggest one, in terms of troops, etc., being CG, 3d Marine Division, but we also had III Marine Amphibious Force, which was just a headquarters over here, and the 1st Wing.

**Simmons:** Was the wing flag at Futenma at this time or at [MCAS] Iwakuni [Japan]?

**Barrow:** The wing flag was at Iwakuni and did not come down until many years later. I was long gone from Okinawa.

**Simmons:** Your lateral relations were liaison and coordination and cooperation. There was no command-wide linking you with CG, III MAF or CG, I MAF.

**Barrow:** That's right. They were my tenants. My CG, FMFPac (Forward), I've forgotten when it disappeared, but I also was deputy commander, Marine Corps Bases, Pacific (Forward), which sort of took the place of that, as I recall. You'll have to forgive me for scratching around on this one. But that gave me license—I shouldn't use the word "license," but you understand what I mean—to visit and be briefed and inspect and look around places like Marine Barracks Subic [Bay in the Philippines], the Iwakuni Marine Corps Air Station, and the Futenma Marine Corps Air Station [and] Marine Barracks Yokosuka [Japan], places like that that all came under commander, Marine Corps Bases Pacific in Hawaii but as his deputy. On occasion, he might, in fact, launch me with a message to go, either myself or members of my staff, to assist or to look into some problem that maybe they were having at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni. But it was not a commander's kind of relationship, but I did attend to that responsibility.

The camp commanders on Okinawa, like Camp Schwab, Camp Hansen, Camp Courtney, Camp McTureous, Camp Hague, 10 others, some smaller, they were dual hatted. There would be the senior tenant command in that particular camp, like the CO of the 4th Marine Regiment, would also be the camp commander.



**Simmons:** Where had the two regiments relocated when they came back to Okinawa? The two camps. The 9th Regiment went where?

**Barrow:** The 9th Regiment went to Camp Schwab, and the 4th Regiment went to Camp Hansen. In both cases, those regimental commanders were camp commanders of Camp Schwab and Camp Hansen. So they answered to me, and there was no tenuous, uncertain relationship there. They answered to me. It may have caused them some problems in their relationship with their division commander, but the things that went on in those camps that were Camp Butler responsibilities, such as MP functions, clubs, and messes and special services and real property maintenance. Everything other than training and command of the troops was a Camp Butler responsibility, and they met weekly with me and called me or my chief of staff frequently on problems that were uniquely housekeeping kinds of problems.

**Simmons:** You indicated that you very early on established a good rapport with General Lampert in his capacity as, one, high commissioner and, two, commanding general, Ryukyus. I would suppose that he exercised a certain degree of operational control over you in that latter category.

**Barrow:** No, that really was what we were talking about earlier. He didn't actually have that so much as the Area Coordinating Committee was kind of a vehicle that he brought the commanders together—Air Force, his own Army deputy, myself, and the Navy command, which was a Navy captain down at Naha, later at White Beach [Okinawa]. The agenda would range far and wide over everything from PXs [post exchanges] to security to disciplinary problems on liberty, etc; and that's where the problem came on this providing Marines to back up air police in places like Kadena. His would be more of a request, with every expectation that because of the obvious need that it be responded to. I never wanted to say, "I'm sorry. We can't do that." So I had the devil's hard time trying to persuade my superiors that it was, in fact, the thing to do, and sometimes getting it done maybe a little bit awkwardly. I'm not expressing myself very well here.

Let me go back to this camp commander business. They changed frequently. They were out there on unaccompanied tours, and you add to that the hope and expectation of every hotshot division staff officer that he would, during his 12 months, also get to command a regiment, you might have regimental and battalion commanders on the six months in their role, in that

responsibility. I had a succession of camp commanders who, just about the time you had one really broken in as to all the things he had to be responsible for other than training and well-being of his command, [had] his FMF hat, you'd get another one.

Now, what am I talking about? Camp Butler had financial responsibility, and really beyond that operational responsibility, because the fiduciary part was significant, of some 33 mess halls on Okinawa. Now, if you mention that to someone in Headquarters Marine Corps, other than one or two people, they wouldn't even know what you're talking about. "Anybody can go out there. There's nothing to this job at Camp Butler." But if you have 33 mess halls running all over this island, you have a high likelihood that some percentage of those—some, 1, 2, 3, or more mess halls—have got some kind of problem. Just with that many, you've got a problem.

We had 26 clubs—officer, staff, NCO, and enlisted clubs—for which we had total responsibility. We manned them with bartenders and waitresses. We stocked the food and liquor and whatever else was served. We kept the books, etc. I had a club officer who I always picked very carefully. He'd be someone that had lots of sense to be able to do this thing skillfully.

We had the off-base, near-base responsibilities for law and order. It was Camp Butler who put out the daily MP blotter, which I might add was rather lengthy, and it was sent to all the camp commanders so the commanders there could pick out their bad boys from the night before. We ran the correctional facility, which at the time I arrived had just been opened. It was a brand-new facility.

We continued to run the transit facility. We had a large, mostly Ryukyuan civilian, and very loyal and very good work force in our maintenance department. I worked, in terms of real-property maintenance, repairing things, which was enormous. We also received a large number of Butler-type buildings that we put up to help take care of the excessive amounts of property that was retrograded out of Vietnam.

Special services. We were the ones, Camp Butler, who had all of the special services equipment—sporting goods, you name it—who operated the beaches, like up at Camp Schwab, Oruwan Beach. This in itself was . . . well, any one of these problems, any one of these responsibilities—messes, clubs, special services, law and order, real-property maintenance, transit facility, getting along with my fellow commanders, being involved in the reversion planning for Okinawa to return to the Japanese, dealing with protest elements and union crackers—it was enough to do. It was enough to do.

**Simmons:** Let's go back and discuss a couple of those areas in a little more detail. You mentioned messes, clubs, law and order, [and] host-tenant relationships. Without putting words in your mouth, was there something of an "us" and "them" division between your Marines and these Marines who were returning from Okinawa? They had fought the war, and you were the rear echelon, and they weren't going to be constrained or whatever.

**Barrow:** Not too much, because I didn't have a Marine on my staff at Camp Butler that hadn't been to Vietnam, starting with myself. So that was not so much a problem as the always-difficult problem of tenant and landlord. The tenant, and rightly so, says, "Your whole reason for being is to support me. Support me means that if I want something, by God, you should provide it." Great! It's left to the base commander to determine, first of all, the validity of that requirement. Sometimes it's frivolous. I could give you examples. I choose not to do so. Sometimes to do it would not be cost-effective; there may be a better way to do what it is he wants done. He often will say he wants this, being very specific as to what he wanted. In my instance, all these people were senior to me, so it's generally unlike what it is in a lot of the bases historically in the U.S. The base commander, more often than not particularly in the old days—I don't know what it is presently—[was] senior to the tenants. I don't like that, either. That meant they had to come hat in hand, sometimes, to get the kind of services and things they needed for their command.

The reverse was true there. I had a lot of people that I respect very much and who were not unreasonable, but there was some of that. After all, I was dealing with some strong personalities. I'll just give you some examples. Like [Louis] "Lou" Metzger and Bill Jones [?] and [Louis H.] "Lou" Wilson [Jr.] and [Joseph C.] "Joe" Fegan [Jr.] and Donn [J.] Robertson, all of whom, I might add, are friends of mine and for whom I have great respect. But without naming names, some of them, I'm sure to this day, felt like in certain areas Camp Butler just didn't come through. No amount of explanation, as relates to budgetary limitations, you can't do these things without some cost involved. If my parent command didn't give me the resources to do it, you're caught in the middle. You understand what I'm saying?

**Simmons:** Yes. In fact, even the designation commanding general, Camp Smedley D. Butler was a misnomer. That carried none of the connotations of what your responsibilities were.

**Barrow:** That's right. And furthermore, there is no Camp Butler; it's an array of camps. It's wherever Marines are. If they're on liberty or they're in some facility, that's Camp Butler.

**Simmons:** Who were some of your key officers that you had?

**Barrow:** Well, of course, the key officer, who I cannot say enough about in terms of making all of this succeed, was John H. Miller, retired Marine lieutenant general, Texas A&M graduate, for a brief period enlisted in World War II, officer at the time of the Korean War. There's a little kind of amusing thing about how he ended up at Camp Butler that I'd like to tell. When I became a frocked BG [brigadier general], one of the things I was told before I left Washington and at FMFPac, was that my chief of staff, who was then there at Camp Butler, would be leaving momentarily, within days, but that I could have just about anybody I wanted. "So why don't you sort of come up with a list of potentials, make a short list out of that, and let us know, and we'll talk about it."

Well, naive me, I thought they meant it, so I just went right down the blue book. I made a list of some six or eight people that I knew would do well as chief of staff, which I knew would be an important job and who I would have good rapport with. So I fired this list off, and any one of these. I got a message back, "No, no, no, no." [Laughter] So I was in a quandary. Where am I going to get a chief of staff? It was sort of "You have to make one." Then it hit me. I had been asking for a colonel chief of staff, and I said, "Maybe I need to find a senior lieutenant colonel who will become a colonel on the job. Maybe he'd be more available." Really, I had someone in mind.

John Miller had gone to Vietnam and had a responsible assignment in the Force Logistic Command under Brigadier General [Mauro J.] Padalino, who I'd gotten to know on Okinawa just before he went to Vietnam, where he had logistics responsibility. John Miller and I had worked together at FMFPac during the time frame '64 to '67, which I've already covered earlier. He was down in G-4, plans. I had formed an enormous respect for him. So I went to Padalino and said plainly my predicament and how important the job was, and to his everlasting credit because I know he hated to give him up, he let John come back with the blessing of FMFPac. So to answer your question, he was my chief of staff and did a superb job. [Doorbell interruption]

**Simmons:** You were saying that John Miller did a superb job for you. We're at about the end of this tape, so suppose we stop for a moment and flip this tape over. [Tape interruption]

We're just speaking about the officers you had with you at Butler.

**Barrow:** I really want to say some more about John Miller. He put in extraordinarily long hours. He was skilled in what he did, and I know it's not uncommon for commanders to say things like,

“I couldn’t have done it without him,” but really, I could not have done it without him. We worked in perfect harmony, and he just was superb in keeping up with a lot of detail. He was my principal man. He was there almost the entire time I was there, stayed a little bit beyond.

So many of the others were on accompanied tours, some were on loan from the division. A fellow named Jim Hark [?] was my maintenance officer, and he was there all of the time with his family. He was a super maintenance officer. Bob Jones, an artilleryman, he was out there on an accompanied tour, to give you an example of someone that I picked to run the club system. I don’t think I’ve ever seen anyone more crestfallen when he learned he was going to go to Camp Butler and, worse, he was going to do something called be the head of the club system. He was a real ripe artilleryman. I belong to the school that says, “If you want to get something done, you’d better look for the best person to do it,” which is a pretty simple formula, and not the next one who comes through the door. He just completely changed the whole club system. He made it flourish; he made it very accountable. He just did an absolutely superb job. So there were a number of these folks, none of whom later went on to any great fame and what have you, except for John Miller, but I had good people working for me.

I don’t think I could talk about this period without discussing two or three major problems, which were sort of endemic, pervasive, ubiquitous, whatever the word is. They were all over Okinawa. One was liberty behavior. I believe that young men aged 18 to 23 or 24, which make up probably about 80 percent of the Marine Corps, and I believe you could say this about almost any Service, they have a very strong propensity to do the things that are really a distortion of manliness, which is to say raucous behavior on liberty. Now, this is a generalization, but the numbers involved, I’m sure there’s some that never left base and many of them went to the library and all this sort of thing, but there was a great many young lads who just went out and drank to excess and regrettably looked down on the Okinawans. Proof of that is the advent of the term, which you found often in conversation, “When I go back to the world,” meaning that Okinawa was not real. It was second class or didn’t really count. Again, this is a generalization, but there was a lot of bad behavior in some of the villages near the camps. Sometimes it was just Marine fighting Marine, sometimes they were doing things to the Okinawan civilians, much of it alcohol-related, some of it drug-related. We had a drug problem, almost entirely marijuana. There was no customs or any other kind of checking system. It came later. But people who traveled all over the Orient would come to, or pass through, Okinawa, and so marijuana was readily available.

But we also had . . . and this was really the beginning, in a sense, and the height of our racial problem. Probably no place in the Marine Corps was it more evident than on Okinawa. [It was] the combination of what I said earlier; we were not in the United States where there's a greater degree of accountability and expectation of proper behavior and U.S. policemen who won't put up with this nonsense. They were kind of living in another world where there was anonymity. "Who's going to see me do whatever I choose to do? My mother and father and friends and whatnot are thousands of miles away." This built-in expectation that you're not really one of the boys unless you can act tough.

Anyway, as a companion part to all of this racial unrest, some of it real, in terms of the so-called perception on the part of blacks of things not being what they should be for them, and some of it created out of whole cloth, just to have an issue. An example is the ridiculous thing called serving soul food in the mess hall. Remember I told you I was responsible for 33 mess halls. How would you like to wake up some morning and be told that you've got to include in your 33 mess halls part of the menu to include things called soul food? Which, in fact, happened.

**Simmons:** Do you think that the Services and the Marine Corps went too far?

**Barrow:** Went too far. Went too far. There are so many good blacks who were intimidated by the more vocal ones, who would tell you that at the time, and certainly would tell you that now.

**Simmons:** How about some of the other manifestations?

**Barrow:** Haircuts and black-on-white crime. Notice I said "black on white." I don't give a d—n how unpopular it may be for me to single out one against the other, but the facts are the facts. For every incident on an MP filing in which some black may have been waylaid in some dark part of the camp and left bleeding on the ground, I can give you several hundred who, in fact, were white. As you uncovered these things, that's what they were—black-on-white crime. Now, there's no forgiving, because there's no really understanding of that. I refuse to try to say that one must understand that this is a manifestation of reaction to discrimination or prejudice. I think this is very important, because if you don't understand what I'm about to say, it's reasonably safe to say you run the risk of labeling me a racist, which I will categorically tell you I am not. But it relates not to discrimination and prejudice. Where there may have been some elements of that, they would be worked on and be corrected. It relates to a certain number—don't ask me what percentage—of blacks that had been brought into the Marine Corps who never

accepted the role of being a Marine, which includes a love for, a strong feeling for not only the institution but fellow members of it, irrespective of their color or anything else. These were people who maintained a kind of street identity, of having their own “little gangs” in the Marine Corps, and these gangs, when they existed in civilian life in major cities and ghetto areas, had as their favorite thing to prey on those that were unable to fight back. So little groups of 3, 4, 12, 15 would sort of . . . probably informal gangs, some of them actually labeled, some of them not.

**Simmons:** Wasn’t the general overarching label “Mau Maus?” Did you hear that term?

**Barrow:** Not really. Some of that.

**Simmons:** In Vietnam we did.

**Barrow:** Yes. Can you think of anything worse than four or five or six or eight, or what have you, of whatever color waylaying and, without provocation, beating up another person by himself? Now, you then say, “And they’re all Marines.” That is just incomprehensible. It’s so bad that it makes my hair stand on end as I think about it at the moment. In my mind, they “un-Marined” themselves with that kind of behavior. They were not Marines; they were people who were temporarily out of their civilian gangs, wearing a Marine uniform. And we need to get rid of them.

**Simmons:** Was there a matter of turf established?

**Barrow:** Much of this kind of stuff happened on the camps. Now, it’s true that there were areas in Okinawa. There’s an area called Koza, and north of Koza, but still Koza, is called Koza Four Corners, which is where the east-west road crosses the north-south road. That area, very sizeable, 8, 10, 12 blocks in each direction from that corner, was just a rabbit warren of black living, clubs catering exclusively to blacks. No whites ever went there, with one exception: I went there. I went without a lot of fanfare and MPs. I went.

Somewhere in the records, there’s a treatment of this by people like Hobart Taylor [Jr.], who was a very bright lawyer, black distinguished lawyer in Washington, DC, who the Commandant took aboard as a kind of, “You go out and tell me what the hell’s going on” sort of a precept he had. The black [James E.] “Jimmy” Johnson, who was assistant secretary of the Navy for Manpower. They were all out there. I only mention this to kind of make sure that whoever reads this will understand that this is not some guy that had a bad experience and wants to wrongly blame some other group. The kinds of things I’ve said, I’ve said to them, and they understood the kind of way I was trying to deal with it and said so in the record. Somewhere in

the record you'll find letters and comments from those two. They knew I went to Four Corners, which they thought was kind of unusual in itself, but I just wanted to prove that this was something of a myth that whites couldn't go. The other was, I wanted to see what the hell it was like after dark.

**Simmons:** Were there any areas where blacks couldn't go? Any areas where the whites would stake out?

**Barrow:** No. No. No, there wasn't. And I want to underscore that this is an aberration, an anomaly. This has nothing to do with the Marine Corps that I had known for so many years and would know afterwards. It was a period there in which we had wrongly brought in, without any kind of determination as to their potential to be Marines, people off the street—whites, as well as blacks. It was our darkest era. I don't want to make too much of it, because overall, there was a superb amount of leadership, a superb amount of good blacks, whites, etc., doing their job, but this was a kind of boiling ever-present problem that I don't know the dimension of it in other places in the Marine Corps, but we had it on Okinawa because of the uniqueness.

Now, again going back to this business of being somewhere other than "in the world," we still had this transit facility. That gave extra anonymity. There was no commander in charge as a true commander would be, with a chain of command. Here would be a PFC who's on his way or coming back from Vietnam, and there's a CO of a transit facility, yes, but all he's doing is he's up to his elbows with all kinds of administrative things. So this guy's there with no team leader, squad leader, [or] platoon leaders to command anybody. He's got real anonymity, and he's not going to be there very long. And he maybe has back pay that he's accumulated. He can raise hell for three or four days and maybe never get caught, or if he is, no one is there to really deal with him. "Just get rid of him. Let him go ahead and get on the airplane and leave," sort of attitude.

Well, anyway, I don't want to spend too much time on this. This is one of the things that I personally worked very hard to deal with, and with some success. I was not arbitrary. I was not of the mind that in the case of racial problems, that the underlying, as you put it, reasons for doing the kinds of things you do are without legitimacy. I never took that position. Because, from time to time, they have legitimate complaints. As we know, a lot of times something that one believes, whether it's true or not, can be to him just as true as if, in fact, it was. So there was some of that sort of perceived, assumed, whatever you want to call it, injustice.

**Simmons:** Did this reach the level of serious crime? Did you have murders, rapes, armed



robbery? Or are we thinking more of the misdemeanor level? For instance, you had general courts-martial authority. How frequently . . .

**Barrow:** We had a lot of misdemeanors; we had felonies; we had some people . . . not too many murders. There were some. I don't recall how many, but there were a few. But there were beatings and gang kind of activities.

Let me give you an example of this. I told you I took over something like 1100 on September 8, 1969, at Camp Courtney, where my office was for a few months until we moved over to Camp McTureous, where I stayed the rest of my tour. About two that afternoon, while I'm still sort of learning where the pencils are on my desk, in came the then-chief of staff, who said, "There is a riot at the correctional facility." We quit calling them brigs. Thank goodness, we now call them brigs again. There had been a real bad, run-down, inadequate correction facility—brig, if you will—on Camp McTureous that, fortunately, had been replaced by a brand-new facility on Camp McTureous, designed by the experts with all their gates and cells and dormitories and holding areas, you know, the usual things, and a secure fence around it. Well, heck, I didn't even know where the correctional facilities were, but you go to the sound of the gun, so I thought, "I'll go see what the riot's all about."

I arrived to see smoke coming out of this new facility and noise and yelling and screaming and carrying on, and we're talking about 240 people, incarcerated in a brig that had a capacity for something less than that. One dormitory had decided that they would assert their independence, I suppose. They thought of burning the mattresses and putting them against the cell doors and barricading themselves inside the dormitory and flying their own flag.

**Simmons:** What was this flag like?

**Barrow:** The flag was about seven feet long and about three and a half feet wide. How it ever got smuggled in, I'll never know, and it was embroidered, which embroidery work is very common in Okinawa. You can take something out to a little seamstress shop, and they're embroider[ing] anything, your name or whatever. This big banner had across the top, in a kind of arch, "Brothers of the East." And under it was a quarter moon and a star, sort of like the Turkish [flag].

**Simmons:** What were the colors?

**Barrow:** The colors were like the colors of the Buddhist monks in Bangkok [Thailand]. I've got it on the tip of my tongue, that sort of a . . .

**Simmons:** Almost a rainbow?

**Barrow:** It's kind of an orange and yellow. Orange and yellow would be the way I'd put it. There's a name for it, and I can't think of it. Then all of their names on there. They weren't seeking anonymity; they were proud to tell the world who they were, so there they were. There were about 12 names embroidered on this flag. Well, that was the cell of bad behavior, of mischief making. The rest of the people incarcerated maybe were trying to do what they were expected to do while they were in jail, but they were stirred up by this little group. It wasn't too hard to identify who it was—they had their names on the flag—and a few others who joined in and misbehaved with them.

So what do you do? I said, "The first thing I'm going to do is get them out of here."

**Simmons:** Were these all black?

**Barrow:** These happened to be all black, yes. "There's no place to put them." I said, "Where's the old brig?" Well, the maintenance people had taken it over and had things stored in the cells. I said, "Get the stuff out of the cells." So all of this is done. When you want to do something, people can turn to, and it can happen quickly. They had these guys in kind of a holding pen there. To make a long story short, we put them back in this old, horrible brig, and they were one-man cells, very primitive kind of things. The very nature of it, in marked contrast to where they were, would make somebody cool down a little bit. That's, of course, what happened.

I don't want to go through the whole array of things like that with the brig, but we later on had a major riot in the brig and had to call for a Marine rifle company to come down from Camp Hansen and surround the facility and surround those that we took out of the facility while we sorted out who was going to have what happen to them and sent them all back in.

All of these things, more than anything else, let's don't try to attribute any of this to this war in Vietnam, which is the popular thing to do. Let's don't put too much emphasis on things I've mentioned, like anonymity and being away from home and no accountability for your behavior and you're not in the world and all this. It was who we were bringing into the Marine Corps. The reason why I wanted to say that is because we don't have a correctional facility on Okinawa today. There is a small—it's called stockade or brig, one being an Army term and one being Marine—I think it's probably a brig, Marine. I don't know this for sure, but I would wager anything it might have three or four people in it, maybe a sailor, an airman, a soldier, and three Marines, right now. When we had an overcrowded facility plus other corrections, techniques,

where you keep them inside your own unit and they're not locked down, but they have to stay in one hut. There's a name for it. My memory is leaving me. And a lot of people who were on restriction. A lot of people doing things other than being sent to jail, because there was not enough room there. We had a policy where, at one point, if you were going to send somebody there, you had to release someone. And the Army had a stockade that was stuffed full, too. It was bad, but the story has a happy ending, which we'll come to as we tape more of these sessions.

I had an enormously rewarding tour in Okinawa. It was an experience, which ran the whole gamut of human behavior that you could interact with. You could do things to help people; you could do things to stop people from doing things that were bad; you had a unique relationship with people who had enormous responsibilities, like the camp commanders I've already spoken of, these other tenant commanders who were generals, major commands, the Japanese, the Okinawans, Ryukyans, if you will, [and] the other Services. So there was a lot of interaction daily. It was an opportunity for any commander who had any get-up-and-go about him, who was aggressive, to do things.

I'll give you an example. We did not have our own PX on Okinawa. We had a Marine Corps exchange in Iwakuni. I'll say right now that unless they've changed in recent years—and I'm not too sure they haven't, because the few I've been in I'm not impressed with—but in those days, some time to come and some time before, Marine exchanges in my judgment were the best, maybe because we were a smaller Service and we could be very attentive to it and put good people in there and that sort of thing. But we didn't have our own exchange on Okinawa. We had some kind of exchange facility in each of our camps, and we had an enormous exchange at Fort Buckner [Okinawa], which is over near where MAF headquarters and wing headquarters is located now, and we had an enormous exchange at Kadena. All of this was the Army [and] Air Force Exchange Service, run by an Army colonel with an enormous staff on Okinawa.

Historically, that whole approach to the Marine presence was, "You guys need a little toothpaste and shaving cream and that's it. So that's about what we have up in these camps. If you're serious about buying anything, you'll have to come down to Kadena or Buckner." Now, I've overstated it for emphasis; there was more to it than that. "And furthermore, whereas you are the big population, and wherever you shop, you have to come down to Kadena and Buckner, you've been big spenders, unlike the rest of us out here, who have families, who have responsibilities for spending our money for food and things for our children. You Marines are all out here

unaccompanied, so you have fat wallets. You buy a lot of stereo gear and all that sort of stuff. But we're not going to give you very much back for your recreation."

I will not belabor this, but I got my teeth into that situation, and it was a wonderful experience of how to bring these characters to heel, if you will, who were arrogant about their relationship with the Marines, the Marines that they were responsible to serve. So there were things like that, that would be unique. You wouldn't have that at [MCB Camp] Pendleton [California] or Lejeune, but you had it there, and it was big enough as I briefly described and very interesting.

Of course, as an aside, I think the Army [and] Air Force Exchange Service is a strange beast. It's got enormous headquarters in Dallas, Texas, which I've never been there, but I visualize it being staffed with an enormous bureaucracy, self-perpetuating. They have their own retirement systems, etc., etc., etc. I bet the pay and that sort of thing for that group is astronomical, and furthermore, the exchanges themselves show very little initiative, very little in the way of either determining what the customers want or in proper marketing. You go someplace and you see 25 feet of shelf space devoted to shaving cream, and they must have two or three cases of each brand up there, and the idea is, "We don't want to be stocking all the time. We don't want to stock any unusual kinds. Here it is. It's good enough." And it's all done with some sort of inventory control that has these bar graphs that they stick underneath these machines now, and that tells them that they need to buy 16 more cases of something, and it's all done by computers. It's the most impersonal, cold, could-care-less kind of an arrangement. If we get that way in the Marine Corps exchanges, somebody needs to, as we say, kick rear ends and take no names. I didn't mean to get off on that, but I use that as an example of opportunity to do things. I learned a lot.

Later on, of course, part of the responsibility of being CG at [Marine Corps Recruit Depot] Parris Island [South Carolina] is that you have a base. So a guy who had responsibility for 26 clubs surely ought to be able to run three clubs on a sleepy base in the United States. [Laughter] So I drew on that experience, and even after I became Commandant, I knew something about what goes into real-property maintenance and carrying backlog maintenance and all these kinds of things and clubs and messes and all of this. So it was a good experience.

On the personal side of things, I had two children back home, one of whom was married and had his own life and would not visit during the time we were there, but my oldest daughter,

who was first at Sweet Briar College [in Virginia], then transferred to LSU [Louisiana State University] after two years, would come home on leave, and married while she was out there, as a matter of fact, married an Army captain who was an aide to the Army general on the island. My twin daughters went to and graduated from Kubasaki High School, and my son was in grade school out there. We did some traveling, went to Japan proper, and went to the Philippines, went to Hong Kong, [and] went to Bangkok. We went to Taiwan. We did not do a lot of traveling, made about two or three trips. From a family point of view, it was a very pleasant experience. Earlier convictions were strongly reinforced by my three years there, which we'll come to later on, much later on, when I became Commandant. That relates to the unaccompanied tour that was almost exclusively the way Marines served on Okinawa. But we'll come to that later on. So let's leave Okinawa.

I was visited by General [Leonard F.] Chapman [Jr.] and visited by General [Robert E.] Cushman [Jr.] and visited by General Buse when he was CG, FMFPac, and later General Jones. I still, at the time I left Okinawa, had no idea until right near the end where I was going. Here the fellow goes out a frocked BG, and he leaves as a selected major general.

**Simmons:** Before we leave Okinawa too soon, I have more questions to ask you.

**Barrow:** Okay.

**Simmons:** First, we mentioned briefly earlier on about the return of Okinawa to complete Japanese sovereignty, which I think was in process, at least the negotiations were, while you were there. To what extent were you involved in that? How far along did it move while you were there?

**Barrow:** It went from zero to completion. In May of '72, the U.S. flag was lowered, and the Japanese flag was raised over all the previous U.S. facilities on Okinawa. There was a lot of—as I indicated very early in this part of the tape—on Okinawa there was an awful lot of detail work that had to be done to satisfy the Japanese of what they were taking over. Of course, there had been a rather strained relationship between the Japanese, or Japan proper, as I like to call it—[the islands of] Honshu, Kyushu, Hokkaido, and so forth and the Okinawans. I think the Japanese of the northern islands tended to look down on the Okinawans, and I think the Okinawans tended to regard the Japanese as exploitative and not really interested in them. They had been the ones who bore the brunt. The only real Japanese population of any size, other than the bomb being dropped on those at Hiroshima and Nagasaki and some of the bombing done in places like Tokyo, they

were the only ones that really caught the brunt of a battle on Okinawa—100,000 or more locals lost their lives caught, if you will, between the fire of the Americans and the Japanese defenders of Okinawa. So they were bitter about that. Whereas that might not have been the facts, the attitude was, “You made us the battleground.” So in addition to the Japanese, the reversion, meaning the Japanese assumed sovereignty of the Ryukyus, you had those kind of underlying things that made it other than just a smooth change. There was even some question as to, “What is it really going to be like after it’s done? Will there be a lot of discontent that will manifest itself in some sort of overt actions on the part of the Okinawans against the Japanese they have no great love for? Will it be accepted? What will the Japanese do to try to win over these subjects, the Ryukyans?” Well, it worked fine. One of the things the Japanese did was they just poured money into the Ryukyus like you wouldn’t believe. Some, perhaps, would argue that they did too much of it. Now, they didn’t do any of it before I left; they were getting their act together. If you go there now, the whole infrastructure that a government can provide its citizens is there, plus entrepreneurship down from the upper islands in terms of resort areas and golf courses, all kinds of things. So I would think that the Okinawan people probably have entered the modern age in a big way and are flourishing.

**Simmons:** They are fully assimilated [and] think of themselves as Japanese.

**Barrow:** I think so. I think so. I remember at the stroke of midnight that all this would take place, I was not present, but it was quoted to me, there was a bartender in the Officers’ Club at Camp McTureous, whose name was Jay, who had been a bartender since the Marines first went to Okinawa, in one club or another, and he spoke good English. He was an Okinawan. Maybe he expressed it as well as anyone in a humorous sort of way, when somebody said, after the stroke of midnight, “Well, now, Jay, what are you, an Okinawan or a Japanese?”

And he thought for a minute and said, “I’m a Mexican.” [Laughter] Maybe that describes it best of all.

**Simmons:** As you mentioned briefly, Patty and three of the children were there. I know that Patty had a very active time during this tour. Will you comment on these activities, particularly as they relate to the officers’ wives stationed in Okinawa and, for that matter, with respect to visitors?

**Barrow:** Yes. God bless her, she really came forward, if you will. She had a lot of things to do. While there were only a small number of Marine wives, most of them either with the logistics

command or a few with Futenma and a few with Camp Butler, they were very close because there were so few Marines. The wives [were] perhaps closer than the husbands, because they had some unifying things that they all worked together on. One of those was the officers' wives' gift shop. It was at Camp McTureous in a Quonset hut that leaked, electricity would go out at the slightest provocation, and it was kind of a faltering, uncertain enterprise. I don't think Patty would want me to say—and neither would it be accurate for me to say—that she was the driving force behind the gift shop, but she showed such keen interest. She didn't do any of the bookkeeping. She didn't stand there and tell you something, but she was so keenly interested and worked their problems very skillfully through her association with me, so that if there were any problems, I heard about it. We made efforts and successfully improved that status all the way to today. They are in what used to be the Army gift shop facility in old Fort Buckner. It's just a super enterprise, and the money goes to Ryukyuan charities sort of like our own United Fund, a certain amount of the profits, and it's a great place to shop. Well, she did that kind of thing.

She was interested in the wives' clubs, not only of officers, but the staff NCO wives' clubs. Took an active role. She hosted an array of people ranging from Marine generals to Commandants to Navy types to congressional delegations to you name it, and she was the . . .  
[Tape interruption]

She just carried an enormous load of traditional entertaining that a general officer's wife does, particularly in command, but perhaps more than the ordinary, because so many people went to or passed through Okinawa. The other generals out there who were without wives turned to her for a lot of things that she could do, like decorate some of their quarters, which she did every time there was a turnover of generals. She would kind of be a hostess in the background for some of their parties, helping to determine menus and the whole layout and so forth. I think she won a lot of admirers while she was there, from these generals and others, and I just think she did a super job.

**Simmons:** I remember in April 1971, when I was returning from Vietnam, you and Patty had me to a very lovely dinner party. You and she had well-deserved reputations for your style and your cordiality and your hospitality. Would you comment on the importance of such things as luncheons and dinners? I am thinking of these things as a very definite facet of your leadership style.

**Barrow:** Well, I think that it is a part of our Marine, or any military, life at all levels. It perhaps

takes on more importance as the level of command goes up. I think that some of our people historically have been much more attentive to this part of their responsibilities—and I do call it responsibilities—than others. I would not presume to say that Patty and I did more than most around us or something, but we did our fair share. After all, I was in the unique position to have done it a lot and have had a lot of experience doing it, because I was a general officer, I guess for something like almost 14 years and in command, counting my tour as Commandant, for about 11 and a half or 12 years of those nearly 14 [years], 3 years at Camp Butler and almost 3 years at Parris Island, FMFLant [Fleet Marine Force Atlantic], and Commandant. So we just grew up out of that school that said people with command responsibility ought to have responsibility to host intra-command parties, social events, and also visiting persons. Liked to do it. Patty is a gracious hostess, if I do say so, and knows how to do it. It sets a certain tone of interest in the people who are entertained. It breaks down any barriers, if there are barriers, in terms of personal relationships between people you're entertaining and yourselves. I just think it's the right and proper thing to do, and I trust and hope we're not backing away from that. The high pace of life we live sometimes might provide an excuse for doing less, but I think it's a very important part of our life.

**Simmons:** Were you involved in any of the major operational events of these years as, for example, the redeployment of Marine units, specifically aviation units, to South Vietnam and Thailand as a result of the North Vietnamese Easter Offensive of 1972?

**Barrow:** I would have to say, in all candor, no. We may have been very indirectly, modestly involved in some sort of service or support of some kind, but not that involved.

**Simmons:** I note that you received the Joint Service Commendation Medal for your service as commanding general, Marine Corps Base Camp Butler for the period 1 January to 15 May 1972. But I don't have a copy of the citation. Do you recall the circumstances that led to that award?

**Barrow:** What were the dates again?

**Simmons:** One January to 15 May 1972.

**Barrow:** That would be the final hours of reversion. The whole reversion thing intensified, you know, up to the point of "Where will this group stand when the ceremony takes place?" sort of thing. It was administrative. It was very real in terms of property actions being taken [and] what was going to happen with things that were kind of pseudo-official like the American Legion Club on Okinawa, which had been a rallying water[ing] hole for years for American civilian



workers, of which there were a fair number on Okinawa. That was kind of their club, yet where did it fit in? Neither fish nor fowl.

So we could talk forever about reversion, but that was the period, January to May. It's interesting that the moment that reversion occurred, General Lampert got in his airplane and departed the island. Of course, the job of high commissioner was gone, and his other job as CG, Ryukyus was turned over to Bob Smith [?], who had previously been his deputy. It was a sad occasion. I liked Jim Lampert very much. [Doorbell interruption]

**Simmons:** Do you recall which command or authority made that award? Was it General Lampert?

**Barrow:** General Lampert. I probably have a copy of that.

**Simmons:** For some reason, I don't. I didn't scratch deeply enough, but I could find it.

**Barrow:** We could have saved ourselves all this time on Okinawa by you reading my Joint Service Commendation Medal award, because that's what I did.

**Simmons:** And that's about what I'm going to do right now. You also received your third Legion of Merit, covering the entire three-year period, and the citation summarizes some of the matters we discussed. I would like to read into the record the most pertinent paragraph.

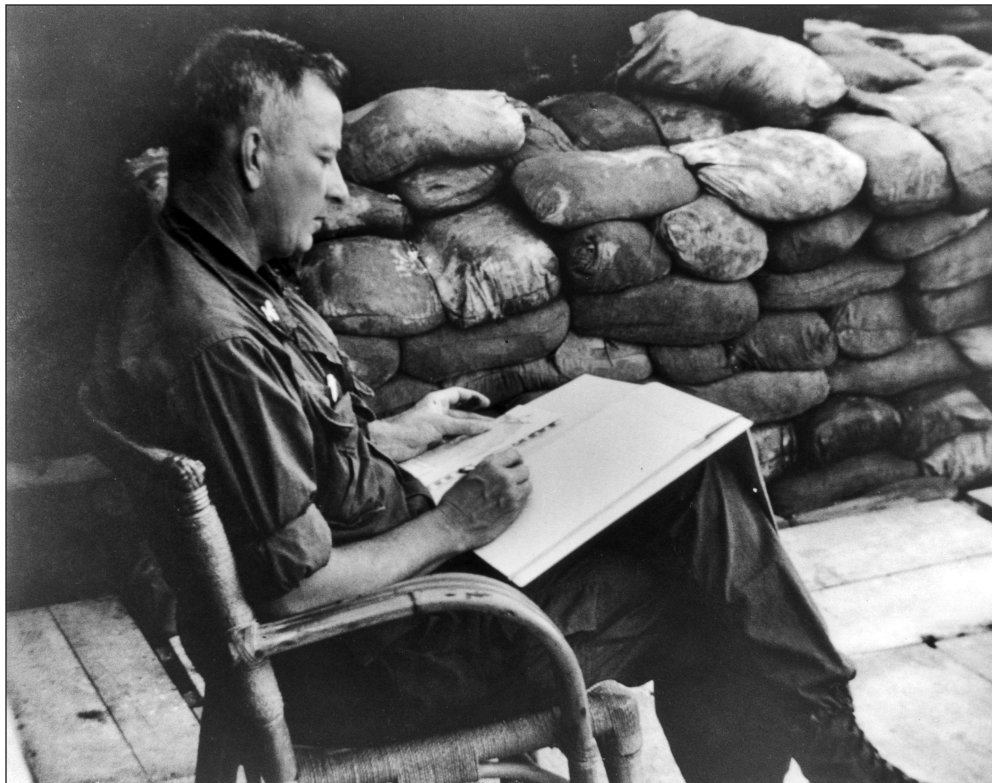
"During this period of severe personnel turbulence and fiscal austerity, Brigadier General Barrow organized a massive logistic effort and effected a management system which ensured maximum utilization of manpower and material assets and greatly enhanced the security, physical aspects, and operating capacity of all Marine Corps installations on Okinawa. In addition to his tremendous command responsibilities, he assisted in coordinating the many details involved in the reversion of Okinawa to the government of Japan and was instrumental in achieving results which served the best interests of the United States and of the people of Okinawa."

Is there anything else you would like to comment upon concerning these three very important years?

**Barrow:** I don't really, Ed. I think, if anything, we've covered it in more detail than the subject deserves. Although it was, as I said earlier, a very challenging, surprisingly challenging, and very rewarding experience. I drew on that experience the remaining 12 years of my service.

**Simmons:** I think, then, this would be a good place to end this session.

End of SESSION IX



Official U.S. Marine Corps photo

*Col Robert Barrow, commanding officer of the 9th Marines in Vietnam in 1969, takes a break from his daily routine to communicate with family at home.*

*Gen Barrow, left, and Gen Louis H. Wilson Jr. review the troops at Marine Barracks Washington, DC, during the Commandant's change of command ceremony on 1 July 1979.*

Official U.S. Marine Corps photo





Official U.S. Marine Corps photo

*Gen Barrow debarks from an aircraft with wife Patty in 1980.*

*Barrow greets Marines.*

Official U.S. Marine Corps photo







Official U.S. Marine Corps photo

*Gen Barrow meets with Marines and their wives during a family readiness gathering.*

*Capt Jack C. Cuddy, right, and WO Neil Goddard brief Commandant Barrow on the Marine Corps M40A1 sniper rifle and scope during the general's visit to the Inter-Service Rifle Matches on 3 August 1979.*

Photo by Cpl D. E. Yates. VIRIN DM-SN-83-09051







Photo by Sgt R. Roeder. VIRIN DM-SN-84-08228

*Gen Barrow inspects Marines during a welcome aboard ceremony on 31 March 1983 at Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, Okinawa.*

*Gen Barrow addresses 3d Marine Division's noncommissioned officers on 3 April 1983 during his last visit to Okinawa as Commandant of the Marine Corps.*

Photo by Sgt R. Roeder. VIRIN DM-SN-84-08231







Photo by Cpl A. L. Ziegler. VIRIN DM-SC-86-06541

*Gen Barrow reviews troops during an honors ceremony on 24 June 1983, marking his last visit to the Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, South Carolina, as Commandant of the Marine Corps. MajGen James J. McMonagle, commanding general of the base, accompanied the Commandant.*

*President Ronald W. Reagan stands with Gen Barrow, left, and Gen P. X. Kelley during the Commandant's change of command ceremony in which Kelley relieved Barrow at Marine Barracks Washington on 26 June 1983.*

Official U.S. Marine Corps photo

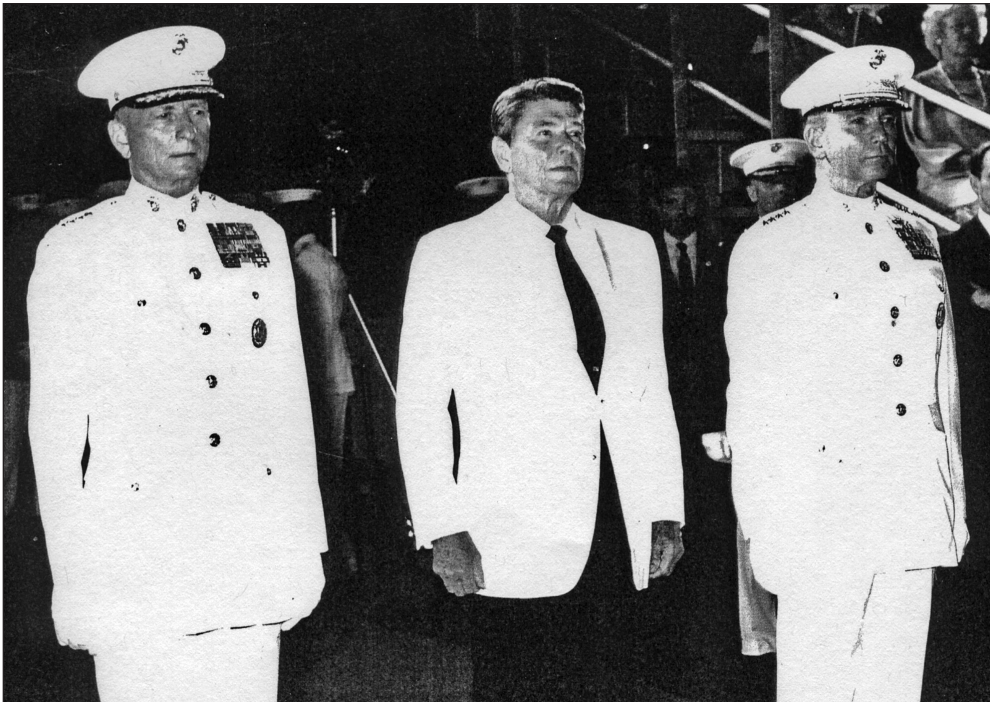




Photo by Cpl Anthony Ortiz. Defense Imagery 081103-M-EL314-084  
*Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen James T. Conway and Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Carlton W. Kent lead a the funeral procession for former Commandant Gen Barrow in St. Francisville, Louisiana, Barrow's hometown, on 3 November 2008.*



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION  
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Interviewee: General Robert H. Barrow, USMC (Ret)

Interviewer: Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons, USMC (Ret)

Date of Interview: 26 January 1989

SESSION X

**Simmons:** This is session 10, and it's the afternoon of 26 January 1989. We're continuing with the oral history interview with former Commandant, General Robert Barrow. As in the past, this session's interview is taking place in the senior visiting officers' quarters in the Washington Navy Yard.

General, in our last session, we covered your three-year command as a brigadier general of Marine Corps Base Camp Butler, Okinawa. Toward the end of this tour, you were selected, I believe, for promotion to major general. When and how did you learn of this selection?

**Barrow:** I was on Okinawa in my assignment there and was informed by a phone call made . . . I've forgotten who called me. I just don't remember who called me.

**Simmons:** Do you remember some of the other generals who were advanced to that rank at that time?

**Barrow:** [Chuckles] No. I'd have to think about it.

**Simmons:** You had done very well with your command at Okinawa. Your next command would be perhaps even more critical. In 1972, the personnel situation in the Marine Corps was quite critical. We can be sure that the commanding generals of the recruit depots were being chosen with great care. Do you know, or can you tell me, the steps that led to your being assigned as commanding general, Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island [South Carolina]?

**Barrow:** I cannot tell you. I'm not too sure that my selection was done with any great care. Frankly, I had thought that I was long overdue for an assignment in Washington [DC]. I had not served in Headquarters Marine Corps since 1956, early '56. So I concluded that that's where I would be going. So it came as something of a surprise to get orders to Parris Island. Again, I got no preliminaries about what was expected of me or any identification made of particular problems that I should deal with. "Just go to Parris Island for a normal change of duty."

**Simmons:** You relieved whom at Parris Island?

**Barrow:** I relieved Major General Carl [W.] Hoffman, an old friend, a fine officer.

**Simmons:** How was Parris Island organized at that time for recruit training?

**Barrow:** Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island is, as it was at that time, the only command there. It's now, of course, additionally the eastern region recruiting. We had the RTR (recruit training regiment) commanded by a colonel, with three recruit training battalions, each commanded by a lieutenant colonel, and companies. Then the breakdown is not platoon, but rather series. The series is the flexible part of this command structure, flexible [to] the extent that that's where you accommodate the fluctuations that take place in population. You may have two, three, four, five series in a company, depending upon whether you have a heavy recruit load, etc.

In the series, you have your recruit platoons, which is where the drill instructor does his work. Now, a series accompanies a captain. A series officer is a lieutenant, used to be one lieutenant only, now it's a lieutenant with an assistant. He has a series gunnery sergeant, and he has the platoons under his series. Four platoons make up a series. The platoons usually have three drill instructors. Only more than that if the recruit population is down; then they take some drill instructors and ask them to make a fourth drill instructor. The platoon sizes vary, but typically it would run around 60 or 70 or 75 [Marines]. You might have sometimes less than that, sometimes more.

In addition to the three recruit training battalions in the recruit training regiment, you also had the weapons training battalion, which is, as the word indicates, where the marksmanship training preliminary and actual firing was done. Parris Island, just as they do on the West Coast, San Diego [California] (they moved from San Diego Recruit Depot up to [MCB] Camp Pendleton [California]) from Parris Island, they move about a mile and a half from their barracks—less than that, really—to the weapons training battalion area, the new barracks, and do their two weeks' [worth of] training out there.

Separate from that, you had the women recruit training battalion, which at the time of my arrival down there was just about ready to go into a very fine new complex, probably one of the best facilities for the money the Marine Corps' ever had. It was constructed when the construction industry was desperate for work, so they got a good bid on it, and it's a very fine facility. Then, of course, we had the headquarters service battalion, which provided the overall services for the base part of Parris Island.

In the recruit training regiment, there were a lot of small things that had to do with remedial training of recruits, if you want to call it that—motivation platoon, a platoon devoted to reducing weight, activities related to strength, improving the strength of recruits. So that's essentially how it was organized.

Parris Island is not a very large command. Permanent personnel numbers just over 2,000, as I recall. Recruit population might range anywhere from 3,000 or 4,000 in the wintertime—it's leveled off a little bit now—up to 6,500 or 7,000 in the summer. We're bringing in fewer (there's a story behind that), and we are spreading out more over the years. Don't have the fluctuations.

**Simmons:** How long was the training cycle at that time? How many weeks?

**Barrow:** The training cycle lasted just under 11 weeks. This has always been something of a contentious issue. Once in a while, someone in Congress or someplace says, "The Marines are spending too much time in recruit training." Marines leap to the defense of whatever time they're spending. I think it's supposed to be 10.4—don't hold me to this; it may be different now—10.4 weeks. But, in fact, it always averages out to just under 11 weeks, which is in pretty sharp contrast to the other Services. I think the Army maybe does it in about eight, I think the Navy in something like six, and the Air Force maybe less than that. But I've often maintained that with the possible exception of the Army, that the Marine Corps has had a totally different view of recruit training. I certainly do. This is where we take the young man who, in a simple act of faith, says, "Make me a Marine," and we do that. And we do more than just make a basic Marine.

I'm persuaded that recruit training produces good citizens. Whatever citizenship virtues a young man might have when he comes to Parris Island, he has a lot of them that experience reinforces. If he's missing a few, they'll give them to him. And we don't believe that's a process that can be done in a short period of time.

Great emphasis is placed on two things, which are not taught but are, by the day-to-day experience, learned. One of those is discipline. It is imposed discipline at the time they're undergoing training, but effort is made there, and the expectation follows that it will become self-discipline. I do believe that, by and large, our Marine Corps has always been, with a few periods where we've had some few problems, we've been a very disciplined military organization. I think there's a built-in expectation from the American public, Congress, [or] anyone who even thinks of it, of the very word "Marine" conjures up a picture of someone who is obedient to orders, who will

do what you'd expect. Discipline is achieved by the regime that these young men are put through and demands placed on them by this unusual personality called a drill instructor. All drill instructors obviously vary, but there's a certain sameness about them in what it is that they're expected to do. There's even a sameness about how they do it. There's a lot of imitation among the drill instructors. The good ones are emulated by the others in their mannerisms, voice, etc. So discipline is one of the two things that recruits most assuredly learn.

The other thing is the spirit of being a Marine. Nobody teaches that, but it's learned. I'm something of a student of recruit training, Ed. I was a recruit myself back in 1942, San Diego, and I might add that was for six weeks. I've been interested ever since. But it has some mystique and certain mysteries about it that are not easily understood, and I confess I don't understand all of it.

The spirit of being a Marine is clearly learned there, and that certainly helps set our distinctiveness. We're all of us so proud of the Marine Corps and proud to be a part of it. No one teaches that, but we get it. It doesn't have to be really reinforced. You go in the Fleet Marine Forces. There isn't much of what one might think reinforcement of that by somebody getting on a box and exalting everyone to remember they're Marines, do your best, carry on for the Corps, and all this. It's gained in recruit training and stays with you the rest of your life.

Well, anyway, if I may just sort of continue talking about Parris Island in general terms, I would like to say, because I'm going to say some ugly things; I don't want to, but I'm going to have to if we're going to be honest and have this be a history. I want to say up front that if you were to ask my wife, or if you were to ask me, "What was your favorite duty station?" we would both say Parris Island. The reasons for that are several. It's not too large, just over 2,000 people there, so there's a closeness. You know so many of the others who share the experience with you. It is, in fact, on an island. At one time the only way you could get there was by boat. Now there's a long causeway. So there's a certain isolation, which tends to set it apart and make it special. In terms of nature, it is most appealing and grows on you. I know there are those who say you go to Twentynine Palms, California, in the high desert country, and the day you arrive it looks like it's not the end of the world, but that you could see it from there. And it grows on them and they don't want to leave. They say it's great.

Well, you have some of the same things at Parris Island. It's very flat, about 8,000 acres, of which almost half comes under water twice every 24 hours. The tide comes in and covers the marsh grass. Live oak trees and palmetto palms, very flat, but that marshland grows on you. It's the highest

tidal variation on the East Coast until you get way up in Maine or someplace. Twice a day. The spring tide will bring you almost nine feet, so routinely you have five, six feet change in tide in an area that's doggone near below sea level. You can see what a change that makes to the appearance of the island.

I remember the first time I left Parris Island by helicopter to give a speech over in Georgia. The tide was out, and I saw a lot of land everywhere. I came back, the tide was in, and I thought it was the Johnstown Flood [in Pennsylvania]. It was just amazing how much water takes over. Then, you come to realize that that's very much a part of the ecological cycle, food chain, that begins with little critters in that marsh grass and mud that's fed on by larger critters and so on and on up until the big ones are out there in the ocean someplace.

At Parris Island, you have shrimp and blue crabs and flounder, all kinds of fish, and oysters. Oyster beds on Parris Island, and the big thing that might surprise you, they have clams on Parris Island. We had several people in the command who used to go clamming. Anyway, there's a lot of bird life and it's just beautiful.

But obviously the thing that moves you most about that assignment is that you see the mission unfolding before you every day, because if you just look closely, you'll see the people who arrived last night. If you see them early enough, you see them before they've had their hair cut, and they're still in their civilian clothes. You see the youngsters in their first week. You come to recognize it's their first week—easily recognize that first week. They can't drill, they stumble and bump one another, and so forth. You can just see it all the way through the various stages.

Then you see them on graduation, which is one of the most moving ceremonies anywhere, because this great change has taken place in just about anyone who goes there. Many parents come for the graduation. I went to every one. At that time, they were graduating two series a week, most often. To see the parents and, in some instances, not being able to recognize their sons because there's been so much change, you see all of that. You may not see it in individuals, but you see it collectively. So the mission is unfolding before you every day, and you feel the importance of it. You're a part of it.

Then, finally, I would say the low country of South Carolina is a unique place, again because of the nature and topography and so forth, but because of the people. They are gentle people, friendly people, hospitable people, and they've had an association with the Marine Corps that dates back to the 1890s when there was a Marine barracks there, when Parris Island was a Navy

coaling station or place where they did some work on Navy ships and things of that sort. Parris Island has been there for so long, the townspeople, they talk about “the island.” There’s lots of islands in that area, like Hilton Head [Island] is part of the low country. But when the old-timers say “the island,” they mean Parris Island. They don’t mean Hunting Island; they don’t mean Lady’s Island; they don’t mean Hilton Head. But they’ll say, “I’m going over to the island.” And the old-timers would tell me the first movie they ever saw was on the island, when they’d come over by boat. And the first golf course was on Parris Island, which is a little nine-hole, very short affair in which the greens were made out of cottonseed hulls, which adhered to one another, sort of like Velcro does. They’d stick all these cottonseed hulls on the green and tamp it down with a tamper. You finished putting out; you went around to tamp the green down. Anyway, I’m . . .

**Simmons:** They still had it that way when you were there?

**Barrow:** No, no. That had gone many years ago, many years ago. But I was just saying that the townspeople really, really liked the Marine Corps and there was a kind of unusually good relationship there. Well, I’ve talked too much about that part of it. It was just a very, very fine tour of duty.

**Simmons:** What was your relationship to the district directors and recruiting services? You said that this responsibility had not yet been enjoined to you. So what sort of relationship?

**Barrow:** Well, the Marine Corps, for the most part, has put pretty good people on recruiting duty. There’s been some exceptions, I’m sure, in which they just were assigned routinely, without any screening or looking for the kinds of people to go out there by personality. District directors, good officers, good district directors.

But we had a major problem in that my relationship was nonexistent, and because I needed one and most often in the area of trying to identify problems that they sent me in the form of warm bodies that should never have been sent, there developed whatever relationship it was; it would be adversarial. I’m sure the district directors—we now call them COs of recruiting stations, used to be called OICs [officers in command], so let’s call them COs. I’m sure the COs of the RSs [recruiting stations] in the work in recruiting didn’t like very much this fellow down there at Parris Island. There was a joke. I think it came out of RS Raleigh [in North Carolina], which I learned many, many years later that they used to say, “Hurray! Hurray! We had another day that General Barrow didn’t get in behind RS Raleigh!” Well, I’m sure I didn’t do anything with that degree of frequency, but in a sense, I was not antirecruiters. We all are Marines; you can’t ever be antiananything in the

Marine Corps, a fellow Marine, particularly. But I was frustrated by the quality of people that was being introduced to Parris Island, sent to Parris Island, and I am afraid I took it out on the recruiting service. I was very critical. In retrospect, I was not critical enough of the policies and the practices that were condoned as far as recruiting, or seemed to be condoned—tolerated, if not condoned. We did some things in that connection, too, called a spade a spade, if you will.

So to answer your question, it was not a good relationship. While we're on that subject, I'll just tell you this, that when we went from the draft to all volunteer in 1973, actually it was preceded by a six-month jump the gun, if you want to, to it all took place a few months after I got there. That is to say we were in the all-volunteer [force]. Anyone coming to Parris Island was a product of that.

Well, it was a bad scene. I'm talking not so much about Parris Island, but what showed up at Parris Island. We believed erroneously in the Marine Corps, particularly in Headquarters Marine Corps—maybe we've always felt this way—that we could make a Marine out of anyone. You just tell me some young boy out there who says he wants to be a Marine; that's all that counts. We'll make him a Marine. That's simply not true. If you stop and think about it, making anyone anything is best done when you have some qualities to work with, abilities to learn, abilities to discipline, [and] a real deep-seated desire to be what it is you want to be—in this case, a Marine. And you don't just almost, in fact, take someone off the street and send them to Parris Island, though they create miracles. That's what's deceived people. They always have stories of some fellow who was out of step with life and he went to recruit training, and they screwed his head on right and made him stand up straight, he lost weight, he learned to say, "Yes, sir," "No, sir," and my God, he's a walking example of what we can do with somebody when we really have them in our control. Judges used to see that and say, "This guy accused of this misdemeanor, send him off to Parris Island before I send him to jail," and all this kind of business. The Marine Corps was guilty of that, the top people in the Marine Corps. They'd take anybody.

It went to extremes. Example: education. The Commandant testified in the early '70s before Congress, when asked a question about education levels of recruiter sessions, he said education was not important—I'm paraphrasing. It was only of some importance. Again, that's another way of saying we can make a Marine out of anyone.

We had arriving there, if the high command, in this case Commandant's office, Headquarters Marine Corps, and whatnot, if they believe that you can make a Marine out of anyone, the recruiter feels like, "All I do is send you just anyone." So you had in the recruiting service,

people on recruiting duty who should not have been there, who didn't know how to recruit, and [who] would never learn if you sent them to the finest recruiting school and had the best supervision. They weren't suited for it by temperament, personality, what have you. We put them out there with bad policies: "Just get warm bodies." Overstated for emphasis. You put them in places where they're not, by the nature of where you put them, going to get you quality. Many of them were in innercities of America, because it was easy to do. You were in the crowd, so to speak. You could work the crowd.

I remember once asking to come to a recruiters' conference in Washington, and they must have regarded me as the bastard at the family reunion, but they let me come. I made a little pitch to all the district directors and head of recruiting service, and I think some of the COs of RSs were there, too. I said, "Why don't you get out of these big cities and go out into suburbia and into the hinterlands? It stands to reason that if you put a recruiter in the middle of an Indian reservation, he's going to recruit Indians. If you put him in the middle of a ghetto, he's going to get you ghetto kids."

They all looked at me, and finally, some began to talk, and they said things like, "Well, all that would do, general, is put a lot of mileage on the cars, and you burn gas and kill time, and your prospects would be few and far between. That doesn't work."

Do you know where we are now? On this tape I'm asking that, looking at my friend Ed Simmons. That's exactly where we are. A typical big city might have had 30 recruiters working right out of the heart of the city. Might today have two recruiters down there, and the other 28 are out in the neighboring small towns and suburbs.

So you had that problem. You had recruiters who were poorly supervised and who, when faced with the problem of shipping quota by qualifying someone illegally or missing quota, knowing that to miss quota would be to bring down a certain amount of criticism—maybe not get the good things he could expect out of recruiting, like your next duty assignment, maybe meritorious promotion, all these good things—a lot of malpractices were introduced. Again, I keep using this word "generalization." I'm sure that the majority was doing right, but you had enough doing wrong to make it bad. Recruiters who were qualifying recruits who lowered the quality still had, in some instances, to qualify them for that low qualification—illegally. A malpractice, if you will. We caught them at that all the time. It wasn't unusual to have recruits turn up who had been recently let out of jails and prisons, even insane asylums. Surely it wasn't unusual to have them show up and be obese beyond anything that you could do.



I remember one once who came from Lima, Ohio, and he weighed something like 310 pounds, but he had weighed almost 400 pounds. He'd gone into the recruiting office and said he wanted to be a Marine, and instead of the recruiter being courteous and throwing him out, he was flip with him and said something about, "Well, you lose 100 pounds, I'll send you to the Marine Corps." Well, he went out and apparently lost nearly 100 pounds, but he still was 310 pounds when we got him, and he was still a big piece of blubber. Then we find out in the physical exam they gave him, he looked like he was a health risk just by virtue of his size, and we wanted to handle him carefully and get him the hell out of there. We find out he had a heart problem and had a family history of heart problems. So he was a candidate to die on us while we processed him. Well, that's just terrible.

I'm going back to your question about my relationship. It wasn't a very good one, and the only way I could get to a recruiter was to write to Headquarters Marine Corps, and that was the first place that they might shrug their shoulders and ignore my letter, or they might send it to the district director, and that's the second place they could ignore it, or they might send it to the recruiting station and they'd ignore it. I never got any evidence, and I had on numerous occasions documented bad recruiting—documented with pictures, with records, the whole thing. I never once, in almost three years at Parris Island, ever had a feedback which said, "We took care of that for you, general. That recruiter will never do that again." I really had the feeling like, "He's making trouble for us."

As a matter of fact, now that I've said that, about midway in my tour down there, I was trying to introduce reforms both in recruit training and recruiting, in the last instance not being able to because I couldn't reach them. I was designated or termed by the then-Assistant Commandant as the "troublemaker in Parris Island." Anyway, be that as it may.

Now back to these recruits, because that's an important part of this whole thing.

**Simmons:** What percentage were you qualifying? And were you satisfied with those you had qualified?

**Barrow:** No. Good question. You're either smarter than I think you are, or you've prepared yourself for this sort of little thing that I'm doing.

When I arrived there, I was told that we could attrite no more than 10 percent of our accessions, the arrivals at Parris Island. That didn't make sense to me, an arbitrary "You will not attrite no more than a certain number." I quickly learned that you could eat up about 6 of that 10 percent with medicals, people who were given a physical at the armed forces examining station, but

a more thorough one at Parris Island, and they'd have a bad knee from a football injury or any number of things, asthma or something. So you'd lose about 6 percent that way. You had another one or two who were just erroneously recruited, meaning they were underage or they were married with children or something else. Then you had those that were recruited with a record that was discovered after they got there, and it was of the nature that could not be waived. You'd have to send him home. You were sometimes late catching up with those. So just under normal, nothing to do with whether he can handle any challenge, just under the normal screening, you might say, you'd could get the 10 percent or better.

I remember calling [Major General John N.] "Jack" McLaughlin, who was the CG at San Diego, and I said, "I don't believe this. What's this 10 percent?" He said, "That's what it is."

Now let me tell you an interesting side story to this. Drill instructors are a strange lot. They're very competitive. With themselves, they want the self-satisfaction of graduating a platoon that looked like they're picture-book Marines. It gives them a great sense of accomplishment, and they should feel that way. They are competitive with one another. "I want to have a better platoon than you have," and that's hard to quantify, but it can be. One way that this goofy 10 percent attrition limitation, one thing it did was give the drill instructors a tool for measuring performance, a distortion notwithstanding, which is to say, "If we are being judged on how few we attrite, I look around and I can save more of these little bastards than you can. I don't want to attrite anybody. That will make me superior." I'm not saying anyone consciously did that or said that, but it's a manifestation of their competitiveness. So you had drill instructors that were . . . [Tape recorder turned off]

We had a little interruption, but the thought I'm trying to capture here is that drill instructors, in their competitiveness with one another, would go to extraordinary efforts to have less attrition than the already too-low attrition that was imposed. If 10 [percent] is good, then maybe 4 or 5 is better. Well, the only way you could do that would be to harbor and nurture and hand massage through the system people who should never even be there, to say nothing of graduating. That's just one little side thing here.

Let me continue on this. This so frustrated me, within weeks of my being there. I met at least once a week with all my commanders and the staff, and I saw them every day because I prowled around Parris Island all the time. I had a meeting and I said, "I want to make it clear, very clear." Because I learned in Parris Island, one of the places that demonstrates this best of all, you

could say, “A equals B equals C,” as a CG, and you’d wait about a week and go down and ask some drill instructor, “What was it that the CG said last week?” And he’ll say that “A minus B plus C equals Z.” They get it all screwed up.

So of all the places I ever served, they maybe wanted to interpret it differently, but in any case, I said, “Let’s get it straight. We are not going to be bound by 10 percent. Let water seek its own level. Is that clear to everyone? That’s the way it’s going to be. Attrite what has to be done so that you are the judgment call. We know we have a certain number of uncontrollables like medical and erroneous and whatnot. I’m speaking of those who by judgment call should not be sent to the Fleet Marine Forces or wherever they’re going when they leave here. They should not graduate.” I said, “So that’s it.”

My chief of staff, afterward, shifting from one foot to the other, said . . .

**Simmons:** Who was your chief of staff?

**Barrow:** Gene Hadley [?]. He says, “In that thing you just announced, isn’t that going to put you in conflict with the Commandant’s policies?” I said, “Yep. I just hope I have a good answer for it. I think I do, when the question comes.” Do you know that I was never questioned, and the attrition went up to 22 and 23 and 24 percent?

I will tell you something else. As I look back on it, it probably should have been 32, 33, 34 percent. I reckon that we were bringing in, through this bad recruiting period, about one-third people who should not have been recruited, which meant that if I’m right on that—this is strictly an opinion of mine, but assuming I’m right—it means we were sending home and not graduating about two-thirds of those who should have been not graduated. In other words, under the 10 percent, we were sending 20 percent-plus to the FMF [Fleet Marine Force] for them to deal with, and that was a source of much of the mischief and problems that took up so much of their time and cost the government money and agony and people in the brigs and all this other business, and finally discharging them. So even when we let the attrition go up like 22, 23 percent, we were still sending maybe another 10 percent out there, but they were a closer call. They were at least marginal, like, “Well, it’s too close to call. Let ’em go.” It wasn’t quite like that, but I mean, that’s the way I look at it.

So let me make a comment. Since we’ve spent so much time on recruiting, let me kind of make a couple of comments, some of which will even leap forward to many years later. I learned, or thought I had learned—we had some statistics to prove it—the value of the high school graduate.

Our statistics held by Headquarters Marine Corps and the ones we held locally in terms of amenability to discipline, ability to learn, all these things, showed that the high school graduate was far and away more likely to be successful in recruit training and in his Marine Corps career than the nonhigh school graduate. It sounds so obvious that you hardly want to say it, but also fewer, if none, mental group lower types like IVs, you have, the better off you are. We've all known the mental group [category] IV who was a good Marine, but it stands to reason that basic intelligence is a factor that relates to learning, relates to perception of right and wrong, which means it can be a disciplinary problem. Some people are not smart enough to see right from wrong, so they do something wrong unwittingly, almost.

About the high school graduate, I've long decided that it's not the fact that he has a piece of paper in his hand that says he's a graduate. And it doesn't relate just to those things that you hear when someone says, "What's so great about a high school graduate?" and the answer often is, "Well, he's demonstrated he can set goals and achieve them," the goal being to graduate from high school, I suppose. It demonstrates an ability to . . . [Tape interruption]

. . . and amenability to discipline, even though the school discipline certainly isn't comparable to Marine Corps discipline. Okay, I'll grant you that maybe all that is at work, but there's one thing that stands out above all else, in Bob Barrow's opinion. The high school graduate is a high school graduate in large part because he comes from a home where there is an encouragement to graduate from high school, an encouragement to learn, a home that is sufficiently loving and peaceful, that not only has it encouraged him to finish high school, but it has helped shape his character into a caring, concerned, loving person. I may be overstating that, but I believe the family environment, the family character building, the family caring, all those good virtues that we respect and admire, are at work in the home, more often than not, at work in the home where the young man becomes a graduate.

Or the opposite of that is that the high school dropout is often dropping out of high school incidental to dropping out of a bad family. He has to make a living; he has to take care of himself. He really is leaving home. He's had enough of it. His father drinks too much, his mother maybe has boyfriends and is cursing and swearing and sloppy housekeeping and nobody cares, and it's a terrible environment. There's much more of that than we realize, and we don't see it because we have no right to see it. You can't invade a man's home and see how his lifestyle is. But it's out there, and some of these youngsters say, "I've had enough of that." Or they just haven't had enough

of the right kind of encouragement and conditions to want to succeed in school, so they leave home.

You know, right today as I'm talking here in 1989, 49 percent of the students in the public schools of the state of Louisiana, where I happen to live, 49 percent in the ninth grade will not graduate. And they talk about the schools, the teachers' pay, the number of students in the class, the curriculum, the buses, the facilities; they talk about everything except what are the parents doing. Are they encouraging or are they discouraging? End of sermon.

Anyway, I had stuck and embedded deep inside of me the thought, and it appears later on—it started at Parris Island—that we've got to go for as many high school graduates as we can get, and I'm happy to say, as an aside here, that in the year 1989, we're getting about 98.5 percent. It could be 100 percent if they didn't want to make room for a few who were deserving. My state of Louisiana last year recruited 700-plus recruits, all of them high school graduates, and no mental group IVs. No mental group IVs, which is the other part of this qualification thing.

When we were at Parris Island, the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery Test, which is a measure of one's learning ability, to put it in layman's language, you have five mental groups: I, II, and then III breaks up into IIIA and IIIB, and then you have IV and then V. Well, [group] V is just one step ahead of a rock. But [group] IV is not much better. We talked a little bit earlier about this maybe not being able to discern right from wrong and also not being able to learn as well. Well, we shouldn't have many IVs. I just told you that I think the Marine Corps is down to zero. But when I was at Parris Island, we had about 28, 30 percent mental group IVs, and now—and I could have told you this several years ago—we learned that the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery Test was incorrectly normed, and that was determined by the Center for Naval Analyses. A fellow named [William H.] "Bill" Sims out there did some brilliant work on it, not for all of the armed forces. He was looking at the Marine Corps, and it turned out he exposed this fact to the Army, Navy, Air Force, as well, that you have many more than you think you have. It translates for us that we may have had at one time close to 40 percent mental group IVs in the Marine Corps during this early '70s period.

This is a wrenching experience. Here we had these high-quality recruits. I don't want to miss that point. We had some super ones in there, and then we had a whole bunch, a substantial number, who were just unqualified, should never have been recruited, and we were wasting money and everything else and trying our patience in the process to turn them around and send them back home, in some cases, in itself a tragedy because some, in fact, did come to the Marine Corps as a

last resort. "Make a man out of me." And we turned him around with another notch in his failure stick, and he said, "Even there they couldn't do anything for me." So we weren't helping him at all. We made matters worse for him.

So that was kind of what we had to put up with, and it cried out for, and subsequently got, better organization. The recruiting establishment was put under the recruit depot commanders, which was a thought of mine that I arrived at early on and couldn't implement until the circumstances were right, and that being [General Louis H.] "Lou" Wilson [Jr.] becoming Commandant in 1975. We'll talk about that when we get to that point in these tapes. You had to have good policies. "This is what we will recruit and this is how you will do it." We had to pick good people and you had to send them to a school to learn how to do it, just like the corporations of America send people to schools to learn how to sell or whatever it is they expect of this individual. As a matter of fact, selling is sort of what this is all about. They had to be well supervised. If you put all that together, you've got a winner, the key being the right people. The COs of RSs and districts, you put them out there, [and] they will perform well.

So let's get off the recruiting part of this, but it relates so much to the other part of Parris Island, which was a problem, and that may be something you want to reserve for the next time we meet.

**Simmons:** We have time.

**Barrow:** That's recruit abuse, of course.

**Simmons:** You mentioned Gene Hadley was your chief of staff. Who were some of the other key officers you had down there?

**Barrow:** Oh, I had Ray Jens [?] was G-3, Cy Walter [?] was at one time one of my RTR commanders, Jim Kurd [?] was a battalion commander. I had a number of young officers that are still around, like Ray [M.] McCormick and Jack [D.] Hines.

**Simmons:** You were satisfied with the quality of officers being sent to you?

**Barrow:** I had some super officers. I also had some who were probably thinking they were on their last tour and didn't have to do a lot of thinking or work too hard. Also, we were given these young officers who mostly had graduated from Basic School, had one tour of FMF duty, and they came there to be series commanders, which is fine, except every now and then they would violate that policy and send me some other kind. Nothing in the world wrong with supply officers. They happen to be leadership-qualified as much as anybody else, perhaps, but they haven't, as a general proposition, as a lieutenant, had much leadership experience as a supply officer.

I remember one time I got a new batch of series commanders in, and there were about six or seven supply officers. You know, that's just wrong, and you have to wonder was it a mistake or was it a deliberate intention to say, "Let him have a few supply officers for a change." The younger officers, the lieutenants and captains and lieutenant colonels, and some of the colonels were good officers, really good officers. I can't complain about that.

**Simmons:** Moving from the officers to the NCOs, the role of the NCO, the drill instructor, or DI, is traditional in Marine Corps boot camp. It's also something that is periodically reexamined and reviewed. Did you undertake such a review?

**Barrow:** Well, I have boundless admiration and respect for drill instructors. Now, that needs to be qualified a little bit. Drill instructors who are doing it right. Of course, that means the majority. Let me make this clear, because I'm going to talk about drill instructors by your question—the majority. I don't know what the majority is, 75 percent, 80, 90? What is it? I don't know. The majority of drill instructors have always and are now doing it right, which is to say making Marines with dignity, toughness, and the kind of results that have been admired for so long. There is an element—or there was I think it's been largely rooted out and eradicated—that believed, and maybe some of them honestly, believed that there are better ways of training recruits than that which is officially prescribed.

When I arrived at Parris Island, I knew very little about what was going on, but for some reason I had a kind of sense that things weren't what they should have been. My first night after the change of command, came home that night, had dinner, and got in my vehicle, my own private car, and drove down [and] turned down to the 1st Recruit Training Battalion area. I walked in, walked up to a barracks, where I could kind of look in and hear at the same time, the ground floor, and here was a drill instructor giving a most impressive performance of reinforcement instruction, something that the recruits had not learned well enough during the day. He had them gathered around. He was standing on a locker box, and he was talking in good language, choice of words. His knowledge of the subject, you could tell, was everything you wanted it to be. It made me feel good.

Meanwhile, I could hear a little bit off in the distance what sounded like ranting and raving. So I went to the scene of that, and here was the exact opposite, this drill instructor who was, in fact, ranting and raving and cursing and using four-letter words, applying names to the individuals concerned, and created an environment where no learning could go on. The only emotion that

would come out of that would be fear. It blocked any learning. I want to tell you that I'm going to make a lot of asides as I go along in this little vignette, but a lot of drill instructors do that sort of thing out of insecurity. "I don't know how to teach the subject, but I can sure as hell rant and rave, and they'll get something out of that. They'll be scared of me, if nothing else."

Well, I then poked and probed. I came away with just what I thought I'd come away with. This thing was a mixed bag of performance. I could even hear some of the language just routinely on the drill fields as they were giving them their drills. So I did some sort of unusual things. I launched a kind of a study to get a handle on it, my own study. From a roster of people, I picked about 23, I think it was, senior staff NCOs who had retired from the Marine Corps in the then-past 30 years, some of them in the 1930s, 1940s, '50s, and '60s. I would get the word to them by phone call, whatever, some of them retired sergeants major, first sergeants, master gunnery sergeants, gunnery sergeants, that the CG would like to see them, one on one. They'd come in, I'd put them at their ease, talk about just . . .

**Simmons:** These were retired in the area?

**Barrow:** Retired in the area, that came on the depot often to do commissary, PX, [and] kept an identity with Parris Island through the years, maybe had served there two or three times, which is usually what they were doing, then retire on their last tour. I'd put them at their ease and talk about various and sundry things. Then as low key as possible, say, "What can you tell me about things around here? How are they going? What do you think about what's going on in Parris Island?" I'm here to tell you that I did not have one who didn't, by one way or another each with a different set of words, say that they did not like what was going on in Parris Island, and specifically it related to the things they saw and heard.

The one thing that they seemed to all have something to say about was the language that was used by drill instructors against the troops. It had become so routine; it was everywhere. A typical 70-year-old former first sergeant would say, "You know, I went through here in 19-whatever, and my drill instructor may have called me a snuffy or a country boy or a hick or something along like that, but he didn't use the kind of language they use now." You see, that had been my experience. I went through San Diego in 1942, and I had two not-red-hot drill instructors, as I look back on it. They were both corporals, as a matter of fact. But they never demeaned anyone in that platoon. No one was singled out in any sort of abusive language. That held a lot of meaning for me.

Let me tell you what I mean by that. I belong to the school—maybe I'm the only member of



it—but I believe that if you verbally abuse someone, and obviously he cannot return it, he can't say, "Well, same to you," or come back at you, and you do it repetitiously. You keep doing it. You have unwittingly, perhaps, but in your own mind you have reduced him to a kind of thing instead of a person. "This is a nothing. He's not anything," which makes it easy to do the next step, abusing physically. By abusing him verbally, you have rendered him to a thing, an inanimate sort of object, which, in the second step, deserves to be kicked. "Get out of my way," sort of thing.

**Simmons:** Or if you're no longer getting the reaction from the verbal abuse, you go a little bit further to get a reaction.

**Barrow:** Yes. So I put that in my list of things to consider. I went over to Naval Hospital Beaufort [in South Carolina] and went to see the head of orthopedics, whose name happened to be Mueller. He later became a well-known orthopedic man in the Navy and his specialty was sports medicine before he came in the Navy. Several years later, he put together, with another doctor, one of my son's feet that was badly mangled in an automobile accident, so I've known him for a long time. I didn't send for him; I went over there. I said, "Doctor Mueller, you see a lot of broken bones and one thing and another. Tell me about it." I didn't want to say what I'm asking for. He could read that into it, I guess.

I really don't like to say this, but it has to be said. He said, "Well, general, last year . . ." This would be 1972. This year I might have been doing this in, say, December, but I don't remember exactly. I got there in October. He said, "I treated 23 broken mandibles," broken jaw, if you will. "All of them were supposed to have been recruits who fell in the shower or on the obstacle course log." He said, "But you know, recruits talk to their doctor plus doctors also have an understanding of how fractures can occur. Falling down in the shower is highly suspect." He said, "I'd have to tell you that the majority of those recruits were hit with something, a fist or something."

You understand? Getting the picture? I did a little checking to find out how many of my officers, company commanders and series commanders, had themselves been recruits. In this case, either Parris Island or San Diego. I think I came up with 12, as I remember, one of whom happened to be my aide. Most of them had gone through Parris Island. If it was 12, maybe 8 went through Parris Island and 4 through San Diego. I had them in one on one. They had no idea why they were coming. I sat them down and said, "You went through recruit training here in 1965." "Yes, sir." "Tell me about it." Some would volunteer and some I had to extract it a little bit. "Do you think you witnessed or you had visited on you something we'd call recruit abuse?" And to a man, they all

said, “Yes, sir.” Then they were willing and even anxious, if you will, to describe it. It took forms that would blow your mind, demonstrating, if you will, the uncanny ability of people’s imaginations with respect to hazing and that sort of thing.

Let me digress and tell you what recruit abuse is. Recruit abuse in other forms, in other institutions, is tolerated all over America, but we cannot and should not, and the public does not expect us to, have it in what we call recruit training. Recruit abuse is like hazing in most universities. It is any kind of bizarre thing that you can get another human being to do that humiliates him, embarrasses him, and more often than not [is] enjoyed by the person who does it or demonstrates that he has the upper hand or fills in where he has some deficiency in being able to teach. He substitutes hazing for constructive, reinforcing kind of teaching. It can be everything from we know the hazing things that go on [include] pushing something across the room with your nose, drinking something that you shouldn’t drink that’s unpleasant to taste. It’s unlimited what can come under the form of hazing.

But in recruit abuse, it has all of these hazing elements, and then they add to that one other thing that maybe you’ll find in some military schools. If you go back far enough, you’d find in VMI [Virginia Military Institute] and The Citadel and one or two other places, perhaps, in which there is physical abuse. The individual might be given a short punch. None of these things are life threatening; they’re not going to kill the individual. They’re not going to do anything that threatens his life, but as I’ve indicated already, it might break your jaw if it’s done that way. So these young officers all had a story to tell, and it ranged back through the 1960s.

So then I came up with this theory, which I still hold to this day, that back in the 1930s and through World War II, everyone was so concentrated on giving these young Americans the basics, the fundamentals necessary to go learn a little bit more and go to war, that you didn’t have time, the inclination, and you had no prior experience that you had been a part of yourself to abuse your recruits. I really think that went on through post-World War II. I think it went on into Korea. But somewhere, it crept in that some drill instructors knew best how to train recruits, and the fact that it was at variance with the prescribed way, well, the people who did that didn’t really understand that you’ve got to be tough; you’ve got to really let ’em have it.

So when the [Staff Sergeant Matthew] McKeon incident happened in 1956 at Parris Island, in which a drill instructor, having been under the influence of alcohol and coming in late at night, took his platoon out into the tidal areas of Parris Island and ran into a creek that had a lot of current

in it because the tide was changing, and they got bogged down in the mud and six of them drowned, he was put on trial. But really the drill instructors were put on trial. He was a surrogate for hundreds of drill instructors, because the conventional wisdom of the time was that he wasn't doing anything that others hadn't been doing, maybe not exactly that, but something like that, taking it unto himself to do something that shouldn't be done.

So the drill instructors deeply resented not so much that he had violated the law, but that he had been caught doing something that was going to make it bad for them. If they were mad at McKeon, that's what they were mad at, that he was stupid to have done something that had such a high risk to it, that if it failed or something went awry, it would make mischief for the rest of them. They really resented . . . and again I keep saying this, it's a generalization. Who is this they? It may be 50 percent, it may be 20 percent, I don't know what. A large number of them also resented the organizational supervision, command changes, that took place after the McKeon incident of 1956, in which prior to then, recruit training was totally under the province of drill instructors with a minimum officer supervision, sort of a one-layer supervision over it. And it was really a benign kind of supervision. It wasn't any officers walking around sticking their nose into various facets of recruit training and taking notes or correcting people or bringing them in and dressing them down for doing something they shouldn't be doing. It was a benign supervision.

Well, all of a sudden, you've got a brigadier general sent down there to be the CG of recruit training underneath the recruit depot commander. [Then-Brigadier] General [Wallace M.] Greene was down there, and he brought in this array of high-quality officers that were going to be a part of the supervision, and they set about to reorganize, and that's how you ended up with the RTR regiment and three training battalions and two or more companies in each battalion, and two or more series in each company, and finally, the platoon. Well, everything above platoon is some form of officer supervision—series commander and company commander and battalion commander and the RTR commander, CG himself. He saw it as just a totally unacceptable arrangement and one in which his integrity, his very being as a Marine and as a drill instructor was being intruded upon, being challenged.

Out of that—Bob Barrow talking—out of that I feel that late '50s, that was '56, early '60s, over time he began to say things, not really say them, but just be talking: "You've got all this officer supervision, you're checking and double checking everything you do. If you think we have been bad, you haven't seen anything. We're going to really be bad, and you ain't gonna catch us." So

much of what was done in recruit abuse during the '60s—and I got there in '72, early '70s—was very carefully concealed. The most open thing was verbal abuse, which put me on to all the rest of it in the first place, as I've already indicated. But the physical abuse was very carefully concealed, and there was intimidation of those who practiced that perpetrated on those who didn't want to practice it.

So you had a body of drill instructors who wanted to do it the right way, but felt they couldn't if they wanted to survive in this club that they had joined; so they, unwillingly, sometimes went along with it. Some became half-hearted abusers and some not at all, they just didn't play the game. But they were all silent. Even the good ones would not say, "This guy I'm working with or who's in the next platoon over there is a real bad guy." You had the Drill Instructor School, which is a great school. Even when I got there, it was a good school and had some super people in it who are now sergeants major in the Marine Corps. [Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps David W.] Sommers was one of the instructors. I was very flattered that in his interview, when he became a sergeant major in the Marine Corps, that he made some very warm reference to me out of that association we had together at Parris Island. But that's the quality of some of the people we had down there. So I had a lot to work with who wanted to do the right thing.

But the Drill Instructor School, which people brought from the field under the so-called commander's recommendation and screening, would graduate, prepare to go out, and take over a platoon as an assistant drill instructor. We uncovered the fact that there was a small, very small, clique who got these graduates immediately and surreptitiously, clandestinely had what one would call a postgraduate course, which had some dramatic moments like one of these types, always picture-book-looking, of course, holding the recruit training SOP [standard operating procedure] in one hand and the hat, which is a symbol of the drill instructor, in the other, and say, "Now, we can do it one of two ways. This way, which you've been screwing around with for the last six weeks, or we can do it," and he'd put his hat carefully on his head, "this way." And wouldn't even let them answer, throw the SOP over on the floor some place, and then begin to tell them about how you can do things to a recruit and it not show itself, what kinds of abuse you could do and wouldn't get in trouble.

Was it bad? Very bad. Very bad. Was it wrong? Very wrong. I get emotional. That kind of thing has absolutely no place in this great thing called the United States Marine Corps. Are there elements of it that sadden me? Very much. What, in particular? The large numbers of people who

used to write me letters when I started leading the so-called reform. A lot of people don't realize it started as soon as I took over as CG down there. Each one who's gone since then thinks he's discovered it and whatever good has happened, he was a major contributor. I don't care who gets the credit. But I got a lot of mail from former Marines who say, "What's going on? When I went through recruit training, my drill instructor used to let me have it," or "I remember we had a boy from such and such a place who wasn't worth a d——n, and by the time the drill instructor knocked some sense in his head, he was a great Marine." "It was good enough for me, it has been visited on me, and the results were—look at me, how good I am. Why isn't it to be visited on everyone else?" You'd be amazed! And I'm talking about educated people, some of them who entertained positions in the civilian world or wherever that were to be envied, you know. People of substance write you these kinds of letters.

Anyway, what do you do about it? Well, I'm a big believer in direct communication, which is to say I don't know how effective I am at it, but if you don't think you're reasonably effective, you have no business employing it. But I like to mount a locker box, if you will, and talk to people that need to be talked to, straight on, not put out memoranda, not say, "There will be no more," and all this. Get to 'em! So I had increments. You can't get them all at once because it had to be with platoons. I had increments of drill instructors in the theater, and that's one of the things that's missing in the files that I was talking about, because it was tape recorded and transcribed.

I simply identified the problem, so they could not say I didn't know what I was talking about or that their concealment of it was still working. I identified the problem. I talked about verbal abuse, many of the same things I've already talked about. I talked about the dehumanizing aspects of it, that it didn't contribute to training, that there would be no more of it, and that disciplinary action was going to be not something like a slap on the wrist, which was the only thing they had ever experienced up to McKeon. And some of them, I'm sure, had to learn the hard way. But we'd take it all away, whatever it took. Then I had all the officers in and did the same thing. Did it help? Yes. It freed the fence-sitters. It freed the drill instructors who wanted to do the right thing but felt intimidated.

On New Year's Day 1973, I'd been there three months. New Year's Day, middle of the afternoon, a knock on my quarters door, and here's a lady with three little children, curtain climbers all, little ones. She said, "General Barrow, may I please come in?" I said, "Please do." Once she got in, she said, "General, I just don't know what I'm doing. If my husband knew I was here, he would

die. But I'm here—my husband's a drill instructor—to thank you for freeing him to be the kind of drill instructor he wants to be.” Now, there was obviously more conversation than that. Patty entertained the three little ones while she and I talked. That was just a small, very small manifestation of a result that was obtained by just direct appeal and along with it, not threats, but the promise that if we don't get our house together, stand by, because we were going to turn the screws a little bit more beyond just appealing, which is what we had to do.

I had my aide at the time, who years later said, “General, about that time you were launching off on this knock-it-off business, there were two people in Parris Island who believed in you.” I said, “What?” He said, “Yes, sir. Your wife, Mrs. Barrow, and me.” [Laughter] But you had to persuade a lot of the officers. He was exaggerating, of course, but you had a lot of officers saying, “What is he doing, stirring up and changing things around here?”

But we won, bit by bit, [and] began to have results. The ultimate result is when a drill instructor, any drill instructor anywhere, puts another one on report. When that happens, you have arrived, because it's a see-no-evil, hear-no-evil, speak-no-evil club for the most part. I can tell you that before I left there, we had that kind of development. I won't go through a lot of specific cases. I'll just give you one.

We had a recruit who had . . . I used to talk to all the Drill Instructor Schools twice, and I used to tell them, which will lead me to my story I'm about to tell you in a minute, I'd say, “You know, the best kept secret on Parris Island is that somehow drill instructors don't believe or understand that recruits write home, or they erroneously conclude that they have absolute and total, complete control over their subjects.” I said, “These recruits write home and some of them may be lying and some of them may not, as to what's happened to them in recruit training. Heretofore it hasn't been looked into with great thoroughness, because there were those in the system who believed, you know, ‘There's nothing to this,’ and threw it away. But we are looking at all of them. It's interesting that as we check some of them out, they are, in fact, true. You bring in a few more witnesses who happen to usually be recruits, who reinforce the initial accusation made in the letter to the mother, which went to the congressman, which went to the Commandant, and comes to me, and so we root out an evil.” Anyway, I used to talk to them along those lines. What good it did, I'm not sure. I hope it did.

But I remember we had a drill instructor who was the epitome. He was “Mr. It” in appearance, everything else. He was caught with his hand in the cookie jar and then some, and

ended up being put in the brig. Unheard of. No drill instructor had ever been thrown in the brig on charges. I had people come to me in the command and say, “General, please don’t let that happen. You can release him.” I said, “Nuh-uh. We’re going to let him stay there until he starts singing,” which is exactly what he did, 96 legal pages worth, like plea bargaining. “I’m guilty and I’ll tell you everything I know about what we do and how we do it.”

Before that happened (we’ll call him Staff Sergeant X), he was so popular and so highly thought of, that even among the officers there was the feeling that he had been unjustly accused or, if indeed he did anything wrong, it was an anomaly or he was provoked. Down in the recruit training regiment, when some of the young officers—some—word filtered up to me that they were organizing something called Staff Sergeant X defense fund [and] had every officer in the RTR. I told you I like direct communication. I wish I had recorded that, because that may have been my finest hour. It was mostly walking up one side and down the other of any of those whose feet fit that shoe. But that’s just how bad it was. I mean, it was just in the system.

I had a very senior retired Marine come call on me about a drill instructor that was being court-martialed. We had a number of those. The wrong he’d done was have a recruit repeatedly, one night after another, sleep in a broom closet. You know, there’s an awful lot of Marines that laugh when you say that. It didn’t hurt him. But I had this individual come to me, and he said, “You know,” paces up and down, a good friend of mine, in my office, he said, “Bob, this drill instructor who’s got this court-martial, I understand that the only thing he did was had a recruit sleep in a broom closet. Now, really, old friend, think about that. That may not be right, but it isn’t so bad as to merit a court-martial, is it?” I said, “Well, sleeping in a broom closet, that may not be certainly life threatening, but let me ask you this, my friend. If we kind of forgave that, which dismissing charges would be, how about if he was made to sleep in a Dempsey Dumpster?” [Tape interruption]

I said, “If we forgive the broom closet, what about the Dempsey Dumpster? We have had recruits been made to sleep in a Dempsey Dumpster.” And I said, “Let me say this. If we decide, well, that’s worse than a broom closet, but that’s not too bad, and we forgive the Dempsey Dumpster, what about those manhole covers over there in the 1st Battalion squad bay on the first floor, which, if you can get enough brute power and strength, you can take them up and that 18 inches of crawl space underneath the squad bay, you can stuff one or more recruits down in there and put the lid back on and let that be his assigned bunk space? Do we forgive that?” And to his credit, he said, “I see your point,” and departed.

But I had a lot of resistance to trying to clean up what was so manifestly a bad situation, and to have so few people allied with me was amazing. I had a chaplain . . . the only encouragement I got with things like the DI's wife who came by that New Year's Day. I had a chaplain, after he got to the next duty station in Iceland, wrote me a beautiful letter, also in these files I'm talking about, in which he said, "General, I did two and a half years (or whatever it was) at Parris Island. Before you came, I would no more think of letting my wife and children go down to the recruit training areas than flying to the moon. The language was blue and you just wouldn't do it." He said, "But I'm not sure what else has happened, but you cleaned up the language. And before I left there, my family used to attend recruit service from time to time, because it's always great fun to do that, and we'd never thought anything about bringing them around in recruit training."

So let me say something about what we talked about first with respect to Parris Island, something that I never said at Parris Island, the biggest silence I kept at Parris Island, that in dealing with recruit abuse, you could not ever leave the impression that provocation was involved, because they'd fall back on that for sure. But provocation was involved. I say it now, as I've said it in more recent times. The quality of recruits that were being sent there, in some instances, were so bad that even the best of drill instructors, I'm sure, from time to time lost their cool and hit a recruit.

Suppose you're standing in front of some wise-acting kid from someplace, who is, by his look and everything else, just defiant. He's not going to do anything you tell him to do. If you move in on him with commanding language, tell him by gosh, this is what he can do, and he spits in your face, this happens. I know it's happened. It takes a pretty cool drill instructor just to get his hankie out and wipe his face. The normal reaction is to let him have it.

So I'm sure that some of those 23 broken mandibles and some of the things that happened were a consequence of provocation. So if you clean up that part of the thing, that helps to get better recruits who come bright eyed, bushy tailed, who want to learn, and present themselves in such a way that the drill instructor doesn't feel like, "The only way I'm going to get this guy's attention is to thump him." You follow me? I think that had a lot to do with it. So whatever, the results have been forthcoming, slowly for sure, but forthcoming and the story doesn't end with my leaving Parris Island. It continues in my next duty assignment, which we'll get into if not this afternoon, the next time.

Another thing that you could not do, I just said you can't ever let the drill instructor say that he was provoked, was the reason why he did something. You could not, particularly as the CG, in



any way, shape, or form demonstrate sympathy or forgiveness of wrongdoing on the part of the drill instructor. That's rooted in several things. He's handpicked to come there; he's not just a run-of-the-mill character.

Before I left there, I had introduced psychiatric screening. That was another thing, almost like a delegation of my people came to see me. "Sir, we don't want drill instructors to think somebody's looking in their head to determine whether they can do the job or not in this psychiatric screening." But I went ahead with it. We had three psychiatrists at Parris Island, three psychiatrists and three clinical psychologists, and they had a technique to screen everyone who was assigned there to go to DI school, and they would find some small percentage, but every time, two, three, four, or five that they would say, "We would urge you not to let him be a drill instructor." There were some things in his background as a child, maybe, that showed that he would be intolerant or would fly off the handle or couldn't handle stress very well, whatever. So we had psychiatric screening.

What I was going to say is that he is picked by his commanding officer, screened there, screened again at Parris Island, including psychiatric screening. He is sent to a six-week Drill Instructor School, which teaches him how to be a DI. They don't all graduate, so the *crème de la crème* is there upon graduation. He has been taught out of a book which is about three and a half inches thick, which I hate to say, but it's perhaps the most finite document of dos and don'ts that any institution has come up with. It's everything about recruit training and then some, what you can do, what you can't do. It's really too much, but that's his bible. He knows it and he's repeatedly told that you must . . .

**Simmons:** Was that SOP brought up to that level while you were there?

**Barrow:** Oh, yes. I'm not proud of that, but they put so much emphasis on what's in writing.

**Simmons:** Let's talk about that a little bit. How was that developed?

**Barrow:** There was one there already, and it had a lot of dos and don'ts in it, but what we did was just through the senior staff NCOs you have sergeants major, you have company first sergeants—senior DI, he's called—and you have enough officer and staff NCOs in leadership there who can set themselves apart close to recruit training and understand what techniques need to be tightened up, what loopholes eliminated, making it always, hopefully, as clear as possible. See, what's going on here is this, the reason why you have such a document with all the finite dos and don'ts. Recruit training, to keep it as tough as it is—and it is tough in the Marine Corps—necessarily lets the drill

instructor go right up to that fine line between what's legal and what's illegal. We don't give them a big no-man's-land like I think the other Services do in a lot of other places where you can only go this far, which is far short of where you really could go and still be considered legal. We let them go right up to the line that's between legal and illegal. And to let him do that, make recruit training as tough as it is, you've got to spell out a lot of things. I don't like saying that, but you do. That's studied and kind of becomes the bible, and they're always reading it, looking at it. "The SOP says . . ." you know.

So by the time he gets on the drill field, he's in a probationary period, to begin with, sort of on trial. When he gets really assigned to a platoon, you must say that he is a professional. I think that any institution necessarily is less forgiving of a real professional than they would be some nitty who doesn't know any better. I used to say if I went to a quack and complained of my throat hurting, and he took out my vocal cords instead of my tonsils, I had nobody to blame but myself. He's a quack; he's unqualified. But I said if a doctor, a true honest-to-God surgeon, did that, he's subject to a malpractice suit. I'd say, "That's the way you are. When you do something wrong, your wrongness is greater than it would be from somebody who didn't know any better, who was not a real professional."

Well, part of that is also what I'm about to say. The CG could never demonstrate any sympathy or forgiveness, because to do so would be a signal. No place sends signals like Parris Island. That would be a signal that, "He has to say these other things, and even once in a while demonstrate his toughness about abuse, but deep in his heart he's one of us. After all, he went through recruit training in San Diego and was briefly kept there as a drill instructor. He's fundamentally on our side. Don't you know that he let old Sergeant So-and-So go back on the drill field last week?" Well, that's a perfect example. I didn't have too have many, but I remember the first one. He came in; he looked like he had stepped out of the Marine Corps bandbox for drill instructors. He was squared away; he had it everywhere except the hat, and the hat had been taken off of him because he'd been found guilty of something. He came in, and he made an impressive appearance and impressive words about how he had learned his lesson and his love of the Marine Corps and recruit training, and he wanted to be back on the drill field, that that's where he was destined to be. You know, the whole nine yards.

I let him unwind, and I said, "You were in that class of so-and-so, and you heard me say." "Yes, sir." Then I went through a bunch of things to remind him of the fact that he knew better. It's

one of the few times I've ever been, you might say, rude at something like this. I said, "You get the hell out of here. The answer is no." I made sure that kind of got around. I didn't have to make sure it would. I had a couple of them try that. But if I had said, "Oh, well, yeah, okay," man, the signal would have gone, "CG, we got him!"

Because, you see, the young officers, I talked to them, every little group that came in. They came in by the twos and threes, fours and fives, young lieutenants. I sat them down in my office and I held a school, telling them many of the same things I'm just telling you, and charging them to be particularly vigilant and honest and to call a spade a spade. "Let somebody else decide whether it merits a write-up and be charged and one thing and another, but you learn that SOP too. And when somebody does something wrong, charge him. Don't stand around debating with yourself whether you should or not." I reminded them of how they, too, could be brought in.

This is another theory of mine. It's not a theory; it's almost a fact. If I drew on some of my experiences, I think I probably would make it a fact. But a drill instructor will get a young, innocent, brand-new arrival, series commander and he will test him. Those few who might do this. He'll do some little small thing that he shouldn't do, but it's so small that the officer doesn't call him on this. That officer doesn't. Another officer would say, "Hey, Jones, it may not be a big thing, but . . . and let's don't do that anymore." So he doesn't call him on it. So then he ups the ante and does a little bit more, and he doesn't get called.

Each time he does that, he is conditioning his subject (in this case, the young lieutenant series commander) to become in effect his protector, unwittingly, and ultimately he gets to the point where he cannot put him on report for something because he's missed doing that so many times before that particular occasion came. Now, some might do it and some might not, and I'm sure that there's been some DIs and series commanders who had discussions about it. "Well, you let me do this," and get out of it that way. But there was this subtle—what's the word I'm searching for—taking over of the commander if he came in with the attitude, "I've been assigned here and I know that you drill instructors are water walkers. You're the world's greatest, so I'm not going to stand in the way of your making Marines. You know best. I'm just going to be standing over here in case you need me." And they love that. Oh, they love that!

Well, once we had the then-Commandant come visit, and I spent a long time in preparation, focusing primarily on the recruiting part of our problems. You see, I was signing at that time between 30 and 40 discharges a day, and I bothered to read every one of them. Almost without

exception, they all went through a process called the depot aptitude board, which they appeared before a board which both had some substance to it, but often it was a formality because of the circumstances employed in there was so gross that there was no need to be asking them questions. "Let's get it over with." Included in the proceedings preliminary to the board itself, almost again without exception, was the interview and sometimes several interviews with the neuropsychiatric unit people. A lot of people don't realize this, and we needed them. At Parris Island, as I said earlier, we had three psychiatrists and three clinical psychologists, who would get in the heads of some of these recruits who would attempt suicide or go UA [unauthorized absence]. It wasn't uncommon to have 25 or 30 recruits UA out of Parris Island. You'd say, "How did they get off?" Most of them wouldn't; they'd be hiding all over the island. These psychiatrists made their reports, all of which I read, and more often than not, my hair would stand on end. Some 18-year-old, high school dropout, mental group IV, who's been in bad with the law about X number of times, came from a home that was broken, or he witnessed his father practice incest on his sister, and his mother had two or three boyfriends, and everybody drank. You know, all this is there, and you say, "G——n it, how did he get here in the first place? As a matter of fact, how did he even get this far with that kind of horrible background?" I used to sign 30 or 40 of those a day, so I saved a bunch of juicy ones, and that was part of my documentation for General [Robert E.] Cushman [Jr.] when he came to visit. We were well prepared for him. I gave the briefing.

**Simmons:** Can you put a time on this?

**Barrow:** [In] '73. Early '73, as I recall. [In] '73. I believe that if something's very important, that the commander himself should be the speaker. I never held with the idea that, "All right, now, general, we're glad to have you here. Captain Jones, will you give the briefing?" Baloney! If you have strong feelings about it, you give the briefing. So I gave the briefing, and among other things, I drew the training aides. One of them was a barrel. They later called it "Barrow's Barrel." The barrel represented the quality of people. Here we had a barrel that maybe was two-thirds good Marines, of which part of it was super-good Marines, who was just the all-American kid who succeeded in whatever he did, a whole bunch who were very trainable and good, and then you had this other part. I had all the background, and I had chapter and verse. I think I raised the hair on his head.

Then we left there and looked at a little training. I told him, I said, "Now, general, tomorrow I want you to see some recruits who have just arrived." The next morning, he knew we were to have colors at 0800. He was going to take colors, which I know you've done down there. It's kind of

colorful at Parris Island. He stayed in my quarters. Got him up early the next morning. I told people down in recruit receiving. Recruits, you see, come in almost every night. They usually arrive around 0100 by bus from Charleston. You might have anywhere from a handful, 35 or 40 to 150. I said, "Keep them until the Commandant and I get there. Don't start your 0200 in the morning cutting hair and all that. Just hang onto them." I wanted him to see what he was getting in the Marine Corps.

So here was this formation of World War II temporary wooden barracks, squad bay. There must have been 150 or more recruits in there, in every kind of scruffy-looking dress, every now and then one who was well dressed, and long hair and beards, and just everything you can think of. Clearly, General Cushman was ill at ease after the short time of my slowly walking in front of each one. He never asked any questions, but in lieu of same, I asked the questions. "Why are you here?" And the answers would be something like, "Nothing else to do." Real great motivating kind of answer. Or, "I don't know." Or, "I was looking for a job." Just all the worst kind of answers. Nobody said, "Sir, I want to serve my country. I want to be a Marine." [Laughter]

We left there, and I could see he didn't feel good about it. I said, "We can work with a lot of those people. We can make Marines out of them, but a lot of them shouldn't be here, sir. They shouldn't be here." I said, "Now I want to prove that point." And at the other squad bay, A-shaped barracks, across, down the hall, in the next squad bay, I had about 16 or 20 recruits drawn up under the charge of then-Lieutenant O'Donnell [?], who is now Lieutenant Colonel O'Donnell at Headquarters. I've kept up with him through the years and saw him a couple of years ago, and I was surprised to see him. I said, "I didn't know you stayed in the Marine Corps." And you might say, "Why am I surprised?" I'll tell you why, because I think that group that stayed in the Marine Corps after going through the experiences of, say, '72, '73, '74, '75, they merit special commendation, because they endured and, in their own minds, prevailed, and here they are. They had their baptism of fire of a different sort, in the personnel business.

Anyway, O'Donnell, I picked him because he was a good talker; he was articulate, smart, and he had memorized a little thumbnail sketch, each one of these. I said, "Now, general, I'm going to show you some recruits that are going to be discharged within the next day or two, who shouldn't have been recruited." And he says, "Aren't we going to be late for morning colors?" I said, "I think we'll make morning colors, general. If we don't, this is transcendent in importance." He says, "All right."

And here was O'Donnell. His spiel went something like this: "Private Jones, two years in

confinement in the Kentucky Minimum Security Prison, charged with . . .” and he’d go through a whole long list of bad things, you know. He’d move on to the next one. Well, I have to tell you that, in a sense, this backfired on me, because after the really day-and-a-half visit, when it was all over, I gave him the packet which had a lot of documentation by name, name of recruiter, and why he shouldn’t have been recruited, and why he was being discharged, the whole chapter and verse, and a lot of my personal emotional thoughts in this thing.

He took it back to Washington. I don’t know how people would regard something like that. I was certainly not disrespectful; it wasn’t a personal affront. I thought I was doing what any good commander would do, calling it to his superior’s attention, things that he could only correct through his staff at Headquarters. But he took all this back with him and turned it over to the Assistant Commandant.

**Simmons:** Who at that time was?

**Barrow:** [General Earl] E. E. Anderson.

**Simmons:** Who, once upon a time, had been the director of Personnel.

**Barrow:** Director of Personnel. Understood personnel business exceedingly well. A very bright man. I am drawing these conclusions, that instead of taking my package and reading it and getting the lessons out of it that everyone who read it—and you would, too, if I showed it to you today—would get, they took it as an affront and a charge and, “Whatever we’re going to do with this, let’s prove him wrong.”

So they went down, case by case, trying to answer why Private Jones was recruited by Sergeant Smith in Baltimore [Maryland] and didn’t do well in recruit training, in each case kind of trying to put the monkey back on our back. “We sent you the best there is out there, and you aren’t doing very well with it.”

Life was never the same thereafter. My fitness report the next period—I didn’t even think about this until I was going through this when they were all sent to me—I’d been ranked with, I think, eight major generals, the top five. You know how they rank the truth tellers. And the other three, whoever they were, were the other three rated below outstanding. After this event, I’m over there in one of the three on the left, with one of them, I guess, moved up, unless we lost a major general or something. Five of them were in the outstanding, and I’m one of the three that’s over to the left. The words were different. “He continues to perform his duty,” sort of thing. Nothing about what I was doing. “He is attacking the problem.”

I'd been summoned to Washington, due to Jack [N.] Anderson. The columnist said abuse was rampant at Parris Island, and the Commandant asked me what I thought about it. I said, "He's right," and sort of gave him a little chapter and verse. So from that he said, "Well, get it squared away." I didn't need him to tell me that. I was doing that already. So my fitness report during that period read something like, "He's attacking the problem with vigor and will surely make great progress." [Laughter] Then after my putting the monkey on the back of Headquarters, which is part of the problem, I get this thing that says, "He continues to do his duties," sort of fitness report. It's amusing and doesn't bother me in the slightest. But it was just a manifestation of the situation in which we were.

Hell, I couldn't even come to Washington! I was persona non grata. They said, "We don't need talk like this. We'll scratch it out if we have to." I remember once I was summoned to come up for something, and I said to [Lieutenant General] Foster [C.] LaHue, who was chief of staff at the time, I said, "Oh, great. It will give me a chance, after that meeting in the afternoon, I'll stay over and the next morning be able to run a lot of errands around Headquarters." Every general in the field had errands to run at Headquarters. A lot of times it's to help somebody that needs some help in assignments or the 101 little things. And here the chief of staff said to me, "Well, wait a minute. Let me check that out and I'll get back at you." So I thought, "That's strange," and went about my business.

An hour or so later, the phone rang, and he said, "About your staying over, no, you'd better get back that afternoon." I found that in the category of unbelievable, and I'm not sure who he checked it out with, but I had my thoughts. You know, I was Commandant for four years, and it was a very common thing, every week or so, for me to walk through corridors somewhere up there and see some general from the field that I didn't know was in headquarters and couldn't care. He had some legitimate business, or he wouldn't be there. I never once said, "Why are you here instead of not back with your troops?" or something like that. You've got to have trust and confidence and believe in people. But that was not a healthy situation, no.

Well, I can talk at great length about Parris Island, and I told you that we loved it and there were a lot of good things. There are overwhelming numbers of people that even in those days came out, great young Marines. The beautiful thing about it is all the problems I've talked about have been corrected. I'd almost swear on the Bible, I am so convinced. I know that recruits that we're getting are superior, better than we've ever had in the history of the Marine Corps. I'm equally

confident that we've just about eradicated the recruit abuse problem. It may pop up once in a while here and there, but it certainly isn't endemic and bad like it once was.

**Simmons:** You mentioned earlier in the session, Parris Island was and still is responsible for the recruit training of all women Marines. You also mentioned the WM [woman Marine] facility that was opened while you were there, like a girls' college. Would you describe this process as it took place while you were commanding general? Who were some of your key women officers? Were there any particular problems with recruit training of women?

**Barrow:** We had a totally different arrangement than presently exists. We had a major or lieutenant colonel as CO of the battalion, and companies underneath. They were autonomous; they reported directly to the CG. Now they're under the recruit training regiment. We had company women, Marine captains, commanding officers, and we had drill instructors, series would be a woman Marine, and we had drill instructors who would be women Marines. We had males who taught drill when I got there. But that was the extent of their participation, taught drill.

To answer your question, I had some good officers. [Lieutenant Colonel] Jenny Wrenn was one. Poor Jenny is now deceased.

**Simmons:** Did she die?

**Barrow:** Oh, yes, died of cancer, a long, lingering death. She was down in Beaufort, then they moved her back to her family in Missouri. She was in a home of some sort.

[Major] Gail [M.] Reals was there. Not too long after I got there, I had several request masts. It's the first time in my life I've had request masts in which I couldn't really tell you what it was that they wanted to see me about when the request mast was over. Does that sound strange? Because a request mast ought to be very precise. "I'm here to find out why I didn't get my pay for six months," or something. [Chuckles] But it would be some little fuzzy thing. After I'd had several of these, I sort of raised the question to myself, "What's going on here?" I'm sure that [inaudible] would eat me up alive to hear me say what I'm about to say, but I came to the conclusion that these women were so much in a woman's world that they just liked to be able to talk to a man or somehow feel that they'd given their problem, however small it may have been, that was not really why they were doing it, to a father figure.

Anyway, I guess I was on the right track. I told my people, I said, "I'm going to put some males down there in that women recruit training battalion." We had a sergeant major, male, and executive officer. General Kurd [?] had the challenge on that. At the time, the women officers were



not resentful; they thought it was great. Sergeant Major Melton was, indeed, sort of like a father figure. He was handpicked. He was not a hard-boiled, swearing kind of guy. He just looked like the kind of man that a woman, a young girl could talk to or look up to.

Anyway, Jenny Wrenn and others told me over and over again what a good thing it was to have done that, and if I was right about my perception on this, it must have answered that. And that was locked in. But you see, a lot of the things that happened in women recruit training, much of which I don't agree with. I don't like to see inch by inch, more and more women being charged with or trying to perform like men. I don't like to see women crawling in the mud, sliding on their backs underneath barbed wire, shooting rifles, and throwing grenades. They're not going to have to do that. I don't give a d——n what some of these people say about the next war is going to be all inclusive, nobody will be spared. Well, I just don't like some of the things. I don't like to see women carrying swords, and I forbade it when I was Commandant. Now they're all carrying swords. I was right up front with it. They don't look good carrying swords. I haven't seen a woman yet who looked good carrying a sword. You know, their hips are wide and it makes the sword stick out. God, I'd be . . . let's scratch all this. I'd be run out of town.

Yet, you know, we're on this subject. I know I'll be branded as a typical male chauvinist, but I think women are super and I don't believe they should be relegated entirely to the bedroom and the kitchen. I think they can do anything a man can do—almost. The question is: do we want them to in each and every instance? Some instances, yes. Some, no. Combat is one of the nos, and we don't want to even be inching toward it. They are superior performers, out perform the males in many areas. But anyway, they love to tamper with that part of recruit training down there, but then all recruit training is subject to being tampered with.

You want to send good people to Parris Island. Keep a sharp lookout and be vigilant, have a strong command presence at all levels to deal with the things we've been talking about all afternoon. But when you pick one of those guys, he also is in the same body as the guy who wants to do something. He doesn't want to just go down there and be vigilant. He wants to make it better. So d——n it, they all want to change it under the name of fine-tuning or something. They want to change recruit training, move something here, add this. It's the simplicity of it that's partly what I said about the big document of dos and don'ts in the SOP. It is the simplicity of it that has stood the test of time. Like I said earlier, two things are learned and not taught: discipline and the spirit of being a Marine. You don't teach that, but it's learned. A young man leaves as a certified U.S.-

stamped man when he goes home, and that's really what he went there to have happen to him in the first place.

**Simmons:** You virtually answered two questions that I was going to ask, just to put the cap on it. How would you compare the quality of the woman recruit you were receiving at that time with the male recruit?

**Barrow:** Oh, much better. To begin with, I have to be careful, because I could be off by a fraction, but as I recall, we had 100 percent high school graduates, which answers one of those things we talked about earlier. Just the opposite. I mean, we had very good women. We had minimal problems, and of course, there wasn't any charges of abuse. I can only think of one or two examples of recruiter malpractice, in which he recruited a woman who shouldn't have been recruited. And there may have been others who fell in the category of eligible, but it's a judgment thing. Take some 19-year-old with a baby. She shouldn't be recruited in the Marine Corps, although I think, as I recall, by law she wasn't to be excluded. If you had to, just talk her out of it, as opposed to looking for some way to legally disqualify her. But that whole array of performance, the things going on over there, was kind of a pleasure.

**Simmons:** You virtually answered this. You may want to add a word or two to it. Your personal philosophy, in terms of capabilities and limitations, as to the role of women in the Marine Corps?

**Barrow:** Well, I have kind of answered it. I have to be honest, and I've looked at myself any number of times, and I reckon I am old-fashioned. I reckon I tend to put women on a pedestal and think of them as very special. To think of them in terms of being mothers and wives, I know that a lot of things that I think about women run counter to the thoughts a lot of women have with respect to how they think about it.

I should also offer my credentials. My experience with women is no better than that of any other man, nor my understanding, but I've seen three wars and I've been in a lot of tough places where even the male animal withstood some severe tests and many of them came back in an unpleasant arrangement. I cannot in any way, shape, or form reconcile any argument that says women should get closer and closer, by changing policy, to that kind of environment. Whereas I come from an experience of seeing it, which is my credibility and which I think entitles me to speak to the subject, those who say women should, those who say that most often and loudest and vitriolically have never been anywhere close to that kind of environment and will, themselves, never have to do it.

I deeply resent some of the spokespersons for the women on this subject of women in combat, who sound off and are quoted and pictured in the newspaper and on TV about what women should be permitted to do with respect to combat. They themselves have never been there. Their conclusions rest totally on theory, erroneous, bad theory, and they never will have to be there. “But it’s all right for me to say, ‘Your daughters, not me, but your daughters should go’.”

So that’s the strong basic fundamental line I take, and if you don’t stand hard on that, you will give inch by inch to those who are pushing closer and closer to where they are places they shouldn’t be. Women can do just about anything men can do—I said that earlier—except some of the muscular things. The big question is: do we want them to? In the case of doing things in the so-called rear area or peacetime environment, why they can run circles around men in some areas of military occupational specialties. They are certainly smart and have a dexterity in some respects that come into play, and their attention to detail, they’ve got a lot of things that’s just a part of a woman’s makeup. But to put them in a truly life-threatening situation is not only fundamentally wrong, because of what I have perceived a woman to be in this world, which is also what most fathers perceive their daughters’ roles to be in this world as they mature, but I also believe that to put women up into the . . . [Tape interruption]

. . . get women too close to the men in combat under fire presents a threat greater than the threat to the woman in being exposed to enemy fire. It’s the threat to the male ego. Now, this is a thing that’s fragile and not very precise. What is a male ego? Well, one thing it is, I believe, is that he does, in fact, fundamentally—he may never think it through, but fundamentally deep in his psyche—he believes he’s the kind of protector of the weak, the women, etc. And that part of his total motivation, and certainly the people to his right and left, fellow males, are part of his motivation. His friendship with them causes him to move forward and to fire his weapon and not to be a shirker.

But if you put a woman in that equation, you’re not enlarging on his motivation to protect, which some might argue, because she’s, in fact, right there and not back home, distant protection you’re giving her. She has taken over a role that has been really his role. It’s tantamount to saying, “I’m a male, too, in female dress.” And his motivation, his ego is trampled on. The greatest trampling of the male ego that could ever take place would be to put women up there doing what he has heretofore felt was in his province. It was his license, his contribution to that situation. That’s not well said, but I think I’ve made the thought. I’ve put the thought out there if the words don’t really say it very well.

**Simmons:** You said something there toward the end, where this woman Marine says, “I’m a male, too.” That’s something else I was going to ask you about. There’s always been a dark thread of lesbianism in Parris Island. It pops up every so often. It’s popped up very recently. Did you have any occurrences of that kind while you were there?

**Barrow:** I may have had it. I did not know about it. I think maybe it does show up every now and then. I made a bad choice of words. I didn’t mean, really, that a woman might actually say, or even try to portray herself, as “I am a man too.” It’s his perception of her. “I thought I was in a man’s world and we were protecting you people. Now you’re acting like (that’s a better word) you are one of us and you don’t need our protection. Maybe you’re trying to protect me, as a matter of fact. So why am I here?” It distorts and destroys his image of himself, which is already pretty fragile, anyway, and you get him to do the things he does in combat because of his . . . you know, women don’t like to hear the word “male bonding,” but if there’s any such thing, it sure as hell is in combat. You bond with the guys on your right and left and in the squad and in the fire team, and you don’t want to let them down. The woman is part of all that, but she’s thought of as being somewhere back there in home and hearth or something.

**Simmons:** You mentioned Lieutenant Colonel Jenny Wrenn. I was dismayed to hear that she had died. I always thought that Jenny had a certain special style and elegance about her. She was one of my favorite women Marines.

**Barrow:** She was competent, she could be forceful, she was a leader. But she also was a lady. She looked it, she acted it, her demeanor, her appearance. Back in the days I’m talking about, there was that expectation that all women graduates would strive to be that way.

They used to have something that my wife and I were always invited to, and we always went, in which well toward the end of the women’s training, we would go to this room and it would be like waiting for the daughters to come down from upstairs to greet the family guests. The first time they had on their heels and makeup, had lipstick, and so forth, and had been coached to be mindful of their manners and their posture, overall demeanor. I know this drives the feminists right out of their minds, but it was, for me, one of the most pleasant experiences to see these young ladies who’d been out there in fatigues day after day, learning how to drill and all those things, sudden transformation. Their hair was beautifully groomed, and they were in proper makeup and high heels, and they are far better than the man under those circumstances in coming forth and speaking

to you. “And how are you, General Barrow? It’s so nice that you would come be with us this morning.” And just poised, sort of like Jenny Wrenn would want them to be.

**Simmons:** You also mentioned Gail Reals. What was her rank when she was with you? What was her position? I should say her, perhaps, that she’s still on active duty and she’s the first unrestricted woman general officer.

**Barrow:** She was a major and was XO [executive officer], then CO there for a while. Very capable.

**Simmons:** One of your accomplishments, of which I am well aware, was the achievement of the command museum at Parris Island. Would you comment a bit on the museum, including its uses and purposes?

**Barrow:** Well, Parris Island has a lot of little nooks and crannies and little things that in your spare time you could think about them being improved upon and maybe something else. We took over a little island that used to be called Scout Island and cleaned it up, put a lot of facilities out there, benches and portable heads and things like that. It became a family picnic area. You’d get a lot of families there on the weekends. We put brig labor. I’d rather not have brig labor. In Parris Island now, I think the brig’s closed, and they maybe once a month have somebody who needs to be in the brig. I don’t know where he goes to do that. Maybe he goes home. But in those days, we’d have 40 or 50 people at air station Parris Island. I’d turn them loose on things like cleaning up the golf course, so you’d go out there, not so much for the golf course’s sake, but you could see out and see New River, realize you were on an island. It just made it more beautiful, seeing marshland.

So there was opportunity for lots of initiatives, and one of those, coming to your question, was this handsome building built, I suppose, in 1940s or thereabouts, that was obviously built to be a museum. You went in, and there were permanent built-in showcases or rotundas that let you go off in various directions, and the same theme sort of continued upstairs on the second deck. In fact, there was some things in some of these display cases or whatever you want to call it. But that’s about the extent of it. Something was in there, but it was pretty bad. It didn’t tell the story of Parris Island, the Marine Corps, recruit training, or anything else.

So we got the idea that here was a facility that just cried out to be made what it should be, a first-class museum. I didn’t know what we wanted the theme to be. My contribution was to turn to my friend Ed Simmons and his cohorts in Headquarters to help us, including telling us what the hell it should be, and locally to get the people out, the tenants that were using the spaces and find some

other place for them to go, and then try to come up with some funding and some people that would run it, maybe skilled enough with their hands to follow the advice from people at Headquarters as to what to build and all this sort of thing. Well, to make a long story short, we got great support. We were told by Ed and his people, or advised or had suggested to us, the idea of a history telling along with the kind of contemporary presentation of recruit training. That was just a super idea, so we dedicated the largest room to that undertaking, which, for family . . . and we get a lot of family visitors. I used to go there on Sundays, incognito, and hear some recruit—nothing made me feel better—taking his mother and father through every step of recruit training, where you could visualize it by the pictures and, in two instances, you could put your head underneath one of these sound domes and pick up the audio of drill instructors counting cadence, and under another you're looking at the rifle range and hear the rifle range man saying, "All ready on the right. All ready on the left," and giving the firing commands. This young recruit patiently showing his mother the things that he had been doing while he was undergoing recruit training, and you could see the expression of awe and pride and all this sort of thing. So it served a purpose. A lot of visitors.

Then we had a history of Parris Island itself, with dioramas. Is that the right word?

**Simmons:** Yes.

**Barrow:** Going back to the time of [French naval officer] Jean Ribaut showing up there, which we now know he was not the first one to arrive, and that's all being changed. I haven't kept up with that lately, but it's kind of interesting.

Anyway, the museum told several stories with great success, and we had a dedication in which General Cushman, the Commandant, happened to be present and actually did the dedication. I think they still know that I have a proprietary interest in that museum, because they want to show it to me when I come. If they don't, when I pay a visit there, if they don't, I ask to see it. So I think it's somebody's continuity file, "If you hear that he's coming, you'd better dust off the place because he's going to be coming to see it."

**Simmons:** The only thing I'd add to that was you had to assign three majors to the job until you got the right one. You had [Major Edward M.] "Ed" Condra [III], and he did a great job with it.

**Barrow:** Yes. I was like Abraham Lincoln looking for a general. I went through about two or three before I finally found my U.S. Grant. Ed Condra did do a super job. It takes a special person.

They're obviously good Marines, but they just didn't have the flair, didn't understand. Ed was, one thing, a combat artist, an artist, and he was just a natural.

**Simmons:** The commanding general of Parris Island has a wonderful and historic set of quarters, but it's also a set of quarters that poses many problems in many senses. You and Patty did a great deal personally to restore those quarters. Would you comment on that?

**Barrow:** Well, I think every commanding general has done something to it, some of it not necessarily visible. One might come in, as indeed has happened in recent times, and finally said, along with being advised by people, "We've got to replace the wiring in this thing. It's just terrible." Well, that's a major contribution, but it's not something that anyone can point to and say, "General So-and-So did something about the wiring." So those may be more important than the things you can see. The same way with the heating and cooling system that had been changed, improved, modernized, and so forth.

Most of what we did had to do with appearance. We had, for example, the double parlor kind of arrangement. It's really a long room on the west side of the house. It was covered in a carpet that had reached a point where it either had to be replaced or, for budgetary reasons, you could put up with it, hoping that you could get through your tour, and maybe the next guy would replace it. But then something else piqued our interest. It was tacked down, but you could turn up a corner here and there, and underneath it was this very fine flooring of . . .

**Simmons:** Southern pine? Hard pine?

**Barrow:** No. You know where it's pieces.

**Simmons:** Parquet?

**Barrow:** Parquet flooring, not the routine kind of thing, but with various interesting patterns and beautiful wood. So we took the carpet up and had them come in and clean and do some sanding, and we had small area rugs that may be in there, but it's a beautiful floor.

All the downstairs windows were windows two stories high. In the entrance hall area, if you remember, that's where the two houses were [at] one time joined, what is now the big house, two farmhouses. Where they came together, someone left a space, which had a roof over it that came off the second-story roof, so you had windows that were down as first-floor windows, and you had second-floor windows. They were covered with venetian blinds, as was every other window. I had a thing about venetian blinds. These were the kind that looked like nooses hanging down, all askew, you know, they just don't look good. They surely didn't look in keeping with the period. So we put [in] interior shutters, the kind you can work two ways. You can open them up, and when they're closed you can move the little shutter parts. Most people seem to think that gave it a southern look,

kind of an older look, and a more practical kind of arrangement. They still survive. If Patty was here, she could tell you about the other things. But mostly we simply enjoyed being there. All of my children, my five children and their spouses, came and visited. One finished growing up there. He did grades 8, 9, and 10, going to school in Beaufort.

**Simmons:** This is Robbie?

**Barrow:** This is young Rob.

**Simmons:** Is there anything else you'd like to comment upon with regard to your nearly three years in Parris Island?

**Barrow:** No. I would just be repeating myself. It was a wonderful, wonderful tour, a very challenging tour. It sounds like every tour I had in the Marine Corps was challenging. Well, maybe they weren't, but if you approach it that you think it is, you may be more productive than if you just say, "Everything's all right and I don't need to do anything." That ranks high among the places that presented a challenge, one that you could do something about with a little help from other people.

**Simmons:** Perhaps that would be a good place to end this session.

**Barrow:** Okay.

End of SESSION X



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION  
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Interviewee: General Robert H. Barrow, USMC (Ret)

Interviewer: Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons, USMC (Ret)

Date of Interview: 13 December 1989

SESSION XI

**Simmons:** This is session 11 of the oral history interview with the former Commandant, General Robert Barrow. The interview is again taking place in the senior visiting officers' quarters in the Washington Navy Yard. The date is 13 December.

General, in our last session, which was 26 January 1989, we covered your 32 months in command of the Marine Recruit Depot Parris Island [South Carolina]. Your next assignment was as deputy chief of staff, Manpower, at Headquarters Marine Corps. This assignment was made toward the end of June 1975.

On 1 July 1975, General [Louis H. "Lou"] Wilson [Jr.] replaced General [Robert E.] Cushman [Jr.] as the Commandant of Marines. Were you chosen for your new assignment by General Cushman or by General Wilson, and do you know the circumstances?

**Barrow:** Well, actually when the general officers' slate had come out earlier that year, I was slated to go to [MCB] Camp Pendleton [California], to be CG [of] the 1st Marine Division. That would have been with General Cushman and what he thought would be his successor, because his successor had planned for me.

But to kind of be more specific, it was General Wilson's assignment; however, we had met several times before he actually became Commandant, that is to say toward the end of June. And clearly he had something in mind for me that amounted to a promotion. But he had not fixed exactly who he wanted to do what. And I thought, one, that I could make it easy for him if I volunteered, and two, I by that time had this big hang up, big concern with manpower issues. So I said, "Lou, make me Manpower," and gave some rationale. That's really how I got it. I volunteered, and he accepted.

And this was interesting in this sense, I don't know of many people who would volunteer

for Manpower or any other staff job in Washington [DC]. In my particular case, I had no background in Manpower. Most of the people have had one or two tours, particularly as they became more senior. I had been a monitor in 1951–52, and this monitor in the old Personnel Division at headquarters. And I had not served at headquarters for 20 years when I came in 1975. So it was a new experience.

But I had, as I said earlier, gotten hooked on the subject of people and importance, and things we needed to have done, so that's why I volunteered.

**Simmons:** This new position brought with it a promotion to lieutenant general. Promotion to lieutenant general is an appointment, rather than the result of a formal selection process. When were you actually promoted to lieutenant general?

**Barrow:** Like the first or second day after Lou Wilson became Commandant, as I recall, and by him.

**Simmons:** Exploring in a little more depth something you have already touched upon, the general perception was that you were brought to Washington by General Wilson to bring about certain Manpower reforms, building on your Parris Island experience. Is this an accurate perception?

**Barrow:** Oh, yes. Yes, it was. And as I said, we had had several conversations. I talked about things like the . . . and you know I wasn't bringing any new information to him. He had his own views, which were very similar to mine. My convictions might have been a little more passionate, rooted in my experience at Parris Island. And before that, when I was CG out at [MCB Camp Smedley D.] Butler [Okinawa]; [I] saw all of the horrible things of Marines attacking Marines at night and racial problems and drugs and riots. [Interruption in recording for telephone call.]

**Simmons:** You were speaking of brig riots when we were interrupted.

**Barrow:** Well I mean, my experience was out there in WestPac [Western Pacific] with all that kind of bad apples that we had in the Marine Corps. And my experience at Parris Island, which clearly brought home to me the fact that we were not getting the quality recruits we should. And that this in turn led to some of the drill instructor abuse of recruits out of provocation with other things, bad types we were getting. And it led to disciplinary problems, because many of them were passed on from there.

And it was costly. You know in the early 1970s, and even at the time that General Wilson

took over, we had in excess of about 51,000 recruits annually. I dare say now with the quality being what it is, it's probably in the neighborhood of 30-some thousand. I wouldn't want to put a precise figure on it (34,000–35,000). The difference being we don't have to fail so many [or] get enough to allow for failure. Most of them are successful in completing their first term enlistment, etc.

Anyway, that's sort of all of the background I had on the last two commands that drove me to be interested in this subject, and Lou Wilson was too. We talked about it on the phone. We had met and talked about it. So, you are right, the reforms were needed, and we set about at once to do something about that.

**Simmons:** This is a question I might well have asked when we were still talking about your period at Parris Island. You just mentioned the quality of accessions and the high rate of failure. The Marine Corps experimented with a great number of remedial measures at Parris Island and San Diego [California]—physical fitness, marginal literacy, and so forth. What would your evaluation of those programs be at this point?

**Barrow:** Well, they were an effort to try to salvage bad recruits. Bad now doesn't necessary mean morally bad, but recruits that didn't measure up physically or whatever. And in retrospect, and even then I suspected it, it was not a successful program. Indeed, subsequently statistics—and it takes a while to accumulate these things—revealed that all of these things maybe produced a recruit graduate. Sometimes even with these remedial efforts they didn't succeed. And he had a less likelihood of completing his first enlistment than did the recruit who did not have to have remedial training.

But we had not only the motivation platoon, which we subsequently got rid of in the reforms, but we had physical conditioning. Now there was an exception. Those are often the young recruits who would be injured in training, highly motivated—the reason why they were maybe injured in the first place. And this was a chance, somewhere between the hospital and returning to their recruit platoon for full-fledged training, that they could be rehabilitated. As far as I know, that still exists at both depots. That's remedial in a sense, but it's working with usually a pretty good recruit.

We even had remedial reading at Parris Island because we had recruits that really read at the first-, second-, third-grade levels. This was fruitless. We may have had a month or so of intensified training and maybe advanced them one grade. That's not a solution, that's grasping at straws.

We had what was called a “fat boy platoon,” because there was the authorized program of medical, remedial program that permitted the enlistment of overweight recruits. I think it applied to the Navy, as well as the Marine Corps. It was a Navy medical program.

And that’s just one of the other matters I state as how bad things were. People didn’t think about the importance of having people that were already physically fit. They would send you a 300-pound recruit that if he was where he should be, he was maybe 180.

And strangely, the mind-set—and even I became part of this—you saw the results, and you got proud of it. There was a guy who came in weighing 300 [pounds]. “Look at him now.” “How do you feel there, recruit?” “I feel wonderful, sir.” Often it was temporary. One of these compulsive eaters, probably by the time he got through his recruit leave he was back up to over 200.

So I’m not sure that was a good program either. And as a matter of fact, we subsequently dropped it. And I believe now that the weight requirements for height and weight for a Marine is applied to the recruiting standards, with maybe a deviation permitted of two or three pounds or something. But you don’t have that situation where we had to take off globs of fat.

It’s the strangest thing you ever saw, was you took a tour of Parris Island; you’d be taken to the “fat boy platoon,” an isolated group. All of them looked like they were made of blubber, struggling to lose weight. They were on special diets with lots of exercise, and it worked, but that’s not what we should have been doing.

**Simmons:** Not to put words in your mouth, but kind of summarizing what I think I hear you saying, in the early 1970s when recruiting was no longer draft driven, we spread a very wide net and tried to scoop in as many people as possible, with the idea that the recruit training process would develop Marines out of a good proportion of them. But from your own experience at Parris Island and also from General Wilson’s perception, the results were in some cases, marginal. And it would be better to concentrate on quality input rather than winnowing them out at recruit depots.

**Barrow:** That’s right. I may have said this in the last tape. So be it. We’ll repeat it. I used to say that we operated under several false assumptions. One is that anybody can be a recruiter, and that is simply not true. And we have subsequently, during my tenure at Manpower, had a study made by some company that came up with a screening test that would predict who could [become] a successful recruiter, and it was absolutely a valid way of doing it.

So that's the first false assumption that anyone can be a recruiter. The next guy that comes through the door, we'll make him a recruiter. And it's selling is what it is, and not everybody is a salesman. So that's the first thing. The fellow who is not a good recruiter struggles and sometimes gets bad recruits and often no recruits.

Then you go to the actual product itself, and we believed falsely that a test was more important than anything else as a basic qualification, indicator of potential. And several things relate to that. The test was the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery Test, and it was badly normed all these years of the early '70s and up to the mid-'70s.

And that's another thing that happened during my tenure at Manpower. People from over in the Center for Naval Analyses in working with it, found out that it was badly normed, meaning that a result being that we had many more mental group [category] IVs than we thought we had. And this was all Services. The Marine Corps didn't; all of the Services were discovering it.

So we were getting people in who were less qualified in terms of their mental capabilities, which means that they often become a problem in terms of discipline, because they can't discern right from wrong, or in any case, they are just slow learners. But that's sort of off to one side. That needed to be corrected and was.

The point I was making is that Headquarters Marine Corps had come to the conclusion that test scores were more important than educational achievements, when in fact just the opposite is true. And in 1974, we had 49 percent high school graduates, and it didn't seem to bother anyone at Headquarters. And it was Congress, who during the annual testimony by the Commandant, more or less compelled the Marine Corps to up their numbers of high school graduates. They said you would have 55 percent that year of '75, as I recall.

They forced the Marine Corps to do what they should have done on their own. Intuitively, I felt, and later testing and all of the things that we do to determine these sorts of things, the high school graduate is far and away more likely to be a successful Marine. There are many reasons for it. The one you hear most commonly is it demonstrates stick-to-itiveness. If he finished high school, he has manifested some amenability to discipline, although school discipline can't equate to Marine discipline. He can get along with his peers.

The truth of the matter is in my judgment it tells one that he is a product of a good home,

where he had the environment, the love, the interest, the caring, the inspiration to motivate him to want to go to finish his education. So high school graduates come from good homes, so there has been some sense of values and good character in the development of this individual. Conversely, the high school dropouts . . . dropping out [are] from bad homes. Anyway, that's another assumption, the assumption being—false assumption being—that test scores were more important than education.

And then the next thing was, the worst false assumption is that Parris Island and San Diego, the two recruit depots, could make Marines out of anyone. Just send anyone down there, that they would perform miracles. And the truth is, we all ignored that some youngster, who was kind of either out of step with life or just an awkward, gawky kid, whatever his weaknesses may have been, went to boot camp, and just like he had the greatest transformation that man could experience.

But for every one of the people that you or I have known or others who point to that, who was a success from that experience, you'd probably have 6, 8, 10 who were not; [they] either failed at Parris Island or the system carried [them] through like a chip floating downstream. And by the time they left the drill instructor, who was really keeping them up [and] making them able to go through the experience, they get to the first command; they are problems.

Well, we had to look at all of these things. And I don't want to get ahead of myself. I would really like to respond to your question. But you can use the word "reform." We had to reform recruiting, and at the same time we recognized the need to reform recruit training, like getting rid of all this remedial business, because we had had examples of recruit training abuse in both depots, and we thought we had brought about improvements.

We had to be vigilant about it, so we fine-tuned that and did things like I introduced it at Parris Island. We now made it compulsive so someone wouldn't turn around and change it, the psychiatric screening of drill instructor candidates, which was resented when I first brought the subject up, but later was accepted. And it was now the policy for both depots.

And generally speaking, showing a continued interest on my part in both depots. The classic example of someone who carried his assignment with him to the next one, I suppose one could say. But in this case the difference was that historically Headquarters Marine Corps had not paid much attention to the depots until an incident happened. And then they would become up in arms and swoop down on the place and institute their own version of reform.

And I was trying to be the depot's man in Washington who had some understanding of it and kept a continuing interest. I talked to depot commanders all the time when I was Manpower. And thankfully, the ones that were assigned didn't feel I was meddling; they would sometimes call me.

**Simmons:** Do you recall who some of these depot commanders might have been at that time?

**Barrow:** Yes, [Major General Arthur J.] "Jake" Poillon [and] [Major General Kenneth J.] "Kenny" Houghton. Jake Poillon was at Parris Island, and Kenny was at San Diego. So we were in the midst of recruiting and recruit training reforms when we ended up with the incident that caught up with us and brought about the very agonizing experience of Yarins [?].

**Simmons:** I'll get to that.

**Barrow:** That's down the road. Let's go on.

**Simmons:** You said that the Armed Forces Qualification Test was badly normed. Isn't it also true, or perhaps it is part of that, that the test had been badly compromised? And also there were varying degrees of coaching?

**Barrow:** Oh, sure. Absolutely. I don't choose to fault recruiters. I guess one should. But recruiting malpractice was rampant. It ranged from having compromised the testing procedures, so that recruits could get the scores at some stations. Individuals within the system could by pencil change the scores. Get a friend to change the score if a recruit didn't measure up.

There was no end to it. Some of them that were not physically fit manipulated them through the medical system. I never was sure how that could be done, but it was. And the worst being the compromise of test scores. No, that's not the worst. The worst was that there was an attitude of just "get anybody."

**Simmons:** How about drugs and drug testing? I think we had a very categorical drug policy at that time. Any experimentation with drugs technically disqualified a recruit, and I don't think anyone really believed this. I think there was a lot of tongue in cheek on this.

**Barrow:** It was virtually nonexistent, any sort of drug program, of testing. This is kind of another false assumption. He may have been on drugs, but once he joined the Marine Corps, he will straighten out. Ha, nothing could be further from the truth. It wasn't until again we were in Manpower—when I say these things, it doesn't mean that I instituted these things. I'm just saying they happened on my watch. So that [was] the first time that we had had any kind of formal training for officers and staff NCOs in alcohol and drug abuse.

And I'm not going to tell you that that was a major step forward in solving the problem, because it was not. But at least we thought at the time that if we got everybody up to speed on what this problem looked like, we mentioned the problem and what some of the corrections could be, and that the CO would then do it, and we would get over the problem.

Well, I must tell you that that was one of my false assumptions. For the next six years . . . or eight years I guess you might say, because it wasn't until I became Commandant that it came home to me how widespread the drug business was. And the key to that correction was largely the use of urinalysis testing. It still is. And we're getting ahead of ourselves, but we should be very proud of where we are now in this area of drug abuse. But at that time, we had it, didn't know the dimensions of it, and thought if we could get everybody trained or the key people, we could get on top of it. And of course, we were kidding ourselves.

**Simmons:** As deputy chief of staff for Manpower, you were Marine Corps' principal witness before both houses of the Congress in personnel authorization and appropriation matters. In general, would you describe this process?

**Barrow:** Well, we went over to, as you say, both houses and had our annual statements as to what the manpower issues were, and what policy we were going to institute. We talked about end strength, and we talked about how many people we would have to recruit in that fiscal year coming up, for which we were seeking authorization and appropriations.

And mostly to submit to questions, which were wide ranging. Everything from recruiting to training, because you see Manpower had training under it. Training was separated after I left. It had what we called manpower management, which assigns people and classifies them and promotes them and runs selection boards and retires them and buries them, and all this. And mostly moving them around. And then we had recruiting, which was a separate division in Manpower. We had training, which was separate. And then we had what's called MPP Division, which is Plans and Policies, working on all the various Manpower programs that would become policy. Then we had the Welfare and Recreation Division, which is exchanges and awards, that sort of thing.

So there were a lot of people in Manpower. There were a lot of things going on. Anyway, we had to testify in an all-inclusive kind of way. It covered all of this. You would never know what questions you would get, and we just had to be prepared for them. I never objected to testifying. I never found that to be onerous. I have friends who just disliked it intensely. But I was always treated fairly and never found it to be something that I didn't like doing.



**Simmons:** Who were some of the congressmen and senators with whom you interacted and perhaps formed friendships?

**Barrow:** Well, I guess in the House, a real stalwart—he obviously liked Marines. He liked things in the military and is still there now, is [Gillespie V.] “Sonny” Montgomery from Mississippi. He could always be counted on. [William F.] “Bill” Nichols from Alabama was a fine man. He is now deceased. [Charles M.] Price was there. He was chairman [of the House Armed Services Committee]. He had been there for so many years that he . . . maybe I shouldn’t say this, maybe he’d been there too long. He is obviously no longer there.

People like [unintelligible]. Hunter [?] from California. And I just missed [Felix E.] “Eddie” Hébert, who was Mr. Defense and had chaired the House Armed Services Committee. We had [Ronald V.] “Ron” Dellums.

**Simmons:** Was he a particular problem?

**Barrow:** Ron Dellums tried to be a problem. He always had some cause he was espousing. And not many people know that he was a former Marine. And one day after he had pontificated about something—I have forgotten what it was now—but it gave me some insights into his personality, his persona, whatever. And at the break, I went up to him and said, “Mr. Dellums, it suddenly hit me that you are a lot more Marine than you like to admit to.”

And it took him by surprise, and he didn’t have a chance to reflect on his answer. It might have been different. He said, “You’re absolutely right. The Marine Corps made a man out of me. Whatever I have achieved in life, I owe fundamentally to the Marine Corps. I went there when I was 18 years old, a mixed up kid.” And he was giving me the classic response of a guy who had so much indebtedness to the Marine Corps for having turned him around.

And then all of the sudden, he realized that he was out of character that he had established for himself, and he kind clammed up. But I caught him, and it was kind of interesting.

On the Senate side, I guess . . . I’m trying to think who some of them were.

**Simmons:** Any particular relationship with Senator [John C.] Stennis?

**Barrow:** Not too much. General Wilson did. I had a good relationship with Senator [Samuel A.] Nunn [Jr.].

**Simmons:** That was not something that General Wilson was able to pass on to you then?

**Barrow:** No, I met him several times privately. And he always treated me with cordiality. But I would say I worked very closely with Nunn, more than anyone else.

**Simmons:** He was a relative youngster at that time.

**Barrow:** Yes, he was, but he was easily recognized as a comer. He had done his homework. He was obviously bright, interested.

**Simmons:** Senator [Barry M.] Goldwater?

**Barrow:** Yes, he was over there. [Senator William S.] Cohen, a Republican from Maine.

**Simmons:** Still there.

**Barrow:** [Senator] Gary Hart.

**Simmons:** How did you find Gary Hart?

**Barrow:** Smart.

**Simmons:** Had he fallen under the influence of [William S.] “Bill” Lind at that point?

**Barrow:** No, I don’t recall that he had. I’m not recalling many names at the time. If I thought about it more or saw a list of people, I could certainly have them pop out at me. But I like to think that starting when I was at Manpower and continuing, I had a lot of friends on Capitol Hill.

**Simmons:** Were there any particular or specific critics, persons of either house, that caused you particular problems?

**Barrow:** No. No, I got along well with people like Mr. [Charles E.] Bennett from Florida. I had to testify later on for him when he was head of the Seapower [and Projection Forces] Subcommittee in the House. And then Cohen had the counter for that over in the Senate. Who was the congressman from New York that had been there for so long? A Navy captain. A lot of people didn’t know he was a Navy captain in the Reserve. I can’t think of it. Tough. I got along with all of them.

**Simmons:** Wasn’t it while you were deputy chief of staff for Manpower that one of the drill instructors at Parris Island shot one of the recruits through the hand? And even worse, at San Diego, Private Lynn [E.] McClure was beaten to death? What are your recollections of these two unfortunate events?

**Barrow:** Well, they were just again examples of a combination of faulty recruiting and recruit training abuse. McClure, in retrospect, should never have been recruited. As I recall, the recruiter who recruited him, a sergeant named Faulkner, had done what he thought was sufficient to determine his [McClure’s] qualifications. He was being recruited in I think Austin, Texas, but his home was in Lufkin [Texas]. And he [Faulkner] did call the Lufkin police and ask if he [McClure] had a record, and they said no.

But as I recall, he had taken a test and tried to get in once before and had failed that, but somehow here we go again. He was able to pass the test when, in fact, his original test scores, which were low, were probably the right ones, and passing him was probably something that never should have been done.

And yes, it was revealed that he had spent some time in an institution. So it was most unfortunate that he was recruited in the first place. And having been recruited and put in the high-tempo environment of recruit training where the demands are high, he probably didn't keep up with the others, and in any case, put in one of those remedial programs that we just talked about. And when he was matched against another recruit to perform pugil stick work, which among other things is supposed to develop aggressiveness, assertiveness, etc., it probably got out of hand, and he was killed, which would have to be something beyond what was authorized or should have been. In any case, that's McClure.

And [Private Harry] Hiscock was the victim of a prank at the rifle range by his drill instructor, who either pointed the weapon at him or said he was going to shoot him in jest and, in fact, pulled the trigger and happened to have a round in it, and it hit him in the hand.

Well, those two incidents got widespread publicity. And I might tell you that it also came at a time when we had some equally adverse and widespread publicity over recruiting abuse. A couple of former recruiters, now out of the Marine Corps, volunteered to the newspapers and later testified on Capitol Hill that they had been part of a recruiting establishment, Detroit as I remember, in which they observed other's malpractices, and they themselves had manipulated people through the system that weren't qualified.

Now, as I have indicated to you, we had a number of reforms underway, both in recruiting and recruit training. And all this emerged, and it simmered and carried on for months. It culminated in hearings at the House Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Military Personnel, had hearings in May and June of 1976, in which Lou Wilson, myself, [Brigadier General Richard C.] "Dutch" Schulze, who was head of recruiting, Brigadier General Schulze, were the principal witnesses the first day. And I think we had something like nine days. General Wilson, the Commandant, was not there more than one or two days, but I was there, as I recall, all of those times.

And it was a very touchy time for the Marine Corps. It was in the newspapers every day.

I would not say that there was a mind-set among the Congress to do us in, but they certainly wanted to get to the bottom of what they saw as a festering kind of problem. So they were just loaded with questions, a lot of which were not very good questions.

And the hearings took on the character that most of them do when you have long, protracted hearings with the same witness, same subject. They would come in and out and pick up the question. And if you already answered many times, your answers, no matter how thoughtful they were and accurate, just never could get across what it was you were telling them.

It was just . . . I already indicated I didn't mind testifying, but that was a kind of agonizing experience, because you knew that fundamentally if you didn't do a good job, they could turn right around and say, "Well we're going to tell you how this is going to be done, because we don't think you understand what needs to be done, and so we'll just tell you." It seems like they could have easily said, there will be no drill instructors around recruits after five p.m. Put them back in the squad bay and let them have free time from five [1700] till the time they go to bed. Things like that. They just impose all kinds of restrictions.

So we were in a sense, fighting for our lives, to use a metaphor. And I think we did a good job. I don't have any of my testimony. If I revisited it, I'm sure it wouldn't embarrass me. I was reasonably well versed about things. Dutch Schulze was. Lou did a good job. But in responding to that congressional inquiry, the hearings, we added additional corrections. I'll give you an example of how one of these came about.

We had had hearings in the morning in which quite clearly we could not reassure the subcommittee that we had enough checks in the system to give the recruit an opportunity to speak of any problems he was having. We had said for example that—and this was one of the reforms we instituted—that the series commander, after physical drill in the morning, physical fitness exercises in the morning, when the platoon came back to the squad bays and they took their showers, before they put on their uniforms to start the rest of the day, they would all stand at attention in squad bays with just their skivvy shorts on.

And he would go down and inspect each one of them, he and his assistant series commander, which was a gunnery sergeant, looking for any evidence of physical abuse or a youngster who might look sick or not feel well. And then he would always turn and ask if anyone had any problems of any kind, just kind of enumerate the kind of things one might choose to talk about, please step forward.

Well, that sort of thing was a big step from what it had been, because no one was doing that, if you follow me on that. Officers didn't go in there in the morning and ask the recruit how he felt and take a look at him. So we probably made a major step forward. This was during the reform, before all these hearings.

That didn't satisfy them. They said, well, let's keep from being intimidated, etc., etc. So we went back for lunch, broke for lunch, and Lou and I met and talked about it. And I talked to both the recruit depot commanders. And our solution was, over the noon hour we added 84 lieutenants, 42 at each depot, to be an officer assistant series commander and presented the technique that this would be a mandatory one on one.

During the first six weeks, every recruit would appear before either the series commander or the assistant series commander for a one-on-one interview, which could be wide ranging, but designed in part to get him the confidentiality of saying in response "had he been in any way mistreated." He could say that he had or not.

And we also . . . that became acceptable to them. That took them off that kick. And we still have that today, the assistant series commanders. When you had one, the recruits, he would be up about 16 hours a day. When you have three drill instructors, sometimes four, they can swap off during the day. But if you only have one series commander, he can't do 16 hours. But if you have an assistant, you have a better chance. . . . [Tape interruption]

**Simmons:** Session 11 here. In this matter of series commanders, we're talking about first lieutenants. I don't think there are any second lieutenants. They have all been graduates of The Basic School. They have all had a tour in the Fleet Marine Force. Some are younger than others. Would you risk a generalization as to what made the best series commander? A young, aggressive Marine, perhaps a product of the [U.S.] Naval Academy or Naval ROTC [Reserve Officers Training Corps] or an older person who may have come up through the ranks and may have been a drill instructor himself in some time past?

**Barrow:** It's hard to tell. It's unpredictable. I would say, generally speaking, that the young officer who had had a rifle platoon in the Fleet Marine Force for a couple of years would have a little more leadership experience and working with people experience of some numbers. I would say, generally speaking, he would be the better one; although you might find an artillery officer is just as good.

Generally speaking, it was in the combat field that we had . . . these officers are all

screened, picked, and they are very special. The main thing is they have to be of high quality and uncompromising and motivated, and they were all of that.

Back to the hearings, I was just looking at some notes I have here. The witnesses were wide ranging. We were arrayed against a lot of interesting detractors. We had a former psychiatrist from Parris Island who headed the neuropsychiatric unit there when I was there, and he testified in a way that was very persuasive, articulate. He was a highly educated man who in effect said that every platoon recruit that went through Parris Island during his three years there, had either been abused or had witnessed an awful lot of it.

And I had to counter his testimony without trying to destroy him as an individual, that his perception was a very narrow one, because the people he saw were the people we were about to discharge for being misfits—people that shouldn't have been recruited in the first place. And they had tended to exaggerate their experiences so that they could . . . most of them wanted to be discharged. They were totally unmotivated. So that was another way to get themselves out of there, was to make up horror stories.

We had former recruiters who were a little bit unreachable, since they had been discharged, admitted the wrongdoing, and witnessed it. They had sent down staffers unannounced to Parris Island and poked around. They came back and talked about what they had found [and] what they saw—not too bad, as a matter of fact.

They insisted on interviewing four recruits. Now I thought that was a great idea. So they wanted to make sure that we didn't play games with them. I resented this, but I accepted it as well. They picked out from some roster of recruits, all the recruits at Parris Island on a given day, and they picked out in a manner the last couple of weeks of troop training.

And they just went randomly down the roster and picked out four recruits, and one of their staffers went down to Parris Island and shepherded them to Washington, so that no one could get to them and say, "Look, the future of the Marine Corps rests on what kind of answers you give." They didn't know where the hell they were going. The next thing you know the four of them are over there appearing before this committee, sitting in the witness chair.

Four recruits out of Parris Island, yet to graduate. They were going to graduate the following week, as I recall. Well, you couldn't have gotten four better ones if you had gone down and asked and looked and screened. But I knew that. I had every confidence that if he had gotten to the 9th week of training or the 10th week of training, he was so, to use the vernacular,

gung ho, motivated, fired up that he would convey a very positive picture of a Marine recruit training.

And that's exactly what they did. And don't you know . . . I sometimes get very annoyed at the press. When the two or three recruits that they had found somewhere, who had failed recruit training were dragged in as witnesses, when the bad guys who had been on recruiting duty [and] no longer were in the Marine Corps were witnesses, and the psychiatrist was a witness all against the Marine Corps, it got all kinds of press coverage.

But when these four bright-eyed, bushy-tailed, super looking recruits performed, the press didn't say one word about it, not one word. It wasn't of interest to them. These guys were telling a good story about the Marine Corps.

But anyway, the hearings added to the reforms we had already started. They included—I'm sort of hitting around now—but they included adding an assistant depot commander.

**Simmons:** In the rank of?

**Barrow:** Brigadier general. And I really am ahead of myself, because the biggest reform of all, the first one instituted in terms of "you will," but not actually executed for about nine months, was placing the recruiting under the recruit depot commanders. I really don't claim to have many original ideas, but my experience at Parris Island told me that that would be the best solution to assuring quality control.

That if the guy responsible for training the recruit also was responsible for recruiting him, he's not going to send himself someone he can't work with, in the simplest terms. Or in other terms, some recruiter out in the hinterland is not going to send his boss a misfit. And so, that's accountability and quality control there, to a fine degree.

Well, all right, so I took over 1 July 1975, and by the eighth or ninth of July, somewhere like that, I had already talked to Lou Wilson about it; he announced that that would happen. All the recruiting west of the Mississippi would be under the CG MCRD [Marine Corps Recruit Depot] San Diego, and east under Parris Island.

As I sit here this morning in 1989, December 13th, I guess I would have to tell you that there couldn't have been more than three people in the Headquarters that thought that was a good idea—the Commandant, myself, and I'll just let the other person be some anonymous character.

Not only did they think it was not a good idea, but they resisted it. The head of recruiting at the time—this was before Dutch Schulze—all of the district commanders, and I don't know

why they resisted it, but they resisted it. It got to be so bad that there was one time I had all of the district commanders in my office, the senior colonels who were later made generals, with their heels locked together while I read them the riot act about coming onboard with something that's already been decided. The only thing we were doing was accommodating to the need to make some changes, so it could be fully implemented.

It took, because of the resistance and things like . . . we want to test one district under each depot to see how it works before we go to all three on each depot. And that had took time. And the results were, it's fine; it's working. I think it was April of '76, about nine months later before you could say it has in fact happened. It should never have taken that long, and it still wasn't well received, but it is now, and it has been for some years.

**Simmons:** Don't you suppose that part of this is that the Marine Corps district was a very old concept and a very entrenched concept? And that person heading up the Marine Corps district, he was "Mr. Marine Corps" in that geographic locality, a lot of autonomy?

**Barrow:** A lot of autonomy. And you're right, little fiefdoms. And the assistant depot commander was added in large part to assure that there would always be a general officer aboard at the two depots, which you and I know is essential to making sure everything is going to go right. But to people in Congress, it sounds like you are more on top of things if you have a general there.

So we said, "All right, we'll have two generals." And one would be on the road all the time. And the last couple of years there has only been one, and if you talk to him as I have, you find that they feel that their first priority is to be on the road to look after the recruiting interests. I wouldn't [have] known how they would have looked at it. They may have said, "Well, I have to mind the store. I'll let the recruiting sort of take care of itself."

But most of them . . . you take [Major General] John [S.] Grinalds. I've had several conversations with him recently. And he called me from Milwaukee, or he's down in New Orleans or something. They see the importance of the recruiting.

Anyway, that was kind of a major accomplishment. I remember the secretary of the Navy, [John F.] Lehman [Jr.], when he learned about it, this being some years later, six or seven years later. He said, "That's the best idea I've ever heard of. I'm going to get the Navy to do it." I said, "Good luck." They didn't do it. They didn't do it at all.

**Simmons:** Military reformers every once in a while, almost on a cyclical basis, almost every



time there is something like a recruiting abuse occurs, dust off the recommendation that recruit training should be a consolidated, centralized process. They argue for this in terms of economy, egalitarianism, uniformity, arguing that there ought to be some centralized recruit training process, which would provide uniform recruits to all the Armed Services. Did that ever come up during these hearings, or did you ever have to contend with that recommendation?

**Barrow:** No, but don't think it wasn't in the back of my head. And that was a scare comment that I used to put on the people who didn't think it was a serious problem. I would tell them, it's my gut feeling that if we don't get our act together, we'll be told that somewhere out in the plains of Kansas there is going to be a new, gigantic facility where all the people going into the Armed Services are going to be processed. And there will be four exit doors, where you gather your man and take him off to the Marine Corps.

And that would put them in a state of shaking, because it is our most precious commodity. It determines our distinctiveness more than anything else, the recruit training. I have to add also that the quality of recruiters together. But yes, I'm sure that they thought about it and spoke to you. And in the minds of the cost analysts, it would make sense, wouldn't it? But . . .

**Simmons:** The Marine Corps is an elite unit. And I think this has always caused a problem with the American public. The American public wants everything to be egalitarian, but they also like elite units. So there is an ambiguity in the public's mind, I think. And there has been always an admiration and kind of a distrust of our recruiting process.

**Barrow:** Yes.

**Simmons:** Leaving that, at least for the moment, who were some of the key officers at Headquarters Marine Corps at this time, and what were your relations with them?

**Barrow:** Well, I had some fine people in Manpower. Charlie Meyer [?] was there just briefly for a month or two. And in recruiting, Dutch Schulze took that over. And [Brigadier General Kenneth] "Ken" McLennan was Plans and Policy, MPP Division. [Brigadier General Edward A.] "Ed" Wilcox was the Manpower Management Division. [Major General Thomas H.] "Tom" Miller was deputy chief of staff for aviation. [General Samuel] "Sam" Jaskilka, of course, was the Assistant Commandant, and [Leslie E.] "Les" Brown was the chief of staff. [Lawrence F.] "Larry" Snowden was the PP&O [Plans, Policies, and Operations].

I have no interesting observations to make about that really. I would say this. I not only would say it; I have to say it. I might end up saying it more than once, except that we'd be at the

end of our time with this interview. Lou Wilson was the right man, at the right time, at the right place. I do not choose to characterize what our problems may have been or who may have been a problem, but the Marine Corps was not doing well in '73, '74, '75 for a combination of reasons. We've already talked to death a couple of those. Bad recruiting was a major reason.

And I think to some extent a lack of inspiration at all levels, to get the fire back in the belly of people who had acquired it sometime in life if they wanted to be Marine. And we needed a kind of a shake-up. We needed a big, heavy dose of motivation and inspiration as well as correction of these problems that we have spoken of. And Lou Wilson is not only bright and experienced, but he is tough and decisive and a no-nonsense kind of fellow, but not without compassion and understanding when it's appropriate to be understanding. Every inch a gentleman, and that's not in conflict with being tough.

And I think he did more for the Marine Corps by his demeanor, a few simple words, including the great remarks when he took over that day in Marine Barracks [Washington] as Commandant, "Get in step and stay in step." The Marine Corps was hungry for someone to tell them to get with it. Shape up. And they responded beautifully. People wanted to do what he wanted them to do. Even little things—get your weight off. I don't want a fat Marine. Look to it. Look sharp.

And so much of it turned on who he was. He was a Congressional Medal of Honor winner. That always brings sort of special honor, a special recognition on the part of all of us. But it goes well beyond that. He was—as I say, his military appearance, his demeanor, his bearing, the way he spoke, the things he said—not profound [but] simple and direct. And the Marine Corps responded.

**Simmons:** I think I would add to that you have already named a very distinguished list of high ranking officers that he brought into the Headquarters or perhaps found at Headquarters, but moved to different positions. Would you say that he not only had the ability to select good subordinates, but also to get the most out of them?

**Barrow:** Yes, he would. His work habits were such that he didn't like to shuffle papers. You could always find a clean desk. And I believe that's saying something about a cluttered desk goes with a cluttered mind or something or vice versa. But he tended to be very direct, very decisive. And when he made a decision, he expected it to be executed promptly and no foot-dragging.

His meetings were always attended beyond those that had to be there. If you would get a ticket, you went as a young major or a lieutenant colonel in my sense anyway, because they wanted to see him perform, cutting through all of the gobbledygook and bureaucratic nonsense that goes on in any major headquarters. And that was sort of interesting to watch, these young action officers easing into the room to see how a Commandant performs in conferences and briefings and what not.

**Simmons:** I'll ask a comparable question as to key officials elsewhere, other than in the Marine Corps, key officials in the Department of Defense, in the Department of the Navy, with whom you interacted at this time?

**Barrow:** Oh, in the Navy, I saw [Joseph T.] McCullen [Jr.], assistant secretary of the Navy for Manpower, with some regularity. He would be very upset that I don't remember his name up in OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense], but I don't. In Manpower, I never had as much contact as you might think. I thought of him when I had to. Sometimes when I needed to, I had to, meaning it was routine—like once a week, we met.

And I didn't concentrate on having more contact with Congress. It so happens that I had a lot of contact with Congress. And it was all good. I wish now I had brought a list of people that were over there. I could run down and tell you who I particularly remember and why.

I would not characterize my service as head of Manpower as one in which I came in with a lot of knowledge about how the department should be run, a new broom to sweep clean and let's get on with it. I came with . . . I think anyone who is assigned to a task, a job, whatever, that he is unfamiliar with and is highly complicated, he is well advised not to try to fake it but admit to his lack of knowledge and act accordingly.

I remember telling the Commandant, General Wilson, I said, "You have this insatiable appetite for details about some little things that a lot of times is in the Manpower Department." I said, "If you ask me a question," which he would do on the squawk box, I said, "I'm not going to go to school on the young officer who has the answer and come down and try to regurgitate it to you. I'm going to bring him down, and we'll both learn the answer together." He laughed and said, "Okay."

And that's exactly what I did. I think it's ridiculous for some senior officer to bring some major or lieutenant colonel up and try to pick his brains for a half hour and then go down and tell his superior, probably mislead him, probably tell him inaccurately. He can't answer any

questions you know. He says, “Well what about this? I don’t know; I didn’t ask him that.”

So I used action officers just as a regular thing. Now I say this because there is some history in the Manpower Department over there of some very capable generals going in there and ending up in a state of dejection and defeat, because they tried to get their arms around the whole thing. They wanted to master, being of that school that most of us are that there isn’t anything in the way of a command someplace that you can’t pretty much get a good grasp of every element of it [and] have a good feel for what’s going on.

There is one exception, this Manpower business. You just have no idea how many people there are working in all kinds of little cubicles over there, doing all kinds of things, writing reports to the satisfaction, for the satisfaction of OSD or the Congress, working on legislation, working on policy. There is no end to it.

And there is some major sitting off in some corner over there who is the world’s living expert on some little thing that he is responsible for—maybe not be so little. It may have to do with pay, merit promotions, whatever. And it’s sad for the fellow who comes in and says, “I want to know everything.” I even know one who told me he lost 20 pounds doing the job. That was sometime removed before I got there.

Anyway, I was challenged. I liked seeing these reforms get put into place. But no way would I tell you I had a happy experience. I liked working with Lou Wilson. He and I were very close friends and got even closer after we served together in Washington.

As you well know, I left, I don’t know if you would say early, because general officers get moved around in all kinds of ways. But I was most anxious to get out of there, and a solution, which in fact became the solution, was for CG FMFLant and Manpower to switch. So I relieved [Lieutenant General Robert L.] “Bob” Nichols at FMFLant, and he relieved me at Manpower. And probably doing a much, much better job at Manpower than I did, because among other things, he had been in Manpower. He was very well versed in all the little nuances of how that machinery works.

But before we leave Manpower, I would like to just cover some of the other things that happened while we were there that we had a hand in. Again, back to bad apples and people. I had read in some publication, about the Army having a discharge program that was quick and easy. If you had a fellow who was either inept or incorrigible, they could just get rid of him. And I remember calling my people and quoting from that little article I read, and I said, “Now we need to have that.”

And of course, that's a little alien to the Marine Corps in two respects. If you have a guy that's a troublemaker, there are those who are waiting to get the goods on him, so they can have office hours as a minimum, maybe a court-martial, and exact a pound of flesh out of him. There are people like that.

The other school is for me to have a fellow who is out of step, a troublemaker is a reflection on my leadership, and I am going to keep him until my leadership prevails, and he straightens up and becomes a model Marine. And you would be surprised, in my judgment, you would be surprised how many people we have like that around the Marine Corps.

So if you could wave a magic wand and say, "Give me your misfits," they would say, "No, no, I'm still working with them" or "I have one over there I'm going to get the goods on." So it was an alien idea that you would have something that would just get rid of all the problems.

But I would immodestly say this may be another one of my contributions in Manpower. I said, "We are going to do that." And I went down and talked to Lou Wilson. And ours was given a different name. It was called the expeditious discharge program. And we threw them out right and left. We cleaned house. Because more than having just the tools, it was creating the proper attitude, and Lou did that, and I did it too. You will get rid of these misfits. And so all the commands that had general court-martial authority had the authority for expeditious discharge.

What if I told you that for example the 2d Marine Division, for the next year, was throwing out 300 to 400 a month? And that is why if you looked at the end strength of FMFLant, as I did in my subsequent command, it went through a period of about a year in which it went down. You say, "What happened?" We were getting rid of them faster than we could bring them in. And it was true of our overall Marine Corps end strength, which would get a little dip there at about that time.

But we got rid of thousands, and don't you know that that led to all kinds of accolades from commanders when you go on a trip. And they would say, "Oh it's the best thing that ever happened" when it finally caught on. And fundamentally it worked like this: "Son, you don't like us or you wouldn't be behaving the way you are. And we don't like you, so we're going to send you home." And it was done quickly, simply, and directly and had no backlash. He got whatever discharge he deserved by virtue of his service record book markings—a general discharge, honorable, or whatever.

And it was just one of the best things that ever happened to the Marine Corps. And we then began, can you imagine, from having correctional facilities—I much prefer the term “brig”—to what is it now? Having brigs that were overcrowded. It wasn’t long before we were sending a team around to see if there were some brigs we could close . . . expeditious discharge program.

**Simmons:** And we still seem to find room in our brigs to accommodate Navy residents, and even residents of the District of Columbia, where the jail system is a little bit porous.

**Barrow:** As a matter of fact, it’s probably not good for the oral history thing to jump ahead, but I don’t think we have more than one or two brigs in the Marine Corps now. Maybe one on the West Coast and one on the East Coast, and they have Navy prisoners and maybe a couple of Army guys in there. That’s all quality recruiting. But we also had to have something to get rid of the ones who were already recruited and still in the system. That was this expeditious discharge.

One of the other things that I would sort of touch on in this business is that we had started a unit rotation study about three months after we acquired a new Commandant. We had had earlier, as we all know back in the ’50s and ’60s, the transplacement battalion, which was criticized for creating a mixing bowl problem when they went to Vietnam, whole units that had an expiration of service in country expire at the same time and all of that.

But yearly rotation was looked at both for aviation and ground, specifically fixed-wing squadrons at first and infantry units, in great detail. It’s a lot more complicated than it sounds on the face of it. There was a task force in session all the time, working that problem until it was finally developed, all the wrinkles taken out of it. It was bought off on by the Commandant and implemented about a year later, as I recall.

A member of that task force was a young captain, who when they would come to brief me about once every month or six weeks about the progress they were making [and] problems they had encountered, there was a colonel, a couple of lieutenant colonels, a couple of majors, and a captain. The captain always did the briefing. The captain was [Oliver L.] “Ollie” North.

And it’s interesting in retrospect that at the time I had never known him. I used to comment to whoever may have been in the room with me after the task force left, about his performance. He was always a master of the subject, articulate, enthusiastic, persuasive, [and] attractive. Indeed, I sometimes felt like I remembered him better than I did the subject he was giving me, because he was such an interesting personality.

We had . . . I'm sort of skipping around. We wiped out the prohibition against dependents of noncommand sponsored, unaccompanied tour people, of going to Okinawa and Japan. That goes back to the very beginning, 1955–56, when the 3d Marine Division and the [1st Marine Aircraft] Wing positioned out there, and you could not have your wife or dependents out for longer than 60 days. And it absolutely amazed me that that was never challenged. There was just no way that kind of policy could survive a challenge, challenged in the right way, courts or what have you.

And as a matter of fact, I think the decision we made to do it was motivated in part by a potential case that was coming along on the horizon. But anyway, I thought that was a good idea. We increased about the same time, the accompanied tours, modestly in Okinawa and [Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS)] Iwakuni [Japan]. We lengthened the duration of an accompanied tour from 30 to 36, and shortened the unaccompanied from 13 to 12 [months].

You and all the others who had to sit on selection boards did not necessarily like the idea, but we also had to do—again, not me personally—but during this time the automated fitness report system. And this was the beginning of an era in which a lot of things were moving toward automation. And some of them took forever. PrePAS [Precise Personnel Assignment System] worked south. PrePAS was a system in which from Headquarters, it is determined that a given human being that comes in the Marine Corps will be . . . in effect he can predict, because the system will predict for him, where he is going to be during his entire tour.

**Simmons:** Spell out that acronym, please.

**Barrow:** Predictable [Precise] Personnel Assistant [Assignment] System or something like that. PPAS. I have forgotten what it was. That thing had more wrinkles in it, problems with it. I just mention it, because it was started back then at that time, '75–'76. And I think it must have taken for full implementation and get all the wrinkles out, about 10 years. It was in being before then, but I mean really working like it should, which I understand it is now.

But a lot of automation, the use of computers, and so on. One thing that appealed to me, going back to one of my favorite subjects, is that we could track recruiter performance. This happened before I left there. Not only did the recruiters come under the depot commanders—we have already covered—but the depot commander or whoever was working the problem for him, he could if he wanted to, could get a recruiter printout on every recruiter in his district, in his area region, I guess it is called, showing how many people he has recruited and their graduation

success, from the recruit depot, and conversely, any problems that he may have produced, instead of recruits—failures and so forth.

But the real value came in that they would feed this back to the source within hours of the arrival of the recruit at Parris Island. In other words, the things that you learned about a recruit there like you read testing and medicals and physicals and the moment of truth when they say there's your last chance to admit to anything that you've done that is wrong, which is always an interesting experience.

Within no time at all, that recruiter's boss knows that that man that he sent to Parris Island last week, or yesterday or whenever it was, was everything he should be, or he had problems. So they could say . . . just outstanding accountability. Still have it. It's one of the great tools of the trade, accountability, quality control.

I'm so pleased with how well we have done in the people business in the Marine Corps. And it took a long time to get to where we are now.

**Simmons:** Where did you live during this tour at Headquarters?

**Barrow:** I lived in the Marine Barracks, Quarters 2. A lot of people don't realize it; you do. You know where the Commandant lives is not Quarters 1. That is CMC [Commandant of the Marine Corps] House and the Assistant Commandant has always been in Quarters 1, which is the first house in the row nearest the Commandant's House. I was next to him.

**Simmons:** And were all five children with you and Patty at this time?

**Barrow:** No, only Rob, who did his senior year at St. Stephen's School in Alexandria [Virginia]. And Rob, during the same period, to my complete surprise, one night at the dinner table said to me, "Dad, how do you get in the Naval ROTC?" I had never pushed on him the thought of his becoming a Marine.

And, as a matter of fact, I'm generally opposed to fathers who do too much of that, because you never forgive yourself if you did and something happened to one of them. We all know there has been a disproportionate number of Army and Marine juniors killed in Vietnam, not necessarily because they were first pushed by their fathers, but that I'd like to think most of them because they wanted to follow in their fathers' footsteps and what have you.

But if it happens that they go on and choose it, it's kind of a nice thing. It means he's been watching for 18 years, and he likes what he has seen. So I said to him, I said, "Well, you do like anyone else. You call the local recruiter and tell him you're interested in that subject." [Tape interruption]



Yes, I told him, you have to see the local recruiter. A couple of nights later, I came home, the head of the Manpower Department, much of my daily life wrapped up in the subject of recruiting and recruiters and so forth, walked in my house and there is this young staff sergeant in my living room in close conversation with my son. I was quite amused by that. [Laughs] I just spoke and kept on going. That's how he got signed up, he went over to Baltimore [Maryland] or someplace, did some testing—I guess an inventory PFT [physical fitness test] test and a written test, whatever else, interviews. That was all just to get his application in, just as if he was applying for a regular scholarship in NROTC.

**Simmons:** What school did he eventually attend?

**Barrow:** That's interesting. I tried to stay out of this as much as possible but I knew that he was working the problem of determining what school had to go on the application. So I asked him, "What did you put down for your choice of schools?" You'll miss the humor in this, but I tell you, he said, "Well I kind of narrowed it down. I can't make up mind whether to go to Tulane [University] or VMI [Virginia Military Institute]."

I said, "Well Rob, you have certainly bracketed the world of human behavior. If you go to VMI, which I think is a great choice, you'll be living a pretty spartan life, and if you go to Tulane, you'll be studying the eateries and diners and so forth of New Orleans." Well, he finally settled on Tulane. I used to say to Patty, "Any young man who could go to Tulane and survive the temptations and pitfalls of life in New Orleans and still achieve some academic success and come out a commissioned officer in the Marine Corps has already met some sort of test."

**Simmons:** As we speak Rob is now a captain and a student at the Amphibious Warfare School in [MCB] Quantico [Virginia].

**Barrow:** Yes. I am very proud of him, when he graduated from Basic School, he went to the 8th Marines and within a month or so was in a Med [Mediterranean] battalion and came out and ended up in Beirut [Lebanon] for Beirut and went back to Beirut when they had the evacuation of PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization]. He was series commander at Parris Island and did OSO [officer selection officer] duty back in the same business that I've been talking about, recruiting. He's done very well; I'm very proud of him. Before we get total off of Manpower . . . well that's about it, I was trying to think of some other things I could add.

**Simmons:** Well I think we might well end this session at this point, if you do think of something we can pick it up. . . .

**Barrow:** Well the other thing, I'm repeating what I said, I left Manpower in October of '76, which is about a 15-month tour, and I swapped jobs with CG, Fleet Marine Force Atlantic, Lieutenant General Bob Nichols.

End of SESSION XI

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION  
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Interviewee: General Robert H. Barrow, USMC (Ret)

Interviewer: Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons, USMC (Ret)

Date of Interview: 13 December 1989

SESSION XII

**Simmons:** This is the next session of an oral history with the former Commandant, General Robert Barrow. As with previous sessions, this interview is taking place in the senior visiting officers' quarters in the Washington Navy Yard. This is the afternoon of 13 December 1989.

General, in our last session we covered your 15 months as deputy chief of staff, Manpower. This was a relatively short tour for you. In October 1976, General [Louis H. "Lou"] Wilson [Jr.] reassigned you to Norfolk [Virginia] as commanding general, Fleet Marine Force Atlantic.

The general perception was that General Wilson was making that move as an additional grooming for you to be his successor. I would expect that your modesty will keep you from confirming that perception, so I will phrase my questions in more neutral terms.

Why did General Wilson cut short your tour as deputy chief of staff, Manpower, and send you to Norfolk as commanding general, Fleet Marine Force Atlantic?

**Barrow:** I guess the short answer would be that I expressed to him my interest in moving on to something else, now that I felt some of the things I could do in Manpower when I first sought the job in fact had been done. And we talked about that in the last session, the so-called reforms. I'm not saying that all reforms originated with me, but at least I was a strong advocate. And once those were all either in place or on the way, I had no burning passion for serving in Manpower.

And I did in fact talk to Lou once, pretty much in those terms. I'm ready to move on. If some of these other command billets open up, I'd sure like a crack at it. And that in fact is just what happened. I think he knew that [Lieutenant General Robert L.] "Bob" Nichols had been there for a couple of years, was due to leave. Nichols had had Manpower experience, would be good at it; and in fact he was. And so that was a very logical, minimum disruption kind of swap.

**Simmons:** You mentioned that Bob Nichols was the previous commanding general, Fleet Marine Force Atlantic. What were the principal elements of your new command, and who were their commanders?

**Barrow:** Well the headquarters in Norfolk was with the 2d [Marine Aircraft] Wing, Major General [Richard E.] Carey, down at [MCAS] Cherry Point, in Beaufort, South Carolina, and New River Air Station [North Carolina]. That's probably the largest wing or equivalent air force division unit in the world. It's certainly the most diverse between rotary [and] various types each.

Anyway, he was commander of the 2d Wing, and [Major] General [Kenneth] McLennan, the 2d [Marine] Division down at [MCB] Camp Lejeune [North Carolina], new Brigadier General [Robert E.] "Bob" Haebel, force troops. This is not only Fleet Marine Force Atlantic, a component of the Atlantic Fleet, but it is also an attack/operational mode, the II MAF [II Marine Amphibious Force], it was then Marine amphibious force, now II MEF [II Marine Expeditionary Force], Marine expeditionary force.

It had been located and had been formed really in the waning months of 1946, when the CG [commanding general] 2d [Marine] Division, sort of double hatted in a very temporary way. And in 1 January of '47—we covered this in an earlier tape, but I will say it again—that FMFLant [Fleet Marine Force Atlantic] came alive in the form of a commanding general, his aide, and a driver on January 1, 1947. And I was the aide, and so I was really going back to a command, which I was one of the first to have been present when it was formed. So that was really almost 30 years later.

I must tell you, to get onto the personal side of the new assignment, that I had many friends in Norfolk from the days of being there as a young officer, aide to Keller [E.] Rockey when he was FMFLant in '47 and '48. And it was very interesting how they were still there—some of whom I had kept in touch with; others I hadn't and sort of resumed the relationship 30 years later. I like Norfolk, the Virginia Beach area, so it was a pleasant experience personally.

But that's essentially what the command consists of.

**Simmons:** Who was your chief of staff?

**Barrow:** My chief of staff for a brief period, several months, was [Colonel] George [B.] Crist. He later made general and just recently retired as a four-star general, commander of [U.S.] Central Command, Tampa, Florida, MacDill Air Force Base.

He was followed by Colonel Jim Phillips [?], artilleryman, a very competent individual.

Major General [Ralph H.] “Smoke” Spanjer was my deputy throughout the time that I was there. Colonel Christensen [?] was the G-3 [operations], Colonel Fillmore [?] was the G-5 [civil affairs] during the entire time. Some of the others changed several times.

**Simmons:** Going back to George Crist, was this your first association or close association with Crist?

**Barrow:** First time.

**Simmons:** You would find reason to use him in various capacities in future years, I believe?

**Barrow:** Absolutely. I came to admire him enormously, his intellect, his aggressiveness. He is a very dynamic officer. He leaves no stones unturned. He is a doer, an achiever, a self-starter, and extremely well-read, knowledgeable about a lot of subjects. And he has had a lot of experience.

In later tapes, you’ll see where he comes back into my life again, but I was very fortunate to have had him as a chief of staff. He’s a taskmaster, let it be known. I would say this to him, so I’m not talking out of school. I would be pleased to have him work for me anywhere, any time, in any kind of capacity. I’m not too sure I would be too pleased to work for him, however.

**Simmons:** How about Smoke Spanjer? Was this your first close association with Smoke?

**Barrow:** I had known Smoke Spanjer since he was a captain, aide to [Lieutenant] General [Roy S.] Geiger, and accompanied General Geiger on a trip to China in 1946. And that’s my first contact with Smoke Spanjer. And incidentally, for some reason General Geiger took a liking to me, and when I passed through FMFPac [Fleet Marine Force Pacific] with General Rockey on the way home in October 1946, he asked me to stay at his quarters and included me in all of the events of the evening, which was a little unusual. Generals in those days tended to . . . unless there was a need for an aide, you didn’t have him around, particularly somebody else’s.

Back to Smoke Spanjer. I served with him in the III Marine Expeditionary Force before it became an amphibious force, now back to expeditionary force in Okinawa, also called Task Force 79. And I covered this in an earlier tape. When I arrived, he was the G-3, lieutenant colonel, made colonel, and I was assistant G-3, primarily concerned with plans. He moved on, and I became the G-3. So I relieved him, worked briefly for him, and relieved him. This would be 1963–64. And our paths have crossed a number of times, but he was my deputy in FMFLant.

**Simmons:** You mentioned the II Marine Amphibious Force in passing a moment ago. Was this an active headquarters at this time?

**Barrow:** No. It was, as most of those were at this time, on paper. People designated. Because

when you went to war, not all of the FMFLant would go to war as II MAF. You had a II MAF headquarters composed of elements—people, that is—from FMFLant and some others drawn from the other commands, because you have a wartime requirement for Fleet Marine Corps Atlantic, as well as wartime requirements for II MAF.

Now, we moved in the direction of more recognition. For example, I think it was 1977—it was '77—we had a II MAF CPX [command post exercise] at Camp Lejeune, so we broke out all the communications gear, which would be the biggest movement of things in the CPX, vehicles and people. And went down into the boonies of Camp Lejeune and conducted a three-day command post exercise with good success. It was a good exercise. It happened to be in the wintertime, and it was very cold. Our scenario was a cold weather one, as I recall.

**Simmons:** Were there any active Marine amphibious brigades or Marine amphibious units at this time?

**Barrow:** We created the first one. It became clear that our exercises, and indeed some of our plans for the deployment of Marines, should there be a conflict, more and more turned on the brigade vice MAF, Marine amphibious brigade as opposed to the Marine amphibious force. Much of this is driven by the limitation of shipping.

It's a sad commentary that we should, in the Marine Corps, ever have to tailor forces on anything other than the threat and the mission to be accomplished. We shouldn't accept in very fine-tuning sort of way to accommodate to whatever shipping limitations exist. But that's a fact of life. We can work hard at trying to correct [that], and we've had some success. But if you only have a brigade's worth of shipping available to deploy, that's what you end up with. So you tailor the exercise to match the capability of the forces that can be lifted.

In any case, in recognition of planning for MAB-size [Marine amphibious brigade] employment and the exercise of MAB-size units, we created the 4th Marine Amphibious Brigade. And its officer in charge, double hatted as CG LFTCLant [Landing Force Training Command, Atlantic] and the individual by name was [Brigadier General Alfred M.] "Al" Gray [Jr.].

And they conducted exercises ranging from northern Norway subsequently, not at the outset, central Schleswig-Holstein area of Germany, Jutland Peninsula, and on down into the Mediterranean. It was a very active element of the force and must be thought of as a kind of another standing part, not one that is created each time you had an exercise or something.

**Simmons:** Where was FMFLant headquarters physically located in the Norfolk area?

**Barrow:** Well, it was physically located in what was once the old naval hospital, very near the Armed Forces Staff College, just off of the . . . I can't think of the boulevard. It's about two and a half miles from the naval base. When it first went there, about two months in 1947, it was out at Little Creek, and then it moved to the Fifth Naval District headquarters building and occupied one part of one wing of one floor. And that's when it was a small headquarters.

But now it occupies a very substantial part of that hospital complex, which also houses Submarine Force Atlantic, Surface Force Atlantic, and then a commander in chief, Atlantic [CinCLant] and a commander in chief, Atlantic Fleet and supreme allied commander, Naval Forces Europe. Now, two of those commands have been combined so that you don't have one man wearing three hats now. But in those days you had three different naval . . . one of them was an area commander, CinCLant, and it had Air Force and Army units available to it, but it was still predominantly naval.

And they were all three responsibilities were vested in one man, Admiral [Isaac C.] "Ike" Kidd [Jr.]. And now is as a good as time as any to talk about that relationship. I believed it to be a responsibility of mine to assure that the Marines always had a "proper place at the table." And that means predominantly the naval table.

My predecessor, General Nichols, was a superb officer and was an outstanding CG FMFLant, and many of the things that I did, and which might appear to be speaking in terms of having initiated them, were really things that he initiated and I brought to fruition. He also had a good working relationship with the Navy.

But I treated that subject as if I was starting on my own. I couldn't say because Bob Nichols has a good relationship, I want to transfer that over to me. You can't do that. You have to prove yourself as you are and not because your predecessor happened to be respected and seemed to get along. And you can say what I set about to do that, or how you want to put it. I like to think that I simply acted because that was part of my responsibility.

In any case, I became very close to Admiral Kidd. I don't think I'm stretching it to say that I was a confidant of his, unequaled by anyone else in the Norfolk area. Here was this Marine three star, who when he had a matter that was perplexing him and he wanted to talk to somebody, try out ideas, maybe even get an opinion or two, I was sent for. He did not do that with his other component commanders.

**Simmons:** Exploring that just a little bit, I'm reminded of the General [Victor H.] Krulak [and] Admiral [U. S. Grant] Sharp [Jr.] relationship in FMFPac, where General Krulak enjoyed a similar status. And you have just used the term "component command." There was always the great question, are the Fleet Marine Forces treated as a type command or as a component command? And you thought you really were treated as a component command, rather than simply a type command.

**Barrow:** And since we have started this subject, I might as well elaborate. Certainly a few days went by, and I wasn't asked to come over. And his schedule might be very tight, but you might as well also say it was thrown out the window, because I might sit with him for two hours. And his flag lieutenant was Frank [B.] Kelso [II], who now has the same job that he had.

He used me to do things for him that could have been done by someone else. It wasn't peculiar to the Marine Corps. In his capacity as CinCLant, he could, for example, send an Army person to Panama to study the situation down there. This was a time when you know we were talking about the Panama Canal Treaty and never knew when it might erupt into something. But I was sent, not because it would be an all-Marine show at all. But I think he thought that whatever I had learned from my visit, etc., would be useful to him, and he could believe it, whatever.

Anyway, I'm an Ike Kidd fan. I like him very much. Marines have learned over the years instinctively to know when they are in the presence of a senior Navy officer who likes Marines or who just says he likes Marines. Ike Kidd likes Marines.

**Simmons:** You are anticipating my next question. I saw Admiral Kidd as recently as last week. And my question . . . and he always evinces this great regard for Marines. You might even say an exaggerated regard for Marines. And I was going to ask you whether this was his sincere feeling, or was this a technique on his part? I think you have already answered that.

**Barrow:** I have. I know exactly what you are talking about. And it does come across in some ways as if he is feigning some sort of great interest and love of Corps, but he's sincere. It's just his way. He's like that about anything he believes in. He kind of goes overboard.

**Simmons:** Admiral [Arleigh A.] Burke has that trait too. Did you find your long experience on the staff of Fleet Marine Force Pacific of much use to you in your new assignment?

**Barrow:** Yes, I did. I surely did. You might say that FMFLant was not unlike any force command, but it still merits being outlined [and] involved in what a lot of Marines think they are



only involved in, training. If you squeeze a Marine and ask him what else they do, they might say, “Oh they deploy people to places.” And only finally do they get down to saying, “and someone in that mass of humanity does a lot of planning for various contingencies.”

That’s what I did at Fleet Marine Force Pacific. I paid a lot of attention to and was comfortable with and understood the whole planning process. And we planned for deployment of Marines from extreme Northern Europe, around through the Mediterranean, and as I have said, all the way into Panama and places in between.

And of course, the other thing, the other component of FMFLant’s charter if you will, is exercises—naval exercises, joint exercises, combined exercises. And so if you take routine training done at Camp Lejeune and areas in the vicinity and some deployed training, exercises, planning, and deployment like MAUs [Marine amphibious units] to the Mediterranean, you end up with a command that always has high-tempo operations. Very few people complained about it. But somehow, we paid some kind of price for that, because we just made ourselves—still do, I’m sure. It’s just the nature of Fleet Marine Force Atlantic.

In the Pacific, you’ve got things that are going on out in the Far East, taking care of people that are deployed out there, and you have things on the West Coast that have, that think they are busy, and they are busy. But they don’t have near the deployments away, particularly overseas someplace, as they do in Lant.

**Simmons:** Would you want to make any comparisons between the relative positions of FMFLant and FMFPac? I’m speaking of two kinds of relative position. One vis-à-vis CinCLant Fleet and CinCLant, vis-à-vis CinCPac Fleet and CinCPac on the one hand, and then on the other hand, vis-à-vis Headquarters Marine Corps?

**Barrow:** Well, I think that the relationship with the fleet at FMFLant was probably closer, and some of this turned on personality. And uniquely the same personality as the fleet was also the CinC for the regional component, CinCLant. Whereas in FMFPac, though people like General Krulak, and I suppose they follow on to him, have a relationship to CinCPac, which is a little off line, because there is no formal relationship. It has to be through the CinCPac Fleet.

You didn’t have to draw that distinction, because the person was wearing both hats. And if you like and get along with him as well as I did, it was a very pleasant experience. So I would think to be in Lant is to be very much colocated, in Pac down the hill to Pac Fleet Headquarters. You just walked across the compound there in FMFLant.

Now that relationship with headquarters, in some ways it's the opposite. I think that you could almost say, looking back through history, that Commandants seem to have talked more on the telephone with FMFPac than FMFLant. Part of that is due to the fact that we had more of our wars out in that direction, the Korean War and most recently the Vietnam War, which established a relationship of almost day to day. I'm thinking of people like General Krulak and General [Wallace M.] Greene [Jr.] talking every day on the telephone. I daresay General Greene didn't talk to the CG FMFLant more than once every couple of weeks.

So there is sort of a historic precedent for it, and I think you find it even today for some reason. It may have to do with the fact that he thinks that because they are so far away, they may feel left out, so I'll call him. In any case, that's how I see the relationship being somewhat different.

**Simmons:** My next question sort of builds on what you just said. There is a general impression, extending over many years, that FMFPac is a stronger and more important headquarters than FMFLant. Is that a valid impression? If it's not a valid impression, why do you suppose it persists?

**Barrow:** I think it might have been a valid impression at one time. And it was valid, because it was true. I mean it was true because . . . I've touched on it a little bit. A lot of heavy hitters were put out there on the staff of FMFPac because that's where the action was in terms of the Vietnam War, before that the Korean War. There are a lot of problems in the Pacific that relate to distance and deployments and so forth.

But I think after the Vietnam War this began to change. And I think in some respects the FMFPac staff, headquarters—I'm trying to choose my words carefully—deteriorated somewhat in quality, somewhat. Not to say that they didn't have some stalwarts, but somewhat. And I think FMFLant was moved up a few notches. So that, I would say, that when I was at FMFLant and when I was Commandant, and I believe it to be true today, there's little difference. The difference would be as related to personalities, not to overall staff numbers and capabilities, performance, etc.

**Simmons:** Without getting into classified matters, what was the extent of FMFLant's NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] commitment during your tenure as commanding general?

**Barrow:** Well, we had commitments that ranged from north of the Arctic Circle and Norway, all the way down to eastern Mediterranean and points in between. And during the time I was

there, some of these commitments became more solidified, more positive, or became finalized.

An example would be the MAF that we now speak of as going to Norway in the event of a general war. That started in a most modest way. It started with exercises, and the exercises were initially of company size. But even once you learned to walk, we learned to walk before we ran and building up to battalions and finally to MAF size, cold weather concurrently, and on the political side of things.

The Canadians, who had a commitment to that part of the world, were being uncertain as to their ability to fulfill it. So the Norwegians were in effect looking around for somebody that would come to their aid in time of such crisis, a threat to the north. And here suddenly was an outfit that evidenced some interest because they were exercising there. So one thing in a sense, led to the other.

We became . . . there was sort of no admiration at all for our inability to perform on skis and move around in the cold, to finally at least grudging admiration. And I'm told today with the much more advanced cold weather training, equipment, etc., that the Norwegians believe us to be very good at cold weather fighting.

Well now, we got written into Allied Forces North[ern] [Europe], which is the command at Oslo [Norway] for NATO. You have Allied Forces South, and you have North, and you have one in the center, and we were involved in all three. Allied Forces North finally, and this was a very long supportive process, we are very much in their plans for employment to that part of the world.

My first experience up there was in conjunction with an exercise that was going to be larger than a company. It was the second iteration as I recall of exercises in the area. And that was in 1977; we had I guess, a battalion up there. I didn't go. In 1978, [Exercise] Arctic Express . . . I beg your pardon, we had a company in Arctic Express, which was conducted in February of '78.

I remember being at a SACLant [supreme allied commander, Atlantic] conference, and the Navy commander of Allied Forces North said, "When are you coming to see us? We'd like to have you visit." And I said, "How about January or February?" And he looked a little surprised. He said, "No one, especially Americans, wants to come to visit Norway in January or February." And I said, "Well we would have no choice as to when we would come if we had to fight there." He said, "That's pretty good thinking. Let's stay in touch."

Well, we had a company in the 8th Marines that was going to be doing one of the early iterations of “walk before you run.” In February, north of the Arctic Circle around Tromso [Norway] that’s north of Bardufoss [Norway], that whole rugged area up there. And so we corresponded, and I went.

And we landed at Tromso on an ice and snow-covered field, and the old [Douglas] C-118 [Liftmaster] that someone said had once been Harry [S.] Truman’s Air Force One; it was an antique in any case. Four-engine DC-6. And the Norwegians extended the very warmest of hospitality. They had one squadron of helicopters—they may have more than that now—at that time. They had one squadron of [Bell] UH-1Bs, that’s a single-engine Huey helicopter. Most of us don’t like to ride in single-engine anything, but that’s what they have. That’s the first generation.

And I was picked up by the northern commander of the Norwegian forces and taken to every installation and saw everything they had to show me in that area, naval and air and ground. But most importantly, I saw firsthand in a very large sense, one of the most defensible pieces of ground I have ever seen.

That part of Norway, for anyone to involve itself seriously as an attacker, would be channelized by virtue of the rugged terrain, which has high ridges and U-shaped valleys, followed by another high ridge and another U-shaped valley. They are compelled to attack down the valleys, which are not that many and which have some cross compartments. And in any case, it’s highly defensible. And I came away with the feeling, particularly as I was flying from one place to another in this helicopter . . . the crew incidentally had been with the plane for like 8 or 10 years, so they knew all the little sounds that didn’t sound right. The crew chief and everybody, same airplane, same crew.

I came away persuaded that the secret to defending there would be heavy use of the helicopter. That you could lightly defend until the enemy had declared himself as to which of these approaches he was to move on. Or you could have an attempted defense on all of them, and he’s going to commit himself to one in all likelihood. And the secret would be to reinforce or achieve mass by use of the helicopter.

Now the Norwegians interestingly saw the same thing, except they didn’t have the helicopters; so they were going to do it on foot. So here you are defending on these various approaches, and suddenly you get the word that they are attacking in strength up approach

Alpha. And you want to get your other forces from Bravo and Charlie to help join the forces at Alpha to defeat this attack. They would have to go by skis all the way down to where there was a common way to go back up the other valley. It may take hours. It would be a five-minute helicopter lift. And I'm just isolating this one example of the defensibility of the terrain and the utility of the helicopter in that defense.

And so I came back a hot advocate for Marines going to Norway. And as you well know, we have gone from company- to battalion- to brigade-size exercises. We are in the plans, as I said earlier. We have all these supplies, equipment, weapons, vehicles, tanks, you name it, prepositioned there. And that's how it all started, some political and some real world.

**Simmons:** What's very interesting to me is that we moved from exercise to contingency planning, rather than from contingency planning to exercise in the genesis of this.

**Barrow:** Yes. And I also might add that this [was] the one time that my Navy friends had some reluctance in taking Marines that far north, because it's up near Kola Peninsula [Russia]. It's up in the part that they view as being rather inhospitable. But after they had one exercise experience and saw what we could do and later saw a role for Marine air to work in concert with naval strike forces at sea, that they warmed up to the idea, and we never had the problems about Navy reluctance thereafter.

And the same thing applies to the use of our air, because when the thing began to get bigger, we had fixed-wing aviation deployed over there. And we became, in terms of size, a dominant force. So it wouldn't make sense, certainly not the Marines, to chop Marine air units to a smaller unit just because they happened to be in country and you're joining them. So we got all the plans to properly reflect that Marine air is Marine air.

And of course this philosophy—and I'm just rambling here now—this philosophy was one that we had to ensure was understood by as many people as possible in that theater. And I must be a little critical of the Air Force in that they tried us on for size more than one time, more than one place, and wanted the Marine air on some exercise and chopped to an Air Force command, often of smaller size than the unit they would be chopping.

And I remember an exercise in the Schleswig-Holstein area in which the Air Force got a West German Air Force general to try to do some of their "dirty work" for them. And having our Marine air virtually thwarted in what it could do, particularly the [Grumman] A-6 [Intruders]. No flying at night, all kinds of prohibitions against their use.

And he and I had a toe-to-toe conversation in the tent of then-Colonel [Jacob W.] “Jake” Moore’s group, who was part of the MAF. And it was all settled in our favor right then and there. And the problem persisted. It wasn’t too long after that I was down in Naples [Italy]. . . .

**Simmons:** Before we get to Naples, was Schleswig-Holstein considered to be part of Allied Front North or Central?

**Barrow:** Baltic. Now, the first time . . . not the first time I had seen him, because he had worked for me when I was in Manpower. He was in training before he made BG [brigadier general]. But one of the early . . . and I had seen him before then, when he was a young major over in Vietnam. I’m talking about Al Gray now. The first time I really saw him in action was just a few days after I took over. I took over October the seventh or eighth of 1976 and left almost immediately to go to the Schleswig-Holstein area.

Now none of this is in chronological order. We’re talking about things up in Tromso. That was a year later, but I don’t think it makes a lot of difference. [Tape interruption]

In October of ’76, I flew into Copenhagen [Denmark] with the express purpose of getting a vehicle and driving the Jutland Coast. And sort of like my experience later, when I said I wanted to see what the terrain and everything was like in the wintertime in Tromso. I said, “We’re foolish, those of us who are senior officers, to succumb to these airplane and helicopter rides which move from point A to B in 10 minutes, when the fighting is going to be done on the ground, and we are losing all feel for space and time factors, and I want to drive.”

And you went across this farmland, sometimes barren land on the Jutland Peninsula and you get a whole different perception of what it would be like to fight in there than if someone suddenly delivered you by helicopter 200 yards behind the beach.

Anyway, the 4th Marine Amphibious Brigade was landing in something called [NATO Exercise] Bonded Item 76. And this was Al Gray’s command, the 4th MAB. And at that time it was temporary. It hadn’t become a permanent MAB. But I have to tell you an amusing story. It was a cold day. This was October, but the wind off the North Sea was blowing strong, and it was wet, half raining. And it was just one miserable day, and everyone was bundled up as much as they could bundle up.

And the brigade commander stepped out to brief the assembled group, which was a lot of NATO officers from all over that area: Danish, German, English, whatever. And there he stepped out with his sleeves rolled up. And he didn’t look as if he was the least bit uncomfortable. And to

this day I think that there are still people, because they were telling me years later, “remember that?” They don’t remember what he said, but they sure remember what he looked like, and he looked comfortable, when he shouldn’t have been. He is, if nothing else, colorful.

**Simmons:** The Norwegian [inaudible] along with it, the prepositioning requirements, this was something new for the Marine Corps, because doctrinally we have been against geographic prepositioning. To what extent were you involved in that?

**Barrow:** Well, I thought we could make one exception, because I believed that this was one place where a relatively small-size unit could make an enormous contribution, and no one else was going to do it. If you were interested in a larger problem, that of defending NATO, you had to see that there was a threat from the north, coming through Finland or coming out of the Kola Peninsula. However a threat may materialize, it was a serious one and beyond the capability of the Norwegians to deal with, independent of help.

And no one else was going to do it. I formed a great admiration for the Norwegians. Four and half million people, which is much less the size of the city of New York, with a pretty good army, air force, and navy (submarines included) and things of that sort. And a great determination to defend their country and a very difficult, long coastline, long country, mountains. It was very difficult terrain to deploy forces.

Anyway, I thought this could be an exception. And I continued to work that problem after I came back to Washington. It was only fulfilled as a “mission accomplished” sort of thing I guess you might say just in very recent years, because the thing is done. But I’m talking about everything done that needs to be done, just in recent years.

**Simmons:** Years ago, our primary commitment was to the southern flank. Now we have switched to the northern flank. Did the requirement for the southern flank just sort of atrophy and go away?

**Barrow:** No. And you know some of our plans call for—I don’t want to get into classified things—but some of our plans call for swinging forces. When we talk about trained forces, you think more primarily of Navy forces, fleets, beefing up one fleet or the other because of the size of the requirement being larger than that which was available. The 4th [Marines] was in the Atlantic, the 7th [Marines] in the Pacific, and so forth.

Well, there were plans to bring some of the Marines out of the Pacific to beef up the Marines in the Atlantic to meet their requirements, which may be in more than one place. Or in some of the plans, put them all together. I don’t want to get into that too much.

But no, we have not neglected—we didn't then, and we haven't since—our commitment to Southern Europe. And there is evidence of it in two ways. We have a continuing presence there in the Marine amphibious unit, now Marine expeditionary unit, which is as you know a battalion landing team and a composite squadron. Sometimes it's not composite. It may be all helicopters, but in more recent years it has been composite helicopters and [McDonnell Douglas AV-8B] Harriers and a logistics unit and a headquarters.

Our smallest Marine air-ground task force. That is a permanent commitment that we have in the Mediterranean with the Sixth Fleet. Has been permanent since May of 1948. The shape and size of the force has varied some, but that's a long-standing commitment. It is so well understood by people in that area that, whereas he doesn't come under the operation control of Allied Forces South, he's under the national command authority of the naval forces in specifically the Pacific Sixth Fleet.

And they are the ones that did things like—I'm talking for the benefit of someone else other than you Ed—but they are the ones who of course went into places like Beirut, the evacuation of the Palestine Liberation Army, back there in '83. And they have done all kinds of things in the Mediterranean. They have evacuated Americans in Alexandria, Egypt, way back, and they were in Cyprus when that conflict heated up. And they have been poised to go any number of times to any number of places.

Anyway, that's a presence, that's a commitment that says the Marines have an interest in that theater. Now, separate from that, we do send forces of MAB or MEF minor—I hate that word, but meaning it is a full-scale Marine expeditionary force, except that the headquarters is a senior lieutenant general type or major general—and you bring more aircraft and more forces. So it's figured on a MAB, but it isn't a MEF.

We deploy those size units, MAB, that bobtailed MEF over there for exercise purposes under Allied Forces South and very much involved with either the Turks or the Greeks or both. And during my time we had one of those they called [NATO Exercise] Display Determination. That's kind of the word for those things that happen every year or two years.

And that was October of '77. A large-size MAB force landed in Saros Bay at the Turkish Straits. That's European Turkey. That's about as close as you can get to Greece without violating air space. And when you put the Turks and the Greeks close together, that makes a little ticklish sort of situation. But that was an example.



And I went to that exercise. And once again, when I was there at Saros Bay and the exercise concluded, I said, “Now let’s drive from here to Istanbul [Turkey],” which takes you down a whole strait and for the same reason. I mean if you were going to have to fight there, your sense of time and space factors would be distorted if you went everywhere by helicopter.

It was an interesting drive. I might add a pretty long drive. And you cross the Bosphorus [Strait] and go into Istanbul. We spent a night I think and went on from there. While I was at Saros Bay, I did take a helicopter and get a pretty good bird’s-eye view of the Gallipoli [Peninsula], and learned enough about it and had it fixed in my mind well enough that it is [a] very identifiable, very recognizable piece of ground if you sort of think about all of that.

So I would say Bob Nichols started this business of being more interested in Europe than we had been before. I picked it up and attempted to accelerate it and show the flag more. Examples: I got to know and like, and I think it was mutual, [Supreme Allied Commander Europe and U.S. Army General Alexander M.] “Al” Haig [Jr.]. I went right to the top, because I knew we were going to have air command and control problems, particularly with the Air Force and maybe with some of the allies too, who had been persuaded by the Air Force when these Marines come, we ought to clip any foolishness about them being part of something called Marine air-ground team.

So I had a couple of sessions. One time, I had breakfast with Al Haig in the Schleswig-Holstein area. He had come to see one of our exercises. It was the time I had the run-in with the Germans. And I told him about it, because it made a wonderful opening to what I wanted to talk about. This was I think, maybe my first visit with him.

I said, “I’m kind of putting myself on report, because I’m an outsider and I may have insulted one of ‘your officers’.” And I told him about it and what the reasons were, and then I waited for a reaction. And he says, “You’re right on.” In other words, when the Marines come with their air, it’s their air. Well, you can’t beat an ally like that, can you?

So an example, we had had a big conference in AFSouth [Allied Forces South] in Naples. And [Navy Admiral] Stansfield [M.] Turner was there.

**Simmons:** What was Admiral Turner’s assignment?

**Barrow:** He was the commander, AFSouth, Allied Forces Southern commander. Anyway, the agenda included among other things, control of air, and I sat there like a Cheshire cat, because Al

Haig had shown up, and he was going to be called upon to critique all of the . . . he was going to sit in on the various discussions, open-floor discussions. And then he was going to make closing remarks, which in effect would be sort of a critique of everything he heard.

And that time came, and the discussions, which I participated in, didn't get out of hand. Don't misunderstand me, but the discussion was about use of Marine air other than for its own purposes, had been going not altogether in our favor. Well, he got up and he very forthrightly, firmly, and persuasively said, "When they come, the air stays with them."

So if you hadn't gone over and made these efforts and done these things, we may have had to deploy in a crisis, and someone would say, "Get those aviation units over here and put them under so-and-so, because we knew we were on firm ground."

We established FMF Europe or FMFLant (Forward) if you want to call it that, in London [England] during my tenure. We had acquired so much in the way of planning responsibility from AFCent [Allied Forces Central] to AFSouth—and I mean AFNorth [Allied Forces North] to AFSouth—that we felt the need to have some people show the flag, if you will, as much as anything else. So we had a little group there headed by a couple of colonels, lieutenant colonels, majors, types of assistants.

And then the other thing we did, which was one of the most profitable things I happen to have started under my arrangement there, but they are still doing it. We had an annual planning conference in London in which every Marine from whatever kind of staff—wherever in Europe, Mediterranean, you name it, Allied staff, national headquarters staff, liaison with the Army, serving with the Royal Marines, whomever—they came to London. And we had people from Headquarters Marine Corps, and I went as the CG from FMFLant.

And they were briefed on everything that's going on in the Marine Corps that they may have missed because they are so far away. And then we covered the waterfront about exercises, command relationships, and you name it as it relates to Europe. And every one of them felt that they profited immeasurably, instead of being left out there by themselves in some headquarters like the one there in Verona, Italy. There is a Marine lieutenant colonel there, and nobody ever sees him. I went to see him once, however.

So there were a lot of things done in the direction of Europe as you would expect would happen, because there are a lot of commitments over there. But I mean, we stirred the pot—exercises, planning, visits, headquarters, etc. And I think these were good things to have done.

Meanwhile, back at North Carolina-Virginia, where the forces were. . . .

**Simmons:** Before we leave Europe, you have spoken of General Al Haig, who was SACEur, supreme allied commander of Europe. And you have spoken of Admiral Stansfield Turner, who was commander of Allied Forces South. Who were some of the other NATO commanders, either Allied or U.S. that left an impression? For example, who had the Sixth Fleet at this time?

**Barrow:** He was director of the Joint Staff at one time, became CinCLantFt, CinCLant later.

**Simmons:** We'll provide that. Any others?

**Barrow:** I'll come up with the others. I can't think of all of them if I [don't] put my thinking cap on.

**Simmons:** You were about to return to Norfolk and what was happening in North Carolina, but first I would like to ask you the same kinds of questions about our Caribbean commitment. How active was the Second Fleet while you were in Norfolk? Were there any crises in the Caribbean?

**Barrow:** No. And we had no crisis in the Caribbean. And we had d——n few exercises. And I think it's something of a tragedy and maybe a reflection on me that we didn't make more of the training areas in Vieques [Puerto Rico].

I can remember a time when everyone went to general quarters to assure we had access to, and maintained and all the rest, the training areas in Vieques. In reflection, I might add, that we weren't training anywhere else. We did some limited training with the unit in the Mediterranean with the Sixth Fleet. But once we started these exercises, as we have already talked about in various places in Europe, we were going farther and maybe doing less because of being constrained by time.

But you couldn't do everything, so the units that were doing those things couldn't turn around and be expected to go to Vieques. So I would say we had made limited use of Vieques. We of course have a responsibility, FMFLant for Guantanamo Bay [Cuba], which I went to a couple of times. And all commanders should do that with some regularity, because it is typical sort of out of mind, kind of small command but a very important one, because the Free World's largest minefield is probably there, maintained by Marines who have been trained to put them in and move them out and repair them and whatever else you do to minefields, work them.

And it's also a place where young Marines can get terribly bored and an opportunity for mischief making with the Cubans across the fence, and historically there has been some of that happen.

Anyway, that's an interesting little element of FMFLant responsibility. But to answer your question specifically, nothing in the Caribbean had our attention during my time down there.

**Simmons:** I note that you received a Joint Service Commendation Medal from Admiral Ike Kidd in his capacity as CinCLant for the period of 7 October 1976 to 25 May 1977, for meritorious achievement in CinCLant joint exercise Solid Shield in '77. What was there that was unusual about that exercise?

**Barrow:** There was nothing unusual about it. It was one of the annual exercises called Solid Shield, some of which are larger than others because of what the forces have committed themselves to provide. It is Air Force, Army, Navy, Marine Corps. It is large scale, both in terms of real forces on the ground as well as constructed forces.

It ranges in play from at sea from Norfolk to Charleston, or even farther south, and on shore primarily the Camp Lejeune area and all the way over to [Fort] Bragg [North Carolina] and often down in Fort Stewart area down in Georgia. [Interruption in recording for telephone call.]

This particular Solid Shield as I recall, was a little larger scale than most of them. And Ike Kidd made a lot out of it as far as exercising all the components, making the commanders be full players. We met frequently with the Army, Air Force, [and] Navy, and I was always included in briefing and planning and various kinds of sessions related to it. So it was kind of his centerpiece during his tenure, this particular Solid Shield.

**Simmons:** That answers what was going to be my next question. You really played the problem. It wasn't just a matter of reading the message traffic. You really got in and played the problem.

**Barrow:** And we made a lot of . . . I made visits with him to places other than just . . . we left the Norfolk area during the planning part of it, and went to Bragg and places like that.

But he had me going places anyway, like Iceland. I went up there once to look at the Iceland defenses and come back and tell him what I found. The same thing with the Azores [Islands], all of which have some assorted responsibilities.

**Simmons:** Were there any other commitments or deployments or major exercises during your tours as CG FMFLant on which you would like to comment?

**Barrow:** Not especially. Back to the cold weather, we knew we had a long way to go to be good during the cold weather. If we were going to be part of that whole situation, we had to convince the Norwegians and the Brits. The Brits, specifically the British Royal Marines, have a role up there. It's small, but it's important. And they sort of looked down their nose at us.

So we did a number of things. We started a special cold weather training allowance, clothing primarily, that was brought out of the works and put in to Camp Lejeune so that it could be looked at, reworked, and issued for training in Korea if we had to. We established training in Fort Drum, New York. I went up there and watched some of that one time. That's about as close to Norway as you can get. We also . . . Camp Ripley, Minnesota, a National Guard camp, and Pickel Meadows, California.

So we got real serious about training our people before they went over there. And they are doing even more now. So I'll tell you, I think they're probably pretty good at it.

**Simmons:** What sort of quarters did you have at Norfolk?

**Barrow:** Michigan House. The same house I moved my CG in 30 years earlier. It is on Dillingham Boulevard or Admiral's Row, whatever you choose to call it. It's not one of the three or four that are distinctively grander, but it is certainly adequate enough. We enjoyed that.

**Simmons:** How much of your family was with you?

**Barrow:** Rob . . . no, Rob was not with me. He was off in school. And our daughter, Barbara, came home and went to school at Old Dominion [University], following the divorce that she had. Her marriage didn't work out. And after some months, she started dating my then-aide. I have lost two daughters to aides. They are like foxes in the henhouse or something. Anyway, that's Sam Turner [?], Marine colonel, aviator type.

**Simmons:** How would you compare the social scene at Norfolk with that at Washington?

**Barrow:** Much more small scale, more person to person. You might end up in a roomful of strangers. You saw a lot of the same people. The Marine Corps retired community is very active and social [with] people like Katie and Art Adams [?], the Youngbloods [?], the Weeds [?]. And they made you feel welcome. We didn't do an awful lot of it, but a lot of it was being done. But what we did do was enjoyable, pleasant.

**Simmons:** Is there anything else you would like to add concerning your tour as commanding general, Fleet Marine Force Atlantic?

**Barrow:** I always like to go back to the people for a lot of things. And I guess I'll never turn that subject loose, including presently. I am pleased that people are so much a key to our distinctiveness and our ability to do whatever has to be done for mission accomplishment.

And so in addition to all these other things that we've been talking about, planning and

exercises and deployment and so forth, I kept a steady hand of interest in the people part of things. You know we have got some pretty good records that are kept, required records on things like conduct, compared commands, who's got few aides, and who's got problems and lessons, and less problems than others and vice versa.

And so I watched the expeditious discharge as it began to sort of play out. And I spent a lot of time on something called foxhole strength. I learned early on, because it was a subject that interested me, that typically you had units going to the field, even in Camp Lejeune part of the field, not even, but especially Camp Lejeune going to the field in which you might have a rifle company with one-third the strength of what a rifle company ought to be.

And the rest were out doing every kind of thing you could think of from running errands to going to dental appointments to working in a FAP [Fleet Assistance Program] program to the base for two weeks. And don't leave out the company headquarters, which if it didn't deploy, at least the first sergeant might not deploy, might be 20 or 25 people in the rifle company headquarters.

So if the CG was at any level, it would be the force level, just pounds on that and asks questions and looks into it and noses into it every time he is down there. Pretty soon, you begin to see some results. And those units deploying the MAU commander would come up—not that I wouldn't have been down [inaudible]. We introduced the MCCRE, Marine Corps Combat Readiness Evaluation. They went through all of that before they deployed, so that you could say he was competent. They know all of these elements of combat defense, offense, and other things.

Anyway, you would see them at Lejeune. But he would come up in the last and final thing to brief me, assure me that they were ready to mount out. And it didn't take more than one iteration of that before they said, "Don't go up there. He's going to ask you how many people are in your rifle company. And don't be showing anything other than what it ought to be, because he is going to raise hell." And that's a sad way to have to do business, but that's just the way it is.

I inspected a unit down there once that was an air liftable unit, air deployable unit, because a lot of people don't realize that we have Marines on a shorter string for deployment by air than the Army routinely has on the string. And we have a brigade's worth of supplies already prepositioned, right now as I talk, or—inaugurated then—at Cherry Point, North Carolina. You only have to move the people and marry up the stuff to take off.

And so we put a lot of interest in that airlift unit. And so I inspected one once down there.

I think it was a reinforced battalion. We had them confined to barracks over a certain period because of their airlift status, keeping them in their status of readiness to do this. You start off with a company and work on up with it.

So I had them fall out to be inspected. And don't you know, the local guy thought he could get ahead of me by knowing I was going to be interested in foxhole strength, so he borrowed some troops from another unit just to stand in and fill in the ranks, because he knew I was going to be looking at that. What he didn't know was that I was going to ask people questions.

I went down and started asking questions, and instead of a guy standing there in the infantry platoon telling me that he was a rifleman and what he does, I suddenly end up with an engineer or something. "Well, what are you doing here?" "Well, I don't know, sir, I was just told to come and get in formation." Well, that made for an interesting little experience, I must tell you.

But you have to just keep working at that. And you know, even after I became Commandant, I used to peck away. And the other thing that goes along with that is, "Are all of your rifle platoons commanded by second lieutenants?" "I don't know sir, but I'll find out." "All right, give me the answer as quick as possible." The answer, "No, sir, they are not." "Why not?" Never mind all the reasons why not, that you've got them doing these other things that somebody says is important.

You ask why not and push on it, they will begin to migrate back to where they are from. And it's just human nature. I remember one time at Camp Pendleton there was a whole bunch of rifle platoons commanded by staff sergeants and so forth, platoon sergeants.

I don't guess I have anything other to say about that experience.

**Simmons:** Let's end this session here, and if some thoughts come to you later, we can always come back to it.

End of SESSION XII

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION  
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Interviewee: General Robert H. Barrow, USMC (Ret)

Interviewer: Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons, USMC (Ret)

Date of Interview: 13 December 1989

SESSION XIII

**Simmons:** This is a continuation of the oral history interview with the former Commandant, General Robert Barrow. Once again this interview is taking place in the senior visiting officers' quarters in the Washington Navy Yard. This is Wednesday evening, 13 December 1989.

General, in our last session we went through your tour as commanding general, Fleet Marine Force Atlantic. This tour extended from October 1976 until the first of July 1978 when General [Louis H. "Lou"] Wilson [Jr.] brought you back to Washington [DC] to serve as Assistant Commandant. This carried with it a promotion to four-star general and also was regarded as a clear signal that you were General Wilson's choice to succeed him as Commandant the following July. Will your modesty permit you to comment?

**Barrow:** Yes. I must tell you that Lou and I were close friends. You always have a special feeling with someone when you think he has a good regard for you. Whether it's well founded or not, I always felt that Lou liked me, and I liked him for the kind of man he was. You put that kind of combination together, there's a warm friendship likely to be the result. We shared so many things in common. We think about a lot of things alike: standards, uncompromising in our standards about appearance, fitness, and conduct, good manners, [and] people fulfilling their obligations as officers in terms of entertaining and dressing and looking and acting the part of an officer and not somebody who's off on a high school picnic when he's going to a social event. So we had a lot that we could just agree on, shared values, if you will, whatever.

We're both Southerners, so we hit [it] off. One of us could fall back on some little anecdotal experience that would lighten the conversation—something that he remembers as a boy—which would probably make more sense to me than it might to someone else, because I'm



from the same part of the country and I would understand the little nuances of a story about the South, about other experiences, and vice versa. Anyway, we're friends.

But I'll tell you in all candor, we never, I never was made to feel, by anything he said or anything else, that I was the heir apparent [or] I was waiting to just simply take over. He had other people put in visible positions. [Lieutenant] General [Lawrence F. "Larry"] Snowden was then the chief of staff, which was always regarded as one of the top visible jobs in Washington. [Lieutenant General Leslie E.] "Les" Brown, if you wanted to consider aviation (and why not), was made visible by being FMFPac that had produced Commandants in the past. [Lieutenant] General [Kenneth] McLennan, who had a number of admirers (I know [Samuel] "Sam" Jaskilka thought the world of him; I do too for that matter), was back as the head of Manpower having had a division. He'd had his tickets punched, so to speak. So there were several contenders around.

I thought of Larry Snowden as perhaps a very strong possibility. And there again, we never have served together in the same unit, but I have a lot of admiration for him and I think he for me. We're friends, and early on I went to his office, and before I could even approach the subject, he was so quick to see what I was trying to say that he filled in all the missing pieces before I got to them, which was, "We both know that each is being thought of and spoken of as a contender to relieve Lou Wilson. I want you to know that I will never, ever say anything about you that would be considered a criticism or some effort to lessen your stature because you are seen as my competitor in this drill." I said it better than that, but I mean that was kind of the thought that I was trying to express.

And he fed right back to me the same thing, so we kind of left there thinking, "They say I'm a contender, but if for some reason I don't. I ought to have great good feelings for the guy who gets it (assuming it's this fellow here I just talked with). The Marine Corps will be in great shape." I think he may have thought that way. I felt that way about him. There was none of this business, none of this rank, or none of this behind-the-back routine. We both laid it on the table and said, "Don't ever believe any story about something someone said that I said about you or this whole business, because it won't be true." And I accepted that and vice versa.

**Simmons:** Different Commandants have used their Assistant Commandants in different ways. Did General Wilson lay out for you your duties? Did he say, "Here are the things I expect you to do. I'm going to deputize you to do these certain things"?

**Barrow:** No. I served in his absence at JCS [Joint Chiefs of Staff] and any of the other things that needed to be done at Headquarters. I made very few trips. I sat in with him on just about anything he was briefed on routinely. I spent as much time in his office as I did in my own. If there was someone coming in there, he would say on the squawk box, “Bob, come on in. I think you’d like to hear this.” So I didn’t miss anything. I can’t think of hardly anything that I wasn’t included on. What I’m trying to say is that I was not just a piece of deadwood sitting in another office because I didn’t have a list of specifics that I was responsible for.

I, other than being the fellow who made the decision, I participated in just about everything he participated in: going to the staff conference and going to this meeting, this briefing, the briefing coming to him, whatever. The exception being that I didn’t accompany him to the JCS. But, when he was out of town, I went to the JCS alone as his representative. So that was kind of the relationship and that’s kind of the answer to whether I had specific duties or not.

**Simmons:** I’m going to pursue this a little more because I think it’s very important, because we’re getting into the philosophies of command here, particularly—whether it’s a commanding general of a division or the Commandant of the Marine Corps—how he uses his chief of staff and how he uses his assistant or his assistant division commander. You’ve already mentioned that General Snowden was the chief of staff and a person of great ability. Did General Wilson use him as chief of staff of the Marine Corps or did he confine his duties largely to the direction of the Headquarters?

**Barrow:** Mostly the latter.

**Simmons:** In the past, there’s been kind of a general philosophy of the Assistant Commandant being “Mr. Outside Man” and chief of staff being “Mr. Inside Man.” Do you think there was that kind of a division in assignment of duties?

**Barrow:** No, not really and neither with Larry Snowden. I made sure he didn’t feel compelled to tell me everything that he might normally think he would have to tell me. One reason why he didn’t have to worry about that is because most of the stuff that he might have had to do that, I was sitting in on anyway with Lou Wilson.

I’m going to carry it a step further. You can put any face on it you want. I like to say that he . . . [Telephone interruption]

You can draw anything you want out of this, but before Lou would have a session, and most assuredly after, with the staff or an individual action officer or whatever he usually . . . we

would sit and discuss it. He didn't need my counsel. I think he . . . we were comfortable together and he might . . . he had already made up his mind, but he might say, "What did you think of that briefing?" And we might spend four or five minutes talking about something. It doesn't mean that I'm sitting there telling him things that are going to make him change his mind or anything else. We thought a lot alike, I suppose.

**Simmons:** You mentioned that you sat in Joint Chiefs of Staff during his absences and, of course, routinely you attended all the briefings that he received before meeting with the chiefs. Did he give you any specific responsibilities, any areas that he wanted you to watch particularly in Joint Staff affairs?

**Barrow:** This is where we draw apart. He had an interest that, in all candor, I did not share with the same enthusiasm, and that's arms control. Don't tell me why, but Lou was pretty much, he was something of an expert on arms control in his own. He had . . . I know him so well. He likes figures. He's pretty good about understanding pay problems and things that had to do with dollars and cents and finance and stuff. Arms control is something like that. They always are counting something: counting warheads or MIRVs [multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles] and throw weights. It's all very measurable, quantifiable. So he kind of liked that.

I can't abide it, and so it was agony for me to go over there (as it was later when I was Commandant) and the subject was going to be three hours of arms control with some Air Force colonel who's been living and breathing it for 10 years standing up there with a bunch of charts going through a bunch of stuff that I would have to characterize as boring—even though it's obviously very important. I would be attentive, but it still doesn't mean you have to like it.

It was understood that I had to represent him, so I . . . it was a strange twist. If he was leaving town and there was going to be an arms control issue, I'd try my best to get from him any thoughts he had that might be in addition to what I got from PP&O [Plans, Policies, and Operations], so I could properly represent him.

**Simmons:** Do you have any particular recollections as to other important issues before the JCS at this time? Any pivotal matters that were under consideration? And while you're thinking about that, who was the chairman of the JCS and how about the other chiefs and vice chiefs of the Services? Any particularly vivid memories of their personalities and your interactions with them?

**Barrow:** [Air Force General David C.] “Dave” Jones was the chairman, and [Army General Bernard W. “Barney”] Rogers was the chief of staff of the Army. [Navy Admiral Thomas B.] Hayward, “Tom” Hayward, was the CNO, chief of naval operations, and [Air Force General] Lew Allen [Jr.] was the chief of staff of the Air Force. And that same group was there, less Rogers, I think [Army General Edward C.] “Shy” Meyer had replaced Barney Rogers, and he had gone to Europe to be SACEur/CinCEur [supreme allied commander, Europe/commander in chief, Europe]. So that same group, with that one change, was there when I became Commandant. So I got to know them not only on the occasions I sat in for Lou, but also on my own.

I guess I was there with a kind of a difficult relationship. Perhaps individually, in other places or on other subjects, one on one the relationship might have been better than it was in a collective environment. A fair amount of acrimony, not ugly but it was there.

**Simmons:** Jones—a friend of the Marine Corps or not a friend?

**Barrow:** Not a friend.

**Simmons:** This was at a personal level or an institutional level?

**Barrow:** Both.

**Simmons:** Hayward—friend of the Marine Corps or not a friend?

**Barrow:** Not—sort of moderate.

**Simmons:** It was about this time that General Wilson was achieving full membership on the JCS for the Marine Corps. Did you have any role to play in this achievement?

**Barrow:** I did not, except I know that it galled the hell out of some of the other people, including the chairman.

**Simmons:** And a lack of enthusiasm on the part of the chief of naval operations.

**Barrow:** Yes, exactly.

**Simmons:** How much did your position as Assistant Commandant bring you into contact with Congress?

**Barrow:** Not at all except when I saw them socially or one on one for some minor purpose.

**Simmons:** You were not a frequent witness at congressional hearings as you had been when you were deputy chief of staff, Manpower?

**Barrow:** No.

**Simmons:** Were there any major budget issues that you now recall? Any big-ticket items that were under consideration?

**Barrow:** Well, there's always the AV-8, because none of the Joint Chiefs supported it. Not that they were the key players, but it's important to have their support. Hayward might have said so but didn't really, and George Brown . . . not George Brown.

**Simmons:** Lew Allen?

**Barrow:** Brown.

**Simmons:** Oh, Secretary [of Defense] [Harold] Brown, Harold Brown.

**Barrow:** Harold Brown professed liking it but not liking it enough to support it, which is another way of saying he didn't support it.

**Simmons:** How frequently would you meet with the Secretary of Defense Harold Brown? Did you sometimes attend the Armed Forces Policy Council meeting?

**Barrow:** Rarely. You see this was Lou's last year. He didn't travel as much his last year as he did, say, his second or third year. So I didn't sit in as much as you might think.

**Simmons:** I'll ask you the same kinds of questions as to the secretary of the Navy. Who was he, and how frequently did you meet with him?

**Barrow:** What is his . . . Claytor? [Secretary of the Navy W. Graham] Claytor [Jr.] was there for a while, and then he moved up and [Edward] Hidalgo took over. I don't remember the dates. I'd have to refresh my memory on that.

**Simmons:** What kind of relations did you have with first Claytor and second Hidalgo?

**Barrow:** Both good. They were totally different personalities in a way, but both lawyers, but different personalities. But I had a good relationship with them.

**Simmons:** Do you have any other comments on General Wilson's style of leadership and management while he was the Commandant?

**Barrow:** I pretty much talked about it earlier, I guess when I was talking about Manpower. He's a very commanding personality, as I said, by demeanor, by voice, by eye contact. He's a commanding figure. He's kind of a no-nonsense person. He has a great sense of humor, but there's a time for that and time to be serious, and when he's serious, he can be very serious.

**Simmons:** And I don't think he's a person anyone would ever take liberties with.

**Barrow:** No, you would not, no. I think he had such universal . . . people held him in such universally held him in such high respect that there was a conscious effort to please him; if not

the fact that he was the Commandant, he was this particular Commandant. There was a conscious effort to please him.

**Simmons:** Where were your quarters at this time?

**Barrow:** I was in Quarters 1, Assistant Commandant's quarters. Saw General Wilson socially a good bit. He and I, more often than not, rode to work together. I was with him a lot.

**Simmons:** In fact, I remember a Christmas season afternoon when for some reason I was at the Commandant's House with Clark, my younger son, who was always a great favorite of Jane because of the name Clark, and you and Patty were there. It was a very informal kind of an afternoon, where you just strolled over from your quarters. You and Patty were alone at that time in quarters?

**Barrow:** Yes. Yes we were.

**Simmons:** Is there anything else about your year as Assistant Commandant you would like to add or discuss?

**Barrow:** Not really. A pleasant year. That's about it.

**Simmons:** Well, we'll end the session at this point.

End of SESSION XIII

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION  
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Interviewee: General Robert H. Barrow, USMC (Ret)

Interviewer: Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons, USMC (Ret)

Date of Interview: 17 December 1991

SESSION XIV

**Simmons:** This is an oral history interview with the former Commandant, General Robert Barrow. This interview is taking place at the VIP quarters, Washington Navy Yard. This is Tuesday, 17 December 1991. General, it has been two years since our last session. In that last session, we covered your year as Assistant Commandant. Toward the end of that session, we discussed the preliminaries to your being named Commandant. We will now get into your years as Commandant, but first I would like to ask you some questions about the selection process. How does the selection process work? Who determines who will be the Commandant, and when did you first learn that you were being officially considered?

**Barrow:** The selection process changes as personalities change. There is no fixed policy, but one way would be the Commandant of the Marine Corps, informally or formally, probably both informally first and then formally later on, proposes to the secretary of the Navy his specific choice or some number of names—two, three, four, and maybe ranked in that order—and his specific choice obviously being indicated.

Then the secretary of the Navy, who perhaps knows these officers anyway, would discuss in some detail with the Commandant about their qualifications and then make his choice, which usually would be the Commandant's choice, and then it goes up to the secretary of defense, who, depending on who he is, gives a very brief interview almost as if saying in effect, "I trust those in the Department of the Navy, the Commandant, and the Assistant Commandant, making their selections so I just want to be one of the way stations to the ultimate sign-off." Or he may interview him in some detail.

Then he goes over to the White House. Of course, the president may or may not ask to see him, and once that's done and he makes his final decision. It's, of course, presented to the Congress

as a nomination. Now, the variations on that theme. . . I'm sure we've had Commandants who deferred the decision process to the secretary saying, "There are three fellows all equally qualified. I give you the choice. I can't come . . ." I think that's probably the case. It has also been not uncommon for the secretaries to be in friction with the Commandant of who his choice is, not agreeing with him, and who then went outside of the Marine Corps, active Marine Corps, to seek advice and counsel, probably even talking the situation over with the chief of naval operations. Maybe even talking to the chairman of the JCS and most assuredly in many cases talking to former Commandants or people that he knows [who know] the candidates that are being considered.

I'm sure that influences sometimes come from the Congress coming down the other way to the president. Maybe not directly, but to the White House to those who would process the paperwork and alert the president, who has his ear. Perhaps the national security advisor would be an example of that who are saying, "It's about that time and we or I, think very highly of General So-and-so." I don't think anybody ever presumed to say in more positive words than that they feel highly of him. I don't think they would dare to say, "This is who we think you ought to nominate." That would be presumptuous.

It varies and, quite candidly—and maybe we'll get to this later on—in the last couple of nominations, it had gotten in some respects messy. We can talk about that later because, without raising my hand to be involved, [I] found myself involved as one of those brought from the outside to have my views expressed on the possible various people being considered.

**Simmons:** In your specific case, the public announcement was made on 18 April 1979 that President [James E.] "Jimmy" Carter [Jr.] had nominated you for appointment as the 27th Commandant of the Marine Corps. Did President Carter personally inform you? If not, who did if you recall?

**Barrow:** He did. Now, I'll be perfectly candid with you . . . Maybe we went over this in the last session and if we did we can scratch it out. There seems to have been two people that were thought of as contenders: [Lieutenant General Lawrence F.] "Larry" Snowden and myself. We're friends. I went to see him early on, and I said, "Larry, as with all these kinds of things, there will be people that will ascribe to me things that I have said about you that are not so and probably vice versa. So I want you to know that my friendship for you and regard for you is constant and will remain so, and I intend not to engage in any kind of political activity." Although that's been done in some instances. He gave me the same message back, and I am confident that the two of us lived up to that sort of gentleman's agreement to not let others want to be kingmakers for either one of us.



So, I don't think either one of us had any sponsorship by anyone, but we went. . . . I don't know how far Larry got in the process, but I found myself seeing the secretary of the Navy, who already knew me. Then I went to see the secretary of defense, and that didn't take very long, and then to my surprise, I ended up at the White House, and I do believe that I'm the only one that went to the White House. I'm not saying there may not have been other contenders, but I think of Snowden as the primary one, and I don't know that he got to the White House.

I had what I would characterize as a pleasant visit with President Carter, and he's not an easy person to engage in conversation, but his manner and so forth was pleasant. He was interested in places I had served, and I gave him some of that, and we talked a little bit about the Marine Corps. There was kind of a lull. I remember mentioning what I knew about Georgia and gave some quotes from the "Marshes of Glynn"—that great piece of poetry—and told him about my time at Beaufort [South Carolina] where I came to love the low country which is also a part of coastal Georgia.

So that warmed him up a little bit, and we continued to talk and he asked me a strange question. I thought it was strange. He asked me what my religion was. I secretively swallowed hard because I'm an Episcopalian. I said so. Now, why do I feel strange about that? Well, Episcopalians have a bad reputation for being sort of thinking themselves a cut above. I know that, but my family has been for generations and that's what we are, and that's what I am. And I knew he was what we'd call a "Hard-Shell Baptist." I didn't know how well that would sit with him, but he didn't show any reaction to it.

It was really goodbye time. I stood up or he stood up first indicating the session was over, and I started toward the door thinking, "Well, that's that." And he said, "General Barrow, I would like for you to be the next Commandant of the Marine Corps." It was almost like catching me as I was getting ready to go out.

**Simmons:** Great story. Let's review some of the elements in the chain of command. Presumably, General [Louis H. "Lou"] Wilson [Jr.] made his recommendation to the secretary of the Navy who in turn passed it to the secretary of defense who presented to the president for approval as you've said. Was Edward Hidalgo still the secretary of the Navy at that time?

**Barrow:** Yes.

**Simmons:** He was. Was Harold ["Hal"] Brown still the secretary of defense?

**Barrow:** He was.

**Simmons:** He was. Were you conscious of any special scrutiny at this time?

**Barrow:** No. No, I was not, and I'll be perfectly candid with you. I think Lou Wilson played it all very honestly. He and I are very good friends. Where before he was Commandant, during the time he was Commandant, while I was Commandant and presently, and he never told me nor did I ask him what happened. Even after it was all over did I say to him, "Well, Lou, how did it come about?" And to this day, I don't know if he went up with one, two, three nominations, or what he may have said about either one or how that part of it worked. That's unusual because usually somehow that gets to be known and sometimes it gets to be even a little ugly, but that's the way it happened.

**Simmons:** After the president's announcement, things moved rather quickly. Your confirmation hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee was held on 1 May. Who chaired that hearing, do you recall?

**Barrow:** Senator [John C.] Stennis.

**Simmons:** Do you recall what other members might have been present?

**Barrow:** They came in and out. Senator [Samuel A.] Nunn [Jr.] was there. I'm trying to think of some of the minority people. Of particular interest I thought was that—this is not an uncommon thing to have—Senator Long, Russell [B.] Long, a very powerful senator at that time, a long time in the Senate of course—he's from Louisiana—and he came forward and spoke excessively glowingly of myself, my family, and there was an exchange of good manners between he and Senator Stennis, these two old (one much older than the other) but long-time Senate friends. Stennis saying things like, "Well, Senator Long, if you feel this way about General Barrow," and so forth—it sounded like, you know, that was . . . made it real good.

**Simmons:** What were some of the salient points you made in your statement to the committee?

**Barrow:** I talked about the fact that the Marine Corps was embarked on an era of getting better in areas of people and equipment, and the things that Lou Wilson had done for the Marine Corps which I thought were needed and were in fact, well, moved in the right direction that I would continue to pursue those. I expressed my interest in people, in truth, in business.

I talked about the need for a Marine Corps and what kind of Marine Corps I could promise. I mean I used the word promised. I promised them that they would have a Marine Corps they could be proud of, etc. It was an easy session.

**Simmons:** What was the line of questioning of the committee? Were there any areas . . .

**Barrow:** There wasn't much at all. I don't recall anything that was difficult to answer or that suggested any particular thrust.

**Simmons:** Well, obviously, the committee was friendly rather than challenging then?

**Barrow:** Oh, yes, very much so.

**Simmons:** Equally obviously, you did well as they confirmed your appointment the following day. L. Edgar Prina. "Ed" Prina, veteran writer on naval affairs, devoted an article to you and your coming commandancy in the June 1979 issue of *Seapower* [magazine]. I'll pull out a few phrases from that article for your comment. I'm quoting. "Barrow will inherit a Corps that has attained a high state of combat readiness for peacetime. He will also inherit a number of serious and nagging problems including this key one: how to ease the impact of inflation on morale and modernization so that the highest quality personnel and material may be obtained?" How would you comment on that?

**Barrow:** Well, that was a major problem. I really, if I may digress and just talk for a little bit, set the stage, if you will, of where we were in the beginning of my tour, 1 July of 1979. President Carter had been president for about two and a half years and he was something of an enigma, and I think his interest in defense was not one that you would characterize as in depth. He probably looked at things in gross terms like the fact that we had to have three million men under arms and that sounded like a pretty potent force.

He probably thought defense was spending more money than we should be spending. He wanted to visit a lot of austerity on defense and some programs specifically, some of which I think he conjured up as well as whatever advice he got from the secretary of defense and the OMB [Office of Management and Budget].

So, the defense, in general all Services, were suffering from a lack of demonstrated interest on the part of the president and what our contributions were to national security and how he might make them better. Even if it wasn't as much as we would want, still try to make it better.

Well, in fact, it was made worse, not necessarily by design, but inflation in terms of constant dollars, which is to say, exclude inflation from the budget numbers. We had about a 4 percent decline over the previous year when I took over, and so that puts you in a state of not being able to afford all the things that you want, and we had some downright nos to a lot of things that we were interested in like the AV-8 Bravo which was not supported by the secretary of defense nor the president.

We can sort of come back to things that we did that got their attention and ultimately made it possible for us to get our head above water, but to continue with the president. He was a . . . I suppose one could also say he was idealistic; others might say naive, about the world in which we lived, and he had made some pronouncements here and there which suggested that maybe the Soviets weren't the bad crowd that a lot of people wanted to make them appear to be.

But, you see, whatever his views were on the future and national security and relations with allies and all the rest, some interesting things happened during my first six months, which happened to be the last six months of the year 1979. And in no order of priority, they sort of ran like this: the Soviets were doing more than advising the rebels, the opposition, to the Afghan government, and before that year was out, they proved it by having several, you know, 25,000 or 30,000 troops that had moved into Afghanistan. Perhaps the centerpiece of turning the president around—that got his attention—but the centerpiece was the November the fourth, 1979, seizure of the embassy personnel in Tehran, Iran. You could see from early on that that was going to be a protracted situation.

[Nicaraguan President Anastasio] Somoza departed, and the Sandinistas took over Nicaragua during that same period. There were two pretty bold attacks on San Salvador, El Salvador, by the rebel, Communist rebels, which looked like that might fall. General Park [Chung-hee] in [South] Korea was assassinated. Mobs descended on [the] Islamabad U.S. embassy in Pakistan. Indeed, a young Marine named [Corporal Steven] Crowley was killed doing his duty.

There were . . . the Panama Canal was finally turned over to the Panamanians, and by the way, about that time, they also changed governments from the then-military figure, whoever he was. I forget. Romero, or somebody worse than he was, took over.

I guess I'm trying to say that there were a lot of forces at work that weren't necessarily linked, but if you stop and think about them, it shows that there was a sort of impotence on the part of the United States to do much about them. Some of them were just local events. Some of them were things that were the consequence of old rivalries or whatever, but it had the effect of showing a weak president in a sense. That these things are happening, if we had a strong president, they wouldn't.

So, I think he made a turnaround to try to do something about that, most especially as related to what the Russians were doing in Afghanistan and what was taking place with the hostage business and the whole [Ruhollah] Khomeini government [in Iran] and their anti-U.S. rhetoric that was going on.

So, he started some initiatives, which were minor but nevertheless on the plus side, to improve things. So, we'll come to those in a minute, but I thought it kind of important to talk a little bit about that. Back to Ed Prina's article and what I inherited in the way of problems of adequacy of funding. The three major accounts that one has to worry about is manpower, and that's the one where we have a lot of money associated with it; the pay and care, etc. of people (procurement and you might say R&D [research & development] relates to that, research and development and then procurement); and then that one that never gets much attention, the unglamorous one, operations and maintenance [O&M], which is just what it implies, taking care of what you have, and it goes beyond that into things like training, ammunition available for training, spare parts for vehicles, and what have you.

I felt that we had gotten to a state where our most serious deficiencies were in the area of not being as good as we ought to be with what we had. That means O&M. So, I did not wish to try to penalize modernization although that always gives. You always keep pushing things out beyond the year that you programmed it to be so that you can save the money to do something else or not have the money at all.

So, we came up with the thought that we would reduce the Marine Corps by 10,000, and so stated that that's what we would do in our next budget submission, and the savings from that would be used not to buy something that was glamorous and appealing out there in the killing world, but to do something about improving our training, buy ammunition allowances. For example, take ammunition. We were, at that time, we were firing more ammunition annually, and that doesn't mean that we were doing all we wanted to do, but that's just what we were doing. The quantities greater than that which we were buying, and the only reason we could do it at all without seeing our stocks just go down to zero is that we were living off the shelves of Vietnam. We still had some ammunition that had been purchased during that period which could have been [inaudible]. We were living off of that, but, you know, ammunition has to be reworked every five years or whatever. Sort of a perfect example [of] what the problem was.

Well, our effort was sincere. In other words, we trade people to make the rest of the Marine Corps better. Somewhat to my surprise, it had an additional effect. It got the attention of folks interested in the Marine Corps, most especially Congress, and that took various forms. One, a lot of times I got what someone said and didn't have a name to it, but there's a senator who said this or a congressman who said that, and maybe if there was a name, I've forgotten it, but there were things

like this: “Who does he think he is? We determine, we authorize the size of the Marine Corps!”

That’s kind of a at once an unpleasant thing to have someone say about you, but it also makes you feel good because you know you got his attention.

Then I had a staffer tell me that—I should remember who it was—the congressman involved that he was alarmed at the idea that 10,000 Marines might leave the Corps, and I said to him, “Is he alarmed at what we did or is he hopefully alarmed at the reason why we had to do it?” In effect, it was really that we had to do it, and the more they thought about it, the more they thought that they should help us, and that sort of set the stage for a somewhat more favorable response when I appeared six months later, in late January, before the HASC [House Armed Services Committee] and in the SASC [Senate Armed Services Committee] and all the rest of it.

I’m trying to remember now what else happened. I remember that we got \$58 million. It was the end of the year reprogramming. Don’t ask me the mechanics of it, but I attribute that . . . which doesn’t sound like a lot of money but at that time, it was very helpful. That \$58 million was just one of the things that I feel was done in response to an initiative which we never had to exercise, but which we said we would, and we actually had it in the program but it never happened.

So, Ed Prina is right. There’s nothing peculiar about that. If you remember, the chief of staff of the Army was sworn in about the same time I was, and we did four years together in the JCS. He came up with that expression that we heard time and time again that the United States had a hollow Army being that you had a lot of people out there, but they didn’t have the wherewithal to do what they might be called upon to do. Whether he thought about what the impact would be, that happened to be a pretty good turn of phrase. It got their attention. So, all that was happening at the time. So, it was not the best of worlds.

It’s like everything else associated with the Marine Corps. Our spirit never flags or fails, and if you looked at how the president may be thinking or you looked at what the Congress was thinking and all these other things that suggested that we were going to have problems in funding, you could let your spirits get down, but you’re not apart from the Corps. I mean we went out on visits even in the Headquarters. We always—at least, I did—had positive feelings about the future. I’m somewhat of an optimist anyway and I tend to keep the glass half full not half empty.

I would say that starting at the end of the calendar year of ’79, the same six months that we’re talking about, we saw this modest turnaround. I guess we’ll get to that shortly.

**Simmons:** We’ll look at a number of those events in more detail as we move along. I would like to

read some additional comments or extracts from the Prina article into the record and see if they evoke any additional comment. I'm quoting again. "The new Commandant may find himself running into some resistance when and if he pushes for the advanced Harrier vertical/short takeoff and landing aircraft and a new class of amphibious ships, LSD-41, to replace the aging [*Thomaston*-class] LSD-28s." You did mention the Harrier briefly. How about the amphibious ships situation?

**Barrow:** Well, let me make some comments about those things. Time for another digression. Had you thought you might have said to me, "What were the first things you did when you became Commandant?" Well, you can carry it back and say, "What's the first thing you did when the president nominated you?" The first thing I did when the president nominated me from my position as Assistant Commandant, I gathered all the generals together in Headquarters Marine Corps.

The word was out that I wanted to present myself to them and talk a little bit about my philosophy, which they probably were curious about. But then after I was sworn in, my very first act was to go call on [U.S. Navy Admiral Thomas B.] "Tom" Hayward, chief of naval operations. When the dollars were short, you can count on the Commandant of the Marine Corps and the chief of naval operations being less friendly than when the dollars are plentiful and we don't have funding problems. So, that's another characteristic of this era in which we were in.

I'm sure the Navy looks on the Marine Corps in those periods as being something that they shouldn't have to afford, whether it's amphibious ships or blue dollars spent on aviation things. Well, it was an attempt on my part to start anew. This is not a criticism of Lou Wilson. It was just to say that I'm a new guy on the block, and I believe and I think these were my words that "We either hang together or we hang separately. Together we make a very positive presentation about the importance of naval forces, but if we let anyone pick away at us individually or we ourselves shoot at the other side, the other part of the partnership, we're doing ourselves a great disservice." And it was along those lines.

Well, his reaction was as you might expect. He agreed with me and so forth. As to whether it happened, we might come to that, but that's the first thing I did. The second thing I did was I called for a press conference in the Pentagon. I didn't say I was going to invite the press up here to Headquarters Marine Corps. I said I would come down where they are and they can invite others outside of the Pentagon Press Corps to come too. So, we had a very sizeable showing of people.

**Simmons:** Now, this was . . .

**Barrow:** This was five days after, about the fifth of July.

**Simmons:** Fifth of July.

**Barrow:** About four or five days after I took over, and the purpose was to have them see me. Although I knew some of them, I wanted them to know who I was and where I was coming from and what my interests were, and I talked at some considerable length about the Navy-Marine Corps team. In other words, doing just what I told Hayward I would be doing. I told him . . . as a matter of fact, that's another thing I told him.

I said, "It's very interesting that I as Assistant Commandant, and will continue to do so as Commandant, never speak of the Marine Corps when we talk about our operating forces without talking about the Navy-Marine Corps." On the other hand, I never hear any Navy admirals talk about the Marine Corps. It's always Navy. So, I did that at this meeting and then submitted myself to questioning of which I got a good many, and I thought it was a very positive sort of thing that I did. I'm not suggesting I disarmed them, but I wasn't some guy hiding up at Marine Corps Headquarters building.

So, that's sort of where we are with Ed Prina. What else did he say?

**Simmons:** He said, and I'm quoting, "Barrow, like Wilson, will not ease his demands for quality first in the individual Marine in appearance, conduct, and performance. He would rather see the Corps come down some in total numbers than lower its standards."

**Barrow:** Are you asking for my comment?

**Simmons:** If there's an additional comment on that.

**Barrow:** Well, that's absolutely so, and I think we've covered this ground in previous sessions of oral history, but I will say it because repetition is the mother of learning. If anybody ever looks at this transcript of this oral history with the idea he might learn something, I would hope above all else he would learn that nothing, but nothing, is as important in any endeavor, military or otherwise—except it's more important in the military because it's the thing to bring about success or cause failure or get a bunch of people killed—and that's the people part of things.

I don't want to make it seem that I'm boasting because I keep talking about what I may have done, but I think I had a major hand in improving the quality of people from such things as bringing the recruit depots in as the head of recruiting east and west of the Mississippi and all of the policies, etc., and setting a goal for high school graduates higher than people believed achievable, and at this time when I took over, we had had three years of 75 percent high school graduates and that particular year I think it was about 78 percent.



Now, did that mean that it was time to rest on our laurels because we'd come from something like 50 percent two years earlier? The answer is no. Never in my mind did I think, "Well, that's pretty good and that's where we should stop." Well, maybe we can get 80. I don't mind telling you, I had it . . . if I didn't express it to anyone because it may have shocked them as being something that was unachievable, but always in my mind I thought we could go all the way to close to, if not, 100 percent. You've heard me speak about it. I think it's in my tape of why I think the high school graduate is so important.

Well, we were in no position to go back on that commitment, and if it took having a smaller Corps to do it, and as I recall, that year we missed our recruiting numbers by some few, and it wasn't that we couldn't have gotten some bodies, but we were still looking for the better bodies. I don't like to use that expression, but that's what it was.

This is sort of a digression. During my four years as the Commandant, without consciously thinking of it every day or having some sign in my office to announce to the world what my thoughts were on the subject, I probably was more constant in my interest, attention, devotion, and practice and policies in the people part of things, and especially this recruiting business. I had had a bad name with recruiters because I had suffered under what was being done in the early '70s, which was not all together their fault. They were carrying out policy. They were shipping people that shouldn't have been shipped, recruiting people who shouldn't have been recruited, and when I made noises about it, I know I must have been thought of as a bad guy.

I didn't do things to turn around that reputation. I did it because I believed in it. This is where the rubber meets the road. The beginning of the Marine Corps is who we bring in. The second most important thing is initial recruit training and then [inaudible].

So, every time I had an opportunity, I let people know that this is maybe in peacetime the most important thing the Marine Corps could do, is recruit well. I just didn't say it. I made sure that we had an adequacy of people, that they were carefully selected, recommended by their COs [commanding officers] for recruiting duty, that they went to recruiters school in San Diego headed by a guy who knew what he was doing, that they had all of the most modern techniques for marked behavior, how one goes out and gets somebody to buy his product. In this case, buy the idea of being a Marine. All that was taught there.

We had a pretty stern set of standards of performance at recruiters school, so a lot of them didn't make it, and we tried to treat them fairly and better with respect to things like promotions,

choice of next duty station, extra considerations of which, the planning that you do. Then I remember saying to the people in there, “I want the best people in the Marine Corps on recruiting duty. I want the best officers in the Marine Corps in recruiting duty.” I got a puzzled look. I don’t know what the puzzled look was about, but I assume it meant, “How do you define best?” And I said, “Now, if you don’t understand what I mean by that, it’s the same kind of fellow you would like to have with you when someone says, ‘Take the high ground.’ He’s a doer. He makes things happen.” I said, “We’ve got to get over this business of the next fellow who comes through the door is going to be assigned to recruiting duty,” because some of them could never be recruiters if they were out there all the rest of their lives, and that the leadership is so terribly important.

We got that. I could regale you with stories for some time here about the success that came with putting the right people out there and particularly I might say, and I sort of singled out the officers, young captains [and] young majors, who then became CO. What did they call it before that? Officer in charge of recruiting station, Birmingham, he became CO. He was commanding officer, not some officer in charge.

I did things like . . . I don’t think many people knew this, except my aides. When I had some report and I read . . . I met often with my recruiters in Headquarters Marine Corps. When I received a report and looked at it and we discussed it and some particular recruiting station in some place did exceptionally well, not while the head of the recruiting was there but after he left, I would tell one of my aides or something, a military secretary, “Get the commanding officer, RS [Recruiting Station] Nashville on the phone.”

This is not Bob Barrow saying how big he is. It’s putting myself in the shoes of a captain in whatever RS I may have called. I did this from time to time. To have a call from the Commandant of the Marine Corps when you’re out there in a difficult assignment, and your best reward in fact is the product that you get in, not just the numbers, but the success rate as they go through recruit training. Probably the next biggest reward would be to have of all things the Commandant of the Marine Corps know that I personally know that I did that, and call me to tell me that. So, I used to do that, and I guess in time I became known as sort of the recruiter’s best friend. Still am! We’re talking 12 years later, and I still have recruiters or officers who call me and say, “General, have you heard what Headquarters Marine Corps is thinking about doing?” As if, you know, I’m going to get on the horse and ride to Headquarters.

While we’re talking about making phone calls, I had another policy that I implemented in an

effort to personalize things. I had . . . I told my aides, I said, “You know it gets kind of lonely out there.” [Tape interruption]

**Simmons:** . . . two or three general officers.

**Barrow:** Every week. So, they would call the CG [commanding general], Marine Corps base wherever or some unit. I know at first they were probably alarmed. When someone would say, “The Commandant of the Marine Corps is on the phone,” usually he’s the bearer of bad news. But I’d simply say, “Well, I just thought I’d give you a call and see how things are down in Albany, Georgia, and what’s going on.” Well, I think that’s important to do things like that. You can always find time to do it. And I practiced that pretty much I guess, throughout my four years. I’m not suggesting that I didn’t miss some weeks here and there, and I’m not a big person on the telephone by the way.

Back to the question Ed Prina was talking about, the AV-8B and amphibious ships. I’ve talked a little bit about the AV-8B, but I’d like to say a little bit more. [W.] Graham Claytor [Jr.], who had moved from secretary of the Navy to deputy secretary of defense, believed in it. So, I had a kind of ally, at least I had my “six” covered as the saying goes with his presence in the scheme of things. So, I was perhaps a little more outspoken than one would think one should be when the secretary of defense and the president had said no. So that I didn’t wait for the Congress to ask me, “What is your personal opinion?”—which is the way they circumvent, to get you around that business of talking about something that you would choose to bring up on your own.

I brought the subject up as one of the things that we felt we needed that was unfunded. Indeed, we were told at a JCS meeting with the president at Camp David [Maryland] that we were not to bring up specific things that related to funding. We were to talk in general terms, very general terms. Well, again, as Graham Claytor is sitting there along with Hal Brown, the two of us as I recall, I told him, I said, “I’m going to seek the opportunity to say something about it.” He said, “Go ahead.” So, I did. No one else had violated the agreement that we wouldn’t talk about specific things. Of course, it had sort of languished along until later years, but the amphibious ship thing did get some relief.

I went out to the laying of the keel of what would become the [USS] *Whidbey Island* (LSD 41) in the state of Washington. We became increasingly interested in the LHA [amphibious assault ship]. There were so many things that the Navy did that were being neglected but supposed to do (that they were supposed to do in order to be effective) got interested in. The first and foremost was

the amphibious ship business, because we were in a steady state of decline and block obsolescence was facing us in 10 years out. So, we began to get, without getting into specifics, some relief. Not totally just Navy. They put some ships in, but the Congress was supportive in either adding or expediting. The other thing was naval gunfire, which we were less successful on. I will come to it in time about the battleships and what we had to do. [Inaudible]

One other thing I tried to do in that press conference I had, and in every audience I had anywhere, was to kind of enunciate what one would call a maritime strategy. Not a specific strategy. Not one devoted to a particular geographic area or a particular possible adversary, but a maritime strategy, which simply talked about the fundamentals, the control of the sea, and power projection.

We talked either, one, you could bring the Marine Corps in as being in control of the sea and choke points and that sort of thing. It was particularly something that I talked about with respect to power projection, that we had carrier aviation and the U.S. Marines. That was the two things that could project power and one of those, only one of those, controlled the ground and sea objectives and didn't just destroy as aviation will do.

I had a very long message. I gave it in various forms depending on the audience, and I will tell you, I actually talked to Navy people about the need to speak more about sea power, which is the underpinnings to the maritime strategy. This is an ugly thing to say because I had a lot of friends in the Navy and admire them and work well with them and all that, but I actually had people react as if we had discovered something. "Oh, yes, sea power. We ought to really do that." I had more than one admiral tell me that as if, you know, we had been too busy with other things and we hadn't had a chance to talk much about that. Well, you've got to talk about what you are capable of doing or what you should be capable of doing. Who else is going to do it?

So, I found myself being a real drumbeater about something that's called maritime strategy. Now, that strategy in later years got fleshed out to specific places and possible enemies. That's sort of an aside, but an important aside to all this and it's kind of setting the stage for where we thought we were going and what we were up to. Lets fire on, and see what happens next.

**Simmons:** Backing up just a little bit here. Your excursion on recruiting certainly proves Ed Prina's point. He said, "Barrow makes no secret that quality recruiting remains at the top of his list of priorities," and you've demonstrated that. "On the 14th of May, it was announced that President Carter is submitting to the Senate for confirmation the promotion of Lieutenant General Kenneth ["Ken"] McLennan to general as appointment as Assistant Commandant effective 1 July." Was that

nomination in accordance with your recommendation? In other words, did you get to pick your Assistant Commandant?

**Barrow:** Yes, I did, and I picked him because he was a man I had not known when we were younger officers. I really got to know him when I was head of Manpower and he was head of Manpower Policy. I found him to be extremely bright, [he] worked well with people, [and he] knew how to get at a problem. He was subsequently CG of the 2d Marine Division when I was CG FMFLant, and I observed him there. So, I thought he would make my kind of Assistant Commandant.

**Simmons:** At what point did you decided to combine the billets of Assistant Commandant and chief of staff?

**Barrow:** Early on, almost at the time I was nominated by the president then had to give thought to a number of things like what people you want to do this, that, and the other. I was mindful that at one time this had been the situation. You had one person doing both jobs. I've forgotten who changed it to being two people.

**Simmons:** Along about [Gerald C.] Thomas's time. I think he was the first specific chief of staff. I think he might have been assistant to the Commandant before then.

**Barrow:** Well, I found in my year as Assistant Commandant, knowing Lou Wilson as well as I did, and being a confidant of sorts and a friend, and I think he respected my judgment about things, and we had a super guy as a chief of staff, Larry Snowden, who would not willingly cut me out of being informed, but it was kind of an onerous experience. I always felt like I was a fifth wheel, that if I got any information it was because Lou Wilson remembered that I was sitting next door and said, "Come on in here and sit and listen to something."

**Simmons:** In other words, you felt underemployed?

**Barrow:** No, not underemployed. More underinformed, not as completely informed as I might have been, sort of was an awkwardness for him to keep me informed. "Get him in here. He may have something to say about it. If nothing else, he ought to know about it." Or Larry Snowden would inform me of things. "You're being informed because you're not going to make a decision or anything, but I just feel like I have to keep you informed." I thought it was kind of awkward to tell you the truth.

**Simmons:** I guess a comparison could be drawn to a commanding general of a division and his chief of staff and his assistant division commander depending on how the commanding general chose to use his assistants.

**Barrow:** Most assistant division commanders, not all but I think that most either get cut out, given nothing to do, and sort of treated as an afterthought or they are given a specific thing to do like “You’re in charge of training” or something like that.

**Simmons:** Or made him a deputy commander. . . .

**Barrow:** But as far as feeling that you are in the line of things, you’re not. It doesn’t go through the chief of staff to the Assistant Commandant to the Commandant. So, I found myself as a result in an awkward situation, and I do recognize that the Assistant Commandant not only has to be kept informed, but actually [inaudible] has to go to JCS meetings and all that. But I just thought there was a better way of doing it and we could save a general in the process, which I used to create that three star for [MCB] Quantico [Virginia]. We got one in there for I&L [Installations and Logistics], but I don’t remember now which came first.

Anyway, you’d have to ask Ken McLennan and [Paul] P. X. Kelley what they thought about it because one did two years and the other one two years. And I believe that that’s the situation now. Isn’t that true?

**Simmons:** Yes, it’s true. The title chief of staff has been dispensed with. The Assistant Commandant is performing the functions of the chief of staff and also those of the alternate, the Commandant’s alter ego in JCS matters and so on.

**Barrow:** But like so many things, the organization worked depending on who is involved. I think we may have said it earlier, but one of my favorite stories about the limey British soldier who was being given a very simple briefing along with his fellow soldiers about the organization of the company and of the battalion, with a few boxes and wired diagrams briefing explaining what the relationship was, and he made the statement, “It ain’t so much them boxes. It’s the blokes what’s in them boxes.” And that’s sort of where it is.

**Simmons:** On Friday evening, 29 June 1979, at a parade at Marine Barracks Washington [DC], you symbolically assumed command of the Marine Corps, relieving General Wilson. What are your recollections of that occasion?

**Barrow:** One of . . . it doesn’t take much to make me happy during my Marine Corps career. I was just happy to be a Marine and happy with the whole situation and places that I found myself, but that was a special happiness, a special happy time for me because I had a lot of family and friends, all of my immediate family, and then I had a fair number of friends who came up from my hometown, and it was just a happy occasion as far as a personal reaction to be at.

**Simmons:** I remember that, in your remarks, you recalled that General Wilson's first order when he took command in 1975 was to "get in step and do so smartly," and that you said that your first order was to follow General Wilson's admonition and "keep in step." As we have discussed earlier, you and General Wilson thought much alike on most issues, but there certainly must have been some wherein you had differences. Did you have a little list of things that you were now going to do now that you were boss?

**Barrow:** Well, this is not a criticism of Lou, but I had thought maybe one more effort should be made to have a better relationship with the Navy. I still harbored in my head and would seek the opportunity to do something when it presented itself, which it subsequently did, to do something about the accompanied tour situation in the Far East, which had been for a number of Commandants, sacrosanct. Around the '70s, they loosened up and let a handful go out there.

I can't think of . . . there probably were other small things, but that's about the extent of it. I gave you two examples.

**Simmons:** You've already spoken of your willingness, about your initiative to cut the strength of the Marine Corps by 10,000. I'd like to revisit that. In your first week as Commandant, you announced that you were willing to accept a decrease in end strength in fiscal year 1980 from 189,000 to 179,000 in order to obtain funds needed to maintain combat readiness. Now, was that your initiative or had you worked it out with General Wilson?

**Barrow:** I think we'd talked about it. I probably talked more about it with P. X. Kelley who was in Manpower in terms of specifics. I think Lou knew that that was going to be an initiative. So, we had thought about it and improved on it. In other words, it wouldn't be something that he would not have announced it before he left. He let me do it. If it was a collective decision, it was probably a collective Lou Wilson, Bob Barrow, P. X. Kelley. I would not say I woke up one morning saying, "Let's cut 10,000 or get 10,000 cut."

**Simmons:** I think you really have touched on this earlier, but was this a scare tactic or did you really mean it?

**Barrow:** Well, we meant it because it turned out that it came across as a scare tactic. That was not our reason for doing it. We did it because as I've already indicated the paucity of funding things to keep us in business not looking to buy new and glamorous [stuff] but badly needed stuff that was out there.

**Simmons:** I think you've also told me how it finally worked out. That by the end of the year you had had \$58 million reprogrammed and so forth.

**Barrow:** That's right.

**Simmons:** How well did you know Secretary of the Navy Hidalgo? How frequently did you meet with him, and what are your recollections of his style and capability?

**Barrow:** I saw him every week. We got along well. He was a man easy to meet. He also had a certain formality about him because he was Hispanic.

**Simmons:** I always thought he was well named.

**Barrow:** Yes. He was very proper in his relationship with others, in his dress, and in his demeanor, but he was also gracious and warm. He tried with some success to understand the naval Services, and he represented us well in places where we needed representation. He and I got along well.

**Simmons:** I'll ask the same questions about Secretary of Defense Harold Brown. How well did you know him? How frequently did you meet with him? What are your recollections of his style and capabilities?

**Barrow:** Well, Hal Brown is to begin with a very brilliant man. Like a lot of those kinds of folks who have an intellect beyond most of us, I suppose, he tended to be portrayed or comes across as being something of a loner. He does not like to mix with people. He doesn't like small talk. There's nothing wrong with it. I'm just telling you what he was like.

You never felt that you could establish a warm personal relationship with him. It would always be a pretty formal one. I met with him twice a week. Every Monday morning, there was the Armed [Forces] Services Policy Council, which is the chiefs of Services, and I met with Hal Brown and his deputy and some of his assistants, and usually without any formal agenda to talk about the things that he wanted to talk about. We could bring up something or he could bring up something, but he also came to the JCS meetings once a week. I think it was every Tuesday afternoon. I found him to be much more willing to talk there than he was at the Armed Forces Policy Council meetings.

Then there was the Defense Resources—what did they call it—Defense Resources Board where we undertook to look at things on a grander scale about affordability of forces. That was maybe once a year. We had to go two or three afternoons to do that.

Only rarely did I ever see him one on one or with just one other person. I'm sure it happened, but I'm trying to recollect. Well, I know of one time it happened, and we'll get into that later.



**Simmons:** You've already mentioned the Under Secretary of Defense or Deputy Secretary of Defense Graham Claytor. Were there any other deputy secretaries or under secretaries or assistant secretaries either of defense or of the Navy with whom you had a close relationship?

**Barrow:** Close, no. Friendly, yes. I didn't have any that I didn't get along with.

**Simmons:** About the same time, you had some things to say about women in the Service, including the need for women as well as men to register for the draft. How well was the all-volunteer recruiting effort working at that point?

**Barrow:** Well, it was working, but marginally. I still believe that we needed to get better quality overall, and we had all the things in place to make it happen, but it wasn't happening at the rate that I think was possible. It was essentially because the upper class, the middle upper class and much of middle class America was not raising their hand to serve. So, that restricted your target because much of the target exclusive of those things I just mentioned were people who were not high school graduates, high school dropouts, mental group [category] IVs, not mentally qualified, not morally qualified, whatever. So, we had a much smaller target to shoot at, and I still believe that it was something the nation should do and people should support. A draft would not be a bad idea for this country, so I was not one who said, "If we could have an all volunteer, for gosh sake's, let's don't have a draft." I believe that . . . [Interruption]

**Simmons:** General Wilson had a particular interest in SALT II, the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty [Talks], and was something of an opponent of SALT II. Did you hold the same views?

**Barrow:** More or less. I'm going to make a confession here that one of the things that set me apart from Lou Wilson was that he had a sincere, abiding interest in arms control. [Interruption]

**Simmons:** We were talking about General Wilson's interest in SALT.

**Barrow:** Very interested in SALT. I'm not sure how or why he became as interested as he was, but he knew a lot of the detail and was very active in the JCS meetings with respect to his position and all that. This is an admission that I'm not very proud of because it's part of my responsibility to be very interested, but I never could get as worked up over arms control as he could and many others could. It's probably wrong to state it, but I never felt that I as Commandant of the Marine Corps, even if we came up with a position in JCS, which would be easy for me to have without getting submerged into details of it, that I was not going to make a hell of a lot of difference in what kind of arms control we might have.

So, I never became a student of arms control. I listened to specific reasons on specific proposals that the arms control folks were about to consider what might we do to reshape and so forth, but when I took over the SALT talk, SALT had become a treaty, signed, and was awaiting ratification, which it never got from the Senate. So, I didn't have to interest myself specifically in SALT except as it relates to what position we might state to help move it in the Senate, and that was already pretty well known so we didn't have to keep restating it, what the JCS position was and so forth.

Of course, the big thing with SALT, as you may recollect, was it hadn't included the [Russian Tupolev Tu-22M] Backfire-5 [?] bomber, as I recall. That was one of the things, and more importantly, verification was a big grapefruit to swallow. As a matter of fact, that's what Congress probably kept its position [inaudible]. But if you wanted to spoil my day, [the way] was to have people come by; the operational deputy, we call him the OpDep, the lieutenant general head of Operations and Plans, would come in with all his arms control people to brief you preliminary to going down to an afternoon devoted to arms control in which, from somewhere inside the bowels of the Pentagon came forth this expert who, in most instances, not all, of their career fooling around with all of the arithmetic associated with arms control. Not a very lively subject. Important as it is, you can't put faces with it, just dull.

**Simmons:** Shortly after you became Commandant, the Army began to talk of a rapid deployment force—a 100,000-man strike force that could be airlifted to any point around the globe. We'll be getting into this in more detail later, but initially, was this perceived as a threat to the Marine Corps' amphibious mission?

**Barrow:** No, because it couldn't happen, and I think they called it a unilateral force was the term they used at first, and the arithmetic wasn't there to make it possible. There was no way that they could acquire the wherewithal strategically enough to get anywhere rapidly in any size. I think they called it the Unilateral Corps, whatever it was that became the rapid deployment force. It just wasn't in the arithmetic. They never talked of it as a corps, going to be a corps. Well it was competition, but I didn't see it as a competition that was going to prevail, and it didn't.

But, you know, one of the things that came out of all the things I talked earlier about the last six months of the calendar year '79—the Iran-Contra and the trouble around the world, [and] the Russians in Afghanistan, etc.—part of Carter's reawakening, wakening, wake up I should say he got a wake-up call, was to come up with the rapid deployment force. So, these two things came out

about the same time. I was rather struck that many people believed we had one, called the Marine Corps. The Congress made little talks on that. “What’s this business about a rapid deployment force? We already have one: the Marine Corps.”

I never betrayed that interest in the Marine Corps. I never sat and tell one, “You’re wrong. It’s got to be everybody.” I let them think that. I still believe it. We may not have had a sufficiency of size for some kinds of things, but certainly for the people who might go first to make the initial contact and get the thing sorted out, that the Marine Corps could have been, if not the rapid deployment force, the precursor force of the rapid deployment force, as opposed to this crazy jointness that later followed and still hangs over our heads in which it seems everyone must go together at the same time.

So, that rapid deployment was one initiative that came out along with Carter’s statement that we would do whatever is necessary to protect our interests in the Persian Gulf region to include military force, which may seem to be just words to some people, but the JCS—and I’m paraphrasing; I forget the exact statement—the JCS not only took it seriously. It alarmed the hell out of us because if you stop to think about going into that region, the two big obstacles are first—three or four really—the capability that you needed to win against some enemy that you didn’t know what size he was. He only thought that he was talking about the Soviets and anybody they would scarf up as allies in the process.

You were thinking about how do you get there? There couldn’t be a farther away place, and once you get there, how do you establish yourself in opposition to this Soviet threat in a place that doesn’t want you, specifically western Iran, the Zagros Mountains, and all of this inhospitable terrain that nobody would ever choose to fight over?

So, you’ve got an unfriendly country that doesn’t want you there, and you’re supposed to go and be ready to face up to a threat the size of which you do not fully understand, and in [the] most remote sections of that part of the world, at great distances from these shores. So, when he said military force was not excluded from his opposition to whatever the Soviets proposed to do, all this kind of gave birth and energy to the idea of rapid deployment.

**Simmons:** On 19 October, a typhoon caused a terrible fire at [Combined Arms Training Center] Camp Fuji, Japan. Thirteen Marines would eventually die of burns they received. What is your recollection of this tragic affair?

**Barrow:** In my 41 years wearing a Marine Corps uniform and participated in three wars to some

degree or extent or another, having witnessed a lot of bad things, ugly things, none can compare to that experience. And to this day, when I think about it, it is difficult as I'm right now experiencing to not have tears come to my eyes. These fine young Marines of the 2d Battalion, 4th Marines, were at Fuji doing what most infantry battalions and some artillery units used to do, go up there to train, out from the base camp, which was primitive to say the least, for so many days then come back with the expectation that they could kind of clean up and have hot meals, maybe see a movie; decent Quonset huts is where they'd live. There they were sitting out this typhoon, remnants of which touched there, some pretty strong winds as I recall, torrential rains so there was a lot of water pouring down the hillside that the camp was on.

Up at the upper end of that camp was this berm with a 5,000-gallon fuel tank, which as a consequence of all the high winds and whatnot ruptured, and no one knew it. It mixed with the water, the berm was ruptured, and you could not sit down and plan a worse kind of thing to have happen. It was all just nature and circumstances just came into play there, and a lot of these young men were snuggled sleeping. Some of them were sitting up. I've forgotten what time of day it was now. Some recollect smelling fumes. Some never knew what happened. The water carried the gasoline fuel riding on top of it down into the Quonset huts. Easy to do. Easy to flood through them. They're not waterproof. They had fires going. This was in the fall. It was getting chilly there which was the fuel provided the fuse for. So, there was lighted . . . there were flames. So by the time the fuel got to the fires at each Quonset hut, it created explosions along with the fire burning. It was just so bad to have that happen. I think 38 or 39, some sailors, most of them Marines, and as I recollect four died almost at once. I think by the time the burn center people from Brooke [Army] Medical Center, the U.S. Army medical center at San Antonio [Texas], got there, they had maybe two that had died and two that were about to die, and they didn't even bring them back because they died within hours. I think 13 ultimately died, so 9 more died between the time they arrived back in San Antonio until near the end of the year.

There were several things about this. Two external agencies to the United States Marine Corps performed magnificently. The Air Force put together a medevac aircraft. They didn't have any in that part of the world that met the requirements. They left San Antonio with all of the capability to deal with that particular kind of injury, burns, with the number one burn man in America on that airplane, an Army colonel named Walters [?], as I recall.

They rode from San Antonio to Japan, picked up . . . did some triage there of who needed to

be treated first and who was hopeless. They say they left a couple. They were back in San Antonio in just a little bit over 24 hours. Think about that. It's absolutely remarkable to fly from San Antonio to Japan and back, dealing with that heartbreaking situation.

Anyway, I was on the West Coast on a trip. Patty was with me, a couple of aides. I said, "We go right now." We break off and we go to San Antonio. So, I got there and, because burn victims are very vulnerable to infection, I had to be sanitized, put in a special suit, and all that. And it was because I wanted to. They offered, they weren't eager about it, but I asked and they let me do it. I went to see them all. It's a terrible sight.

One young fellow—it's just as well that he be nameless; I don't remember his name—sort of a fellow who proceeded us in each room, you know, to alert them that somebody was coming, the head officer said, "The Commandant of the Marine Corps will be here in two seconds" or something. He, this young fellow, was on his back, and he said in a voice that was surprisingly strong—he was absolutely swathed in bandages, little slits where his eyes would be—and he said . . . [Tape interruption]

**Simmons:** You were describing this one particular burn victim.

**Barrow:** Well, there were 34 there. The largest collection of burn victims ever at this place, which is the burn center for the U.S. Army. Anyway, we went around and I went into this one room, and this rather strong voice in all these bandages said, "It's a pleasure to see you, sir."

**Simmons:** What do you say to that?

**Barrow:** I said, "I'm sorry it's under these circumstances." To which he said, "It would be a pleasure to see you under any circumstances!"

**Simmons:** In the fall of 1979, it seems . . .

**Barrow:** Let me . . . he, within a few hours, died. Just an example of the Marine Corps operating on a shoestring. Fuji doesn't look like that today. That incident, among other things, moved me to make it look like a place where people should be secure and reasonably comfortable. Not some back road, makeshift buildings put together by infantry carpenters. The same is true of that facility out there in cold weather, inexcusable that at Bridgeport [?] we had that kind of thing we had there. So, in some sense, it served some good purpose to make changes to those kinds of things. But the interesting thing about that experience, all of the parents, some wives, [and] siblings were flown there to be with these youngsters. I said to the Army authorities that were very kind to me and showing me around, I said, "I would like to meet with them and talk to them."

It was set up to happen in the chapel, and I think it was the chaplain, a very senior man, who came up to me and said, “General, do you know what you’re letting yourself in for?” I said, “I think I do.” Someone has to talk to these people, and if I end up becoming the target, that’s all right. So, I tried to piece together the best I could—nothing like what finally came out—tried to describe this situation, how it happened, and in some detail and expressed my deep sorrow on behalf of myself personally and the Marine Corps as well and all that. And then I said, “I’d be happy to try to answer any questions.”

One man stood up at once. His first question was, “I want to know who is responsible for this? Who is responsible for my son up there dying?” Well, I’m not sure you could ever find any one individual on the scene that could say who is responsible. Neither do you want to tell this guy nobody is responsible. There were too many man-made factors in there. It wasn’t just the typhoon. So, I guess that somewhere in the back of my head, I figured, let him have at me. So, I said, “I guess I’m responsible. I’m as responsible as anyone, so I’m responsible.”

Well, that became an open invitation, and they let me have it. It was probably, of course, good for them to get it off their chests, and it was almost like one by one they stood up to attack me, the Marine Corps, and finally one rather older man with a strong voice and sort of a reassuring demeanor about him, he stood up and he talked to them. “I’m amazed at all of you for doing what you’re doing to that man up there who has come to us to try to explain what happened and has said they were like his sons too.” And it was like a piece of magic. That’s more or less what he said. They just quieted down.

That was sort of the end of that chapter. The Marine Corps Reserve units at San Antonio and some Marines from as far away as Brownsville, Texas, rallied around taking care of families, making sure they had places to stay, doing all kinds of things. It was a magnificent effort.

I got back to Headquarters. I announced something I wanted done was every general officer on any cross country, CG of 3d [Marine Aircraft] Wing coming to Headquarters, or I&L going to Japan, whatever. Every general officer flying across country would go by San Antonio to see those burn victims, to do several things to show our continuing interest as representing the higher levels of the Marine Corps. A little bit of an educational process. You’d have to think about what might the Marine Corps have done wrong sometime in earlier years that permitted something like that to happen.

And finally, to do something that was best done by [Charles G.] “Charlie” Cooper—he

wasn't the only one—who went several times. And you know Charlie Cooper, Marine lieutenant general—he wasn't at the time—he's a retired lieutenant general. He was badly wounded in Korea, and I had the experience many years later of meeting his doctor in New Orleans who was a professor of medicine at Tulane University, and he asked me, he said, "Do you by chance know an officer named Charles Cooper?" I said, "I did." He said, "He has no reason to be alive. He was one of the worst wounded people I ever worked on, and I reckon it was his will to live, his strength of character, and his physical training that made it possible."

So, it was that kind of thing that Charlie could do with them. He could explain his own experience. "I wasn't burned, but I was not supposed to live, and here I am." Now, Dr. Walters and his people also said that the survival rate which is always, the degree of burn they were, running about 70 percent death, when in fact we lost a total of 13, 9 after they got there, out of 38. He said the high survival rate was in large part [to] their youth, their excellent physical condition, and their support of one another, the will to live. End of story.

**Simmons:** Very impressive. Very impressive. In the fall of 1979, it seems that our U.S. embassies in the Middle East were the Marine Corps' front lines. You've already mentioned in November our embassy in Tehran, Iran, was sacked and 60 Americans, including 9 members of the Marine security guard, were taken hostage. What are your recollections of that event?

**Barrow:** Well, the magnitude of it and the dastardliness of it, the humiliation of it all combined to send great shock waves through the government and through the populace at large. So, if it had been no Marines, I would have been one of thousands who were just absolutely wanting to do something and help, on the other hand and feeling pretty helpless. But having Marines there, I was obviously tuned my interest up even more. I think the numbers were more than that. Four came out early.

**Simmons:** Yes.

**Barrow:** They were sent out along with some women early on, and I think there were nine that were kept till the very end. Well, we had JCS meetings. We had meetings with the secretary of defense. We talked about options, every kind of option you could think of. Would it be good at this point to talk about that whole incident as opposed to talking now and then picking it up . . .

**Simmons:** I think so, yes.

**Barrow:** . . . a year and a half later?

**Simmons:** Yes. Yes.

**Barrow:** Because they were there, what was it, 444 days?

**Simmons:** That's right. Something like that.

**Barrow:** Let me say to whoever reads or listens to this tape that whereas many of the things about it are etched deeply in my memory, I by no means now 10, 11 years later am able to recall every detail. Let us talk about it. First, we must talk about it again in the context of the president and the country and so forth.

In the cold light of history, there were a lot of things one cannot understand. Why'd they do this? Why'd they take that chance? Why'd they do this? We must remember that President Carter had no other event in his four years that shook him quite like this, and it's something about hostages that seems to get all presidents, as we know from the follow-on one, [Ronald W.] Reagan, and he would be hounded by the press. He felt himself the subject of ridicule because of what appeared to be impotence at being able to deal with a bunch of ragtag revolutionaries doing God knows what to our citizens.

ABC signed off its evening news every day, "This is the 332d day of the hostage captivity," whatever it was. So, there was just constant reminders. I say all this because in a sense, he was desperate to do something and directed that we do something, the military. We had any number of meetings in which it was just talked about, like, "Can anybody think of anything?" sort of thing.

I remember once sitting next to Harold Brown. It was a long thing, getting briefed on where they were and whole kind of time and space factor, considerations, of getting there and what could you get there, and what would you do if you got there, covert stuff. And it was kind of a long thing, which I would have had the time to sit down and write kind of a half note to him. I listed all the principles of war—objective, offensive, security, mass, economy of force, unity of action, simplicity, all of this—and I remember talking to him during the break. I said, "You don't go into something considering the principles of war. If you do, you probably wouldn't do a lot of things, but they're good tools to understand why you were successful or why it was a failure."

In other words, it's possible to have all of them observed and practiced and still be a failure, and it's also possible to have many of them not be observed and you have a success. So, it's just a tool, but I said, in looking at this thing, the principles of war are just not there for application even in the objective starting at the front end of it. The objective should at least be feasible of accomplishment, so we don't pick one that is so impossible to accomplish. You should rule it out as being an objective. It would be like Robert E. Lee saying, "We're going to take Washington." It's a good objective, but it isn't feasible. That's just an aside. He was such a brain. He [Brown] probably wasn't terribly interested in that subject. He was thinking about other things.



**Simmons:** Let's hold off on Desert One [rescue operation] itself until it falls into place in the chronology. Let's concentrate on the immediate effects.

**Barrow:** Well, that's the effect right there. It was just demonstrating to the morale of the country, the morale of our president, and to the morale of a lot of us having something to do with it.

**Simmons:** This was kind of reinforced because similarly in that same month of November, the embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan, was sacked and burned. Do you recall the heroic actions of the Marine security guard at Islamabad?

**Barrow:** Yes, I do. I don't remember the specifics of it, but I know that he defended his post and was killed as a consequence. There were some other Americans killed in Islamabad about the same time. Not military as I recall, but American citizens. I attended his funeral. As I recall later, Cardinal O'Connor [?] conducted the funeral service over in Fort Myer [Virginia]. The parents were there, the ambassador from Pakistan, a lot of people.

**Simmons:** Did these events in Tehran and Islamabad cause any changes in State Department-Marine Corps relations or the way in which our Marine security guards did their business?

**Barrow:** Yes. It didn't take . . . no, not make any changes. It caused some people to say that we were putting Marines at risk beyond what they should be if that's the nature of the world in which we live. We shot that one down as being as bad as it was, it was our line of business. We had had an association with the State Department going back to the end of World War II, and these were themselves rather peculiar incidents in that the big misunderstanding that most people had with respect to Marine security guard personnel at U.S. embassies on foreign soil; they are not responsible for the defense of the embassy itself. That's local-national; sometimes they don't do it. Sometimes, they're the ones trying to violate it.

The embassy guard personnel have the responsibility for the internal security. If the building itself is penetrated, they are responsible for the people and the things in that building to protect them, but they're not out on the street, so to speak. They're not out in some barricade or sidewalk foxholes defending the embassy. Some of our people have been killed or the ones that were simply captured, they were not captured as a consequence of laying down their arms defending the embassy.

They were just overwhelmed in Tehran, and this young man who was defending in Islamabad went beyond really what was called for. We lost three down in San Salvador not

protecting anything. They were on liberty, but they were killed because they were Marines and American citizens. They were killed minding their own business having a cup of coffee.

**Simmons:** There was also another incident in San Salvador on 30 October, at which time the Marines put up a spirited fight to hold off a mob till Salvadoran troops arrived.

**Barrow:** Yes. That is not to say that they won't defend what the prescribed procedure is for defending the embassy. The host country has the responsibility, but now that's an example. Nobody would ever do anything like say, "That's not my responsibility." They're going to put up a fight. In that case, that's exactly what happened until the El Salvadoran Army could get there.

**Simmons:** What [are] your recollections concerning the situation in El Salvador at that time? As I recall, the Marines did not have a very significant piece of the action. That was essentially Army, wasn't it?

**Barrow:** Yes. We had a Marine assistant attaché, and all the attachés did more than what normal peacetime attachés do. They were active and out in areas of some danger and so forth. Most of the presence was U.S. Army, military presence, and this was a low point in America, the great strength and significance of what this country is all about. We had gotten to the low ebb of counting how many people would be permitted to be there, and the number was 55. You dare not make it one more, Congress being the one imposing these limitations.

Still smarting from Vietnam and their vote on the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which "We're not going to have another entanglement like Vietnam." You dare not have more than 55. You want somebody with special skill to go in there, then you have to take one out!"

Now, the stupidity of that is that however many you have, have a . . . for a commitment. They had to carry out some kind of a mission, which has gotten the approval of Congress. In this case, it was to help the Salvadoran government build itself up to resist this Marxist-Leninist threat sponsored by [Fidel] Castro in Cuba and supported by the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and ultimately by the Soviet Union.

If you task an agency to do something, and then turn around and say, "But you can't have all that it might take to do it. We're going to put a limit on how much you're able to use to do it," which rendered it d——n near infeasible to do it. I think it was a terrible thing.

Then the next thing followed. "They cannot be in combat areas where they might get shot at." Well, they're out there to lend advice to see what's needed and to get a feel for things, and then, "you cannot carry any kind of sidearm to protect yourself." What was it that they ended up with? I

think they ended up carrying a pistol. There were all kinds of rules of engagement, and it was just terrible, and slowly but surely, the place looked like it was going to go to hell in a handbasket. Whether it would turn around, it did, but not as a consequence of anything we had done.

**Simmons:** In December 1979, the secretary of defense announced that the new Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force was to be headed by a Marine general. That appointment and the promotion to lieutenant general went to Paul X. Kelley, then serving as your deputy chief of staff for Requirements and Programs. How did that appointment of a Marine to that billet come about?

**Barrow:** It was generally thought of as an Army assignment. Be mindful we had a lot of people in Congress and elsewhere who believed that this should be one Marine Corps mission exclusively, but having lost that, they really never made an observation or statement. The Marines would have a major role in it for the simple reason we had forces that could get there, amphibious lift, and we had forces in a high state of readiness and so forth.

So, we were to be major players. My concern was that we could be cut out of being major players if we didn't have some way of assuring that we wouldn't be. The best way would be that we'd have a Marine in charge.

I went to see Graham Claytor, deputy secretary of defense, and my argument was quite simple. One, he knew P. X. Kelley and liked him. P. X. used to brief him when he was the secretary of the Navy on Requirements and Programs, and I said, "You know how many people on Capitol Hill and so forth think that this should be a Marine Corps show?" He said, "I know. I know."

I said, "In my judgment, if you have an Army guy running that thing, you're going to send the signal that's to be primarily an Army show, and a lot of people will dislike that. And you'll continue to get questions about what kind of force is this to be and all these comments that you read in the press that it's not rapid, it's not deployable, it's not even a force. A lot of it's sort of on paper." I said, "If you really want to put the final polish to it, and make it look like it's going to amount to something, send a signal that a Marine is in charge." I said, "I have one." I gave him a name that he knew, see. A double-barrel whammy. I gave him a reason and I gave him a name. He liked P. X. He says, "That's a hell of a good idea."

So, the next time the subject was spoken of in terms of this is where the chairman comes in who is [Air Force General David C.] "Dave" Jones who used to speak daily with the secretary of defense, and then he shared with the chiefs when we had our meetings only that which he felt necessary to share, although always giving the impression that he was sharing everything.

So, he talked in terms of this being an Army-Marine possibly rotation, but a Marine would have it first. Isn't that a surprise? So, the decision had sort of been made that that's what it was going to be, a Marine first, and the next time, be an Army man. That's how P. X. got there.

**Simmons:** At the end of 1979, it became public knowledge that Secretary of Defense Harold Brown had approved a concept called maritime prepositioning. It is sometimes stated that maritime prepositioning was Dr. Brown's own personal brainchild. Is that so?

**Barrow:** I am pleased that [you] asked that question and the way in which you asked it, because the short answer is yes. It has been said by any number of people that it was somebody else's idea, and several people have claimed parenthood for that. But one day, I think it was at an Armed Forces Policy Council meeting—that would be on Monday morning at eleven o'clock—Harold Brown said to me, "Bob, could I see you for a minute?"

I've already described Hal Brown. I like him very much, but he's not given to small talk, so I knew it was something important. He got me aside, and he said, and I'm paraphrasing obviously more or less the exact words, "Do Marines always have to storm ashore?" Isn't that a strange question? He's not given to such small talk. I read a lot into it. So, I fired back. I said, "No, sir. They surely do not. An amphibious operation is but a means to an end. Marines do most of their fighting after they have gotten ashore not getting ashore. We want that to be as little fighting as we can possibly make it, but knowing that you cannot always expect to go for some undefended place, somebody has to know how to do it, and we call that amphibious warfare, but it's a means to an end. So, to answer your question, no, sir, we don't."

He said, "In other words, Marines, if you had their equipment aboard some other kind of ship that could either be brought into a port or somehow moved over to the shore in an environment that was not threatening, the Marines would do that, do you think?" I said, "We would do that extremely well because it still has a maritime character about it, and we're accustomed to having one foot on the beach and one foot in the sea."

He said, "Well, that's very interesting." And that was the end of the conversation. The next thing I know, it comes up in the JCS as the secretary of defense initiative to have some maritime prepositioning. It may have been called something else, but that's essentially what it was. And indeed while it was a concept that was to be of some permanency and some size yet to be determined, he was interested specifically in a concept that could be executed as soon as possible, which gave birth to the near-term prepositioning ships, near-term prepositioning. That's what it

meant. It wasn't a long-term one. It was a near-term one. The near-term ones would come out of hide; the long-term one was going to require congressional funding, approval, authorization, and appropriation. It was a different breed of cat.

So, the idea was what size force would this be. What kind of force are we talking about? There's a limit to how many ships you can round up, and there's a limit to how much you can sustain and all the rest of it. So, the word was, "Army, Marines, this is kind of your bailiwick. You go do the paperwork on this and come back and brief us, and we'll have to make the decision on it and who does it." I went back to Headquarters Marine Corps and gave the elements of this to P. X. Kelley to come up with a force of some size and structure that could do the kinds of things one might have to do as either a precursor force or stand alone for some period of time.

We wouldn't be talking about the MEUs [Marine expeditionary units] and just plain old everyday kind of MAFs that we're all accustomed to, although they change in task organization. It's to the everlasting credit of the people in R&P [Resources and Programs] that they spent some days burning the midnight oil figuring out a brigade, which when it was given to me, I did not have to say, "I don't know why you did that. Let's do this." So, a lot of people, a lot of people did work on the creation of what that brigade was to look like.

I remember getting sufficiently well versed in it and talked about it that I didn't [have] a briefer to go with me in the tank when we were to brief what we had come up with. That particular day, that afternoon in the JCS, we met. I think something was going on in the normal JCS meeting place because we went to this room. We went in the command center, the JCS command center, situation room, or whatever it's called.

I briefed this 16,500-man Marine brigade, all the stuff it had with it to sustainability in the water, the fuel, heavy with tanks, a tank battalion, etc., bearing no resemblance to any brigade anywhere. [Army General Edward C.] "Shy" Meyer talked about an armored cavalry regiment, which by comparison to what we were talking about was pretty modest.

The JCS rarely votes. People express themselves and you sort of know how they feel about a subject, so the chairman says, "I believe everybody is for this" or whatever, but he actually asked for an expression of choice. The Navy voted for the Marines. The Air Force voted for the Marines. Obviously, the Marines did and so did the chairman. Only the Army voted for himself, and that's how the Marine Corps got the RDJTF [Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force]. It became a natural and drifted on into the permanent business.

During all this time, the permanent MPS [maritime prepositioning ships] business came up. There was a large body of senior officers in the Marine Corps who were very opposed to it. I can even say that at one time maybe P. X. Kelley and myself were the only two that were for it. So, we had to do a lot of persuading; I guess [we] led the arguing. I think we had a general officers symposium about that time, and that was kind of one of the central themes of the symposium, and one of the central parts, one of the main themes of my argument was “Look here, fellows. Somebody is going to do this. In terms of national interest, who could do it better? Something that is a maritime kind of thing, loading ships, and unloading ships and fighting on the beach if you have to and having a force made up of a Marine MEU, MAF, or whatever that might make it possible to land the reinforcement element.”

I said, “As a national sort of value, that’s a Marine thing.” If you get parochial, “if we don’t do it, somebody else does. The other somebody is the United States Army and they will lay big claims to being also a maritime force of sorts, and we’ll be put out of business. Every time something happens some place, it’ll be that MPS configuration that goes there to do whatever has to be done.”

I remember making a special pitch to the aviators. I said, “This may be the best thing that ever happened to you because your big problem is having all the support needed to make you functional when you finally get in the theater.” I said, “Only at Marine Corps schools do we have that nearby friendly country with a couple of airfields available for us to land on and use to support some amphibious operation. But here’s a chance for Marine air to get in because you’ll always be situated where the environment is benign.” If there is such a word.

So, we overcame that opposition, and then we had to do something else. We had to live up to the commitment we made that we could get those maritime prepositioning ships loaded. This didn’t happen right away. I mean, the decision was finally approved some time after we had our briefing in the tank, but there wasn’t a hell of a lot we could do because we had to have the ships. We started doing some things at [Marine Corps Logistics Base] Albany [Georgia], and as I remember, all of us were getting ready to do that.

I’m trying to figure the dates. Do you have any information on when it was we actually stuffed those ships? I think it was . . .

**Simmons:** Well, of course, it’s considerably later than the time frame we have here. I do have a notebook just devoted to the maritime prepositioning system and how it evolved.

**Barrow:** I remember going down to Albany and giving them words of encouragement and watching them break all this gear out that had been sitting there in the prepositioning, I mean in the war reserve stocks.

**Simmons:** Well, in the time frame that we're looking at right now December '79–January 1980, at that time, was there an immediate relationship between maritime prepositioning and our Marine amphibious brigade for that shipping and the new Rapid Deployment Task Force? Were these things, were they developed kind of jointly or were they kind of two separate ideas?

**Barrow:** Two ideas that came together. The 7th MAB at Twentynine Palms [California] and [MCAS] El Toro [California] were the designated units, and we had several things come together: the Army's Unilateral Corps, which never really got beyond concept obviously, and the rapid deployment forces became the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force and P. X. Kelley, and the maritime prepositioning concept which in time had the hope that there could be several units devoted to that was preceded because out of necessity with the near-term prepositioning ships. These pieces all happened to fit, but they were never thought of as working in common from the outset, either one of them.

**Simmons:** We'll come back to some of this a bit later keeping in the time frame of your first year. On 31 January 1980, before the House Armed Services Committee, you delivered your first posture statement as Commandant. Now, what do we mean by posture statement?

**Barrow:** Well, it's the statement that the Commandant makes annually, put together by, I wouldn't say committee, but every staff agency in the Headquarters makes a contribution relating to those things he has cognizance over. The Commandant sees it in the rough and makes whatever changes he wants. He probably starts out at the outset announcing the thrust. "I want this posture statement to point out that we are in desperate straits with respect to modernization, let us say sustainability or whatever." There may be a common thread that runs through it, but it is a statement in which he speaks of how the Marine Corps is today, really what's happened since a Commandant, the one talking perhaps, appeared before you a year ago. What we have been doing in training, operations if there were any, how do we stand on those programs that you funded and what their status is, and it is surely not a detailed want list, but we certainly touch on those.

Like we might say something like, "Our predecessors have reminded you the [Boeing Vertol] CH-46 [Sea Knight] is approaching its useful service life and we must seek a replacement, and I would consider it to be my number one aviation priority." I'm sort of making that up, but that

is the sort of thing that is in the posture statement. It's given to the committee. You give the same one to the House Armed Services Committee, the Senate Armed Services Committee, and the Appropriation Subcommittee for Defense in both houses, the same statements given to each. And then the staffs, if not the principals, massage it, look at it, and they already have a familiarity of what they're going to say, and that sort of supports the budget that's coming over to hard numbers.

It made its way through the SecNav [secretary of the Navy], the secretary of defense, OMB, the president, when they arrived over there. There are two separate documents. One supports the other. Then you appear with your Service. [Tape interruption]

. . . appearance of the principals who were going to speak from that posture statement and submit to any questions that the congressional committees have, and in the case of naval Services, they always go together, the CNO, the secretary in the middle, and the Commandant on the other side.

It's interesting because my first appearance as Commandant, though I had been Commandant since 1 July, before one of these committees was [at] the end of January 1980, the House Armed Services Committee. I wish my memory could permit me to remember the names of most of those 35 members. I think that was the number at that time. I knew a lot of them from having appeared when I was Manpower and what have you.

Now, this is an aside that just doesn't do anything but try to humanize what we're talking about here. I am of the opinion that anyone in charge of anything, irrespective of how many people he has helping him do it, should on certain occasions be the one to explain it, to talk about it. By the same token, he should be sufficiently knowledgeable that he can do it without reading it.

With rare exception, I have never read a speech, and I admire people who do because that is the classical way. The precision of it is there. You then have it printed. I'm not faulting people who do it that way. It's just that I am more comfortable with being seemingly off the cuff. If it ain't off the cuff, it ain't extemporaneous, and that means somebody just called on you and stood up and talked. I know. I have gone over it, and I happen to be fortunate in being able to read a document if it isn't too d——n long and remember most of it. Highly perishable. I may only remember it for a short time, but I'll remember all of the elements of it, the principal elements for a long time.

So, this was not some gimmick I was putting on at the House, but I must tell you about it, what the consequences were. The secretary, all of them have, in addition to the long posture statement, have an executive summary sort of thing. It may be 8 or 10 pages instead of 50 pages of



the whole statement, and the secretary of the Navy read his as I recall without looking up. The chief of naval operations read his without looking up. What is the committee doing all this time. They're talking to one another. They're reading the newspaper, and I'm not making this up. They're talking to their staffers. One or two are following it because you not only give them the partial statement, but you give them the summary of the partial statement so they're just sitting there reading it while you're reading it.

So, it came my turn. The only gimmick that I used was that I wanted to make sure they knew that I was not availing myself of any notes, so I didn't have any pad, any pencil. I even pushed the water glass out of the way. There wasn't anything but me and a bare table. I talked to them about the Marine Corps. When my testimony finally came out in print—you always have to do a little bit of editing—there was very d——n little needed to be done to it. Usually, my Southern speech got mixed up with the stenographer, and she said “nouns” instead of “grounds” or something, but the interesting thing was they quit reading the newspaper, they quit talking to one another, and they started looking and listening.

I was interrupted once with applause, and I was applauded when I finished. I'm not saying this because it's a matter of saying, “Hey, look at me,” but it's a technique that if you feel comfortable with it, one should do it because it made them feel that “Here's a guy that knows his subject so well. He knows all about the Marine Corps. He's telling us about it. He's not reading about it.”

It made for a warm relationship. They could relate to me. Now, there's a risk taken in this because you can misstate unwittingly or you can get some figure in your head cooked up wrong, but it's a risk that's worth taking, I think. Now, this is the final point on this, and then we'll move on to something else. But what that did, beyond what I've already said it did, is it meant that I could never do anything other than that. So, for four years I appeared before all four committees every year and some other committees like the Seapower [and Projection Forces] Subcommittee of Congressman [Samuel S.] Stratton's, and I never read from a paper. I always talked, just talked, you know.

**Simmons:** That's probably a good point at which to end this session.

End of SESSION XIV

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION  
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Interviewee: General Robert H. Barrow, USMC (Ret)

Interviewer: Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons, USMC (Ret)

Date of Interview: 20 December 1991

SESSION XV

**Simmons:** This is the 15th session of the oral history interview with the former Commandant, General Robert Barrow. This interview is taking place at VIP quarters, Washington Navy Yard. This is Friday, the 20th of December 1991. General?

**Barrow:** Well, I need to say one or two things before we get into our question-and-answer session. This particular session covering my 4 years as Commandant, 1979 to '83, at the outset 12 years have passed, and I need to say that the lag time has been entirely my fault in that I have procrastinated, not always found it convenient when I came to Washington [DC] from time to time. I would often hasten to get out of town and not sit down and do a session. They're pleasant experiences, but I just kept postponing them, and now I'm trying to catch up. The penalty I'm paying, of course, is that my memory is not as good. The further away from an event you get, the less you have to remember the details.

Having said that, there's something else I wanted to say because it may not be, there may not be a question asked which permits me to say this. One of the things I attempted to do as Commandant was to reestablish as much understanding as possible on the part of the public, the Congress, and everyone else [of] the utility and usefulness of the Marine Corps. You cannot do that without talking about the [U.S.] Navy or speaking of sea power or maritime strategy or whatever you choose to call it.

So, in all the speeches I gave, including those to the various Service schools, and it was something I liked to do by the way, and in my testimony and in talking to someone's rotary club, the press, visitors, whatever, I had a little routine I used to go through which went something like this, and this is simply the sketchy part of it. It obviously was much longer which made it into a speech, and that is that our country was faced with three threats, and in order of seriousness, it was strategic

nuclear, the conventional, and then the third one, you could call it the Third World, or you could call it regional conflict. It was all of those not easily identifiable problems somewhere.

That's the order of seriousness. In order of likelihood of occurrence, inverse order. The strategic nuclear was not likely to be a reality for various reasons, a standoff, and the awesomeness of it, etc. The conventional, which we think of as NATO standing off with the Warsaw Pact, the fact that nothing had happened for all those years should not bring the assumption that it's never going to happen, but it hasn't so there it is, a kind of standoff too.

But the other threat is in being. At any given time, someone has a problem that we have to be attentive to either diplomatically or we have to be ready to do something militarily, and a major part of that problem was of course the Soviet Union who had, during the era we're talking about, the '70s, developed a capability to go beyond the Soviet borders, naval and air—air meaning air transport. So he was down in places in Africa and the Middle East [and] Asia. He not only had the capability, he had some sort of interest either political, military, economic, and he had done it, and he was continuing to do it. And Afghanistan was an example of him doing it himself, but most often it was done by initiatives taken or done by a surrogate or proxy of some sort.

One reason there was more of that beyond those that served his purpose was that he was emboldened to act, because on his part I believe there was an assumption that the United States after Vietnam would not act to counter anything that they did, that we would be—as one person put it—we had become a muscle-bound superpower. We had a lot of capability to do things, but not the national will to do it unless there was some very clear-cut threat to our national well-being or security. But anyone who is in the profession that we're in would think beyond that and say, "The U.S. will change in time, or some of the things that don't seem to be big in terms of what we usually responded to on sizeable scales will be of such consequence, particularly in an area of resources, which we're becoming increasingly dependent on somewhere else, will cause us to again get involved."

And so, that leads me to sort of the second part of the kind of thinking I was doing at the time, and it tries to deal with the problem that is often spoken of in this town as the strategy-force mismatch, meaning that the national strategy for which there is not the capability to execute all of it with the forces we have.

Now, in my opinion, since the days of George Washington, we have had throughout the years often requirements to be able to do something that was greater than what we had capability to

in fact do them. That's a form of strategy-force mismatch. The way you deal with such requirements in my judgment is to have forces that are mobile, flexible, and available. Meaning, mobile, go to more than one place, or you might even say go to more than one kind of place as relates to topography and weather and the whole gamut of things.

Flexible—do more than one kind of thing. A wide array of military tasks. And available, meaning do it now either from a forward deployed force presence or reasonably rapid movement means to get you there. What I have just described, in my judgment, is the Navy-Marine Corps team. I thought, during these four years, that you couldn't say that enough in various forms.

It was difficult to sell. Many people in the Navy were focused on the problems of being responsive to either the strategic nuclear threat or the conventional threat in Europe, how to get across the perilous seas that they would have to transit in support of conventional forces in Europe, or how to deal with the Soviet ballistic missile submarine threats, etc., etc. There was a lot of focus on things other than what I used to call the regional conflict, Third World threat, manifested in their lack of interest in amphibious ship building or just talking about it.

Yet, they were interested. The Navy of course is platform conscious, which is to say there are major communities within the Navy, the subsurface, the surface, and the aircraft carriers. The air and the one part of all this that did have a consciousness about force presence and forward deployment, deterrence, etc., was the carrier community. I never talked down the carrier community. I'll say now what I thought at the time and will always think. Carriers have some utility, but aviation of any form is primarily, indeed exclusively other than helicopters, all fixed-wing ordnance delivering aviation is destructive by the very nature of it.

The presence of an aircraft carrier lurking near some distant shore where there is some sort of a problem that we, the U.S., has suddenly become interested in [and] thus dispatched a carrier, might have some intimidating value and indeed if they were ever used, might be able to destroy some things, but it's not going to control land. It's not going to control people, and in some respects, it could even be a stimulus for more resistance by the fact that it is destructive and it cannot evacuate Americans and it cannot do a multitude of things that can only be done by folks who can move from the sea to the shore and back.

So, if you look at the history of naval response to troubled events, troubling events from World War II to the time I was talking about, the two things used were Marines and the carrier, probably in about equal numbers and very often together, not working together always, but together.

When the Navy tended to talk about a maritime strategy that related to carrier deployments, it didn't have quite the underpinning, the substance to it, that I thought the argument we made with respect to the utility of Marines—thinking of the oceans not as barriers, which has been the view of some people in days of yore, but as highways to get to troubled areas where we might have something that no one could possibly concede as a likelihood occurring or about to occur, and we needed to make a response.

So, I wanted to talk about that, and I've tried to be as brief as possible because it's a subject you can flesh out with all kinds of supporting rationale, but it has great historic roots. And it's almost a national imperative that we have that capability, and at the time I was making the point surprisingly with people on Capitol Hill which understood it quite well, and that's why people like Senator [Samuel] Nunn are not only very supportive of the Marine Corps. But when the subject of the rapid deployment force came up, he and some of his cohorts would boldly make the statement, "I thought we had a rapid deployment force called the United States Marine Corps," which of course drove everybody that wasn't a Marine right up the wall.

But an example of what I'm talking about having manifested itself in a different form was what we talked about in our last session, which was the maritime prepositioning ship concept, which really is two things. The concept was one to be fulfilled as it was most desired to be, ships built for the purpose and all of that in the near to medium term out, but the immediate term to meet the situation in the Persian Gulf situation was called the near-term prepositioning concept, and they were put on [the island of] Diego Garcia. But that initiative was another manifestation of exactly what I had been talking about and continue to talk about, and maritime prepositioning is not in conflict with amphibious at all. The two are complementary, and we need both. We needed them then and we need them now and we'll need them forever probably.

Anyway, that's a kind of inadequate treatment of a very complicated and big subject, but I did want to say something about that, and you may ask me some more questions or we can move right into what you want to talk about here.

**Simmons:** Thank you for providing that perspective, general, and we will be getting back to some of the specifics of what you've mentioned. We ended the last session with your review of the salient points of your first posture statement to the Congress. We are now at the beginning of the calendar year 1980, and you have been Commandant for something over six months. Maintaining a quality force would be one of your continuing concerns. You introduced several new incentives to improve

enlistment and reenlistment options; one was the community college enlistment program. What did it offer and how well did it work out?

**Barrow:** I don't remember how it worked, Ed. I really don't. That's one of the things that has escaped my memory. I remember that we, in general, had a deep interest in trying to improve the quality of life for young Marines and their families, and pay was always a problem during the [President James E. "Jimmy"] Carter years, and all the chiefs of Service were very attuned to that problem and worked hard to try to do something about it with some success, but the specifics of some of the things we did are just not fresh enough in my memory to talk about.

**Simmons:** This is one you may recall. You also delegated to field commanders enlistment authority for second-term Marines and authority to grant selected reenlistment bonuses. Can you elaborate a bit on this?

**Barrow:** It was very popular in terms of money in the hands of the young man who reenlisted, particularly for a longer reenlistment, and in certain short fields, he could get a very nice bit of money. We're talking like [\$]15 to [\$]20,000 in some instances for reenlistment. That may not sound like a lot now, but in those days it was substantial, and was very . . . I never felt it was controversial. There perhaps may have been some people that didn't fair as well as others who were simply reenlisting for the same time, but not in a critical field, that might have been resentful, but I never heard it expressed nor did any of the commanders say, "We really need to not use this as much or revise it or do something with it." It was a helpful tool to keep people that we needed in critical billets more than any other reason.

**Simmons:** Even so, your reenlistment goal of 14,000 Marines fell short by 2,653. Can you conjecture why you had that shortfall?

**Barrow:** Well, I think part of it is that we tried to tighten up on reenlistment or who was being reenlisted. This did not bother me because I think we had gone through an era in which while we had a great many fine Marines, who [were] what we would call the career force; we had some who were not as strong as we would have liked for them to be. So, if they didn't quite measure up, that was a reason for not reenlisting them.

**Simmons:** Another continuing concern was the enlistment and use of women Marines. At the close of 1980, there were 188,469 Marines on active duty of whom 170,271 were enlisted and 18,198 were officers. Of these numbers, 6,219 were enlisted women; 487 were women officers. There were 39,492 first-term enlistments in 1980. Of this number, 2,315 were female recruits. How would you

compare the quality of male and female recruits? You had set a goal of 10,000 women Marines by 1986. I wonder if we reached that goal?

**Barrow:** No. Goals, I think are designed to be elusive and not always attainable. It simply was a way of saying—at least that's the way I looked at it—to the extent that we had places for them where they could be employed and not to the detriment of the male population. And by that, I mean you don't want to fill up shore billets, nondeployable type people spaces, with people that can't deploy. That's one of the reliefs of the young male type that sooner or later he might get out of that deploying FMF and go to a nondeployable billet. Well, if it's clogged up with people you can't deploy, you've done him a disservice.

But to the extent that it didn't go that far and you could find good utility use for them, I was supportive of increasing the number of women Marines we had. Now, as to the quality, this is a generalization let it be understood, and I'll say it again, a generalization, but generally, the women were of better quality overall, as average, in the sense that they were all high school graduates. We could be that selective. They scored better on the various Armed Forces Qualification Tests and as ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) test, and therefore, they were more trainable, more easily trained, rarely disciplinary problems. That goes with being a woman, not being frisky like most males are and going out and proving their manliness and doing all kinds of wild things from time to time, and so in that sense, in terms of their ability to learn and time their competence, if you will, plus the fact they were less of a discipline problem, made them an attractive source of manpower, womanpower if you will.

I'll tell you that wherever they have served, they have been I think a big plus for the Marine Corps, but I believed then and I will always believe that there is absolutely no requirement for women to be in any of the combat arms.

**Simmons:** One of the consequences of the hostile actions directed at our embassies was the termination of the pilot program of assigning women to the Marine security guards. Any comment?

**Barrow:** Well, that was not my idea in the first place because it came about somewhere between the transition of [General Louis H.] "Lou" Wilson [Jr.] to Bob Barrow. But in any case, it was in being, and I thought it was inappropriate and said so at the time and puffed and fumed about it and froze what we had at the time to whatever numbers there were, and there weren't many, and here again, we go into one of these things that equal opportunity should not have the kind of play it gets in most governmental agencies, the same kind of play in the military. We are not in the business of

trying to see how we can broaden the opportunities for women simply because that seems to be the philosophy in general in government that there's no limit to what women can do.

The simple facts are we don't need them. We can get all the males to do whatever needs to be done in the threatening kind of situations that you need, so why experiment with women being put in possible situations of danger simply because someone can make a boast or a claim that you have broadened the opportunity for women to do more things than they had been doing.

So, by the very nature of the fact that some areas were just plain too primitive and too hardship-type places, women would not be assigned. Well, that means that of the overall numbers of males you have available for assignment to security duty, they're going to pick up that slack. We have always had male Marines going to hardship tours followed by a not hardship tour or vice versa. Well, if you start filling up the nonhardship tour places, the Parises, the Romes, the Londons of this world, then you are freezing out the males from having a place to rotate to from a hardship tour, some country in the middle of Africa.

The other thing is there were countries that may not have been hardship places but they were places where women simply did not have . . . they were not accepted, Arabic nations. Even in the Far East, the culture of the people was such that women never took the role of being somewhere armed with a weapon in the kind of military sense, but more importantly, you could never predict where some embassy was going to come under threat. And whereas the host country is responsible for the defense of the embassies, the Marines are a last-ditch defense. And suddenly, without knowing what we were doing by putting them some place without being able to predict what might happen, you might find women Marines in direct combat.

Then, of course, the concern to end all concerns is the kind of situation, which you could imagine would be most undesirable. If an embassy was overrun and you took American hostages as was done in Tehran and a goodly number of the security guards were women, there's a threat there that I think is unacceptable to the American public.

**Simmons:** Early in 1980, it was announced that women Marines were now serving in 90 percent of all Marine occupational fields. You made a statement and I'm quoting, "Women Marines are indeed Marines in every sense of the word. The past contributions and dedication of women Marines speak for themselves. The increasing numbers of women will be a major factor in maintaining and enhancing the quality of our Corps." Even so, you were under continuing pressure and some personal criticism for not expanding opportunities for women in the Marine Corps. Any comment on that?



**Barrow:** Well, it's the same one that . . . yes, I'll comment on it because it ties in [with] what I've already been saying. The pressure was there to go one more step in whatever direction it might have been and whatever occupational field. It had more to do with affirmative action, equal opportunity, whatever one chooses to call it, than it had to do with military need.

The two things were that you keep increasing it. You put them in places where they're getting closer to danger and the battlefield or you are putting them in billets that would, if you increase the numbers, would restrict the male from being available because those billets had been pretty much dominated by females.

**Simmons:** Do you recall any specific or particular pressure or recommendations from DACOWITS—the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Service?

**Barrow:** Oh, yes. Now, I can't tell you about the specifics, but we had not only DACOWITS but over in the OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense] we had an assistant secretary for something or other, a woman named Kathleen Carpenter who was a hard-line feminist who believed that women should be everywhere. So, she missed no opportunity to poke at all the Services about what they were not doing in the area of extending women's opportunities.

So, we were thought of as the Neanderthals of the armed forces, and the Marine Corps was "just impossible," which was the word that many of them used from time to time in various ways, but that's kind of the common word. That never bothered me. They're testy, but you just go ahead and resist them, but we had some . . . this whole subject is a complex one and it manifests itself in strange ways. Now, you take the president himself or it might have been [First Lady] Mrs. [Eleanor Rosalynn] Carter in some small way got in [on] the act. They went to one of the parades over at 8th & I [Marine Barracks Washington], and all the people in the contingent of troops that participated were males. So, it's alleged I think Mrs. Carter said, "Why are there no women there?"

But, in any case, this happened on Lou's watch. He put three or four women in the ranks. So, you had to be a little bit careful knowing that you didn't have . . . the point of my telling that story is that you had to be a little bit careful in how resistant you were because you didn't feel that you necessarily had the support of the White House in such matters. If you've made yourself too obnoxious about resisting, you might get your wrist slapped as we later did with homosexuals, I might add. If you want to hear that story now, I better tell it.

**Simmons:** Tell it.

**Barrow:** I've forgotten when it happened, but this has happened more than once, but it happened on my watch that there was a fray, a brouhaha, down in southeast involving Marines who were readily identifiable by their short haircuts and military bearing and physical fitness look about them and all of this, and youth. They were involved with some homosexuals in which the homosexuals came up on the short end of the stick.

The papers picked it up, and I guess my reaction would be interpreted as being very supportive of my Marines. I didn't go so far as to say that homosexuals by their very nature should be good targets for folks like Marines. I don't even believe that, much less say it, but you can be supportive in a way that some people might infer that you thought it was not a bad thing to have happened. That happens.

So, I got one of these messages passed down through the chain of command that the White House would like for the Marines to cease and desist seeking confrontation with homosexuals, put them back in their cage sort of a message. I can't remember the text of it, and it was a verbal thing so I had nothing in writing. And I don't know who in the White House it came from, but I don't think a staffer would just presume to say it without it having come from maybe the president, because it was in *The Washington Post*.

That admonition, or charge, whatever one chooses to call it, didn't go any further than me. There comes a time when you get messages like that I think that you don't keep pushing them down and down till some squad leader who gets it says, "What am I supposed to do with that?" So, I was the final depository of that concern.

**Simmons:** We might mention here that by its very location Marine Barracks Washington in that portion of the Capitol Hill area of Washington, DC, which has traditionally been the center of gay activity with many gay bars and rendezvous in the immediate vicinity of the barracks.

**Barrow:** I remember one thing that came out of that. I got several letters supportive of the Marines and I really can't remember all that happened and what we did and so forth, but one that I particularly [took] pride [in] was from [Navy] Admiral Arleigh [A.] Burke who said, "I'm with the Marines, and I wish I was young enough to join up with them," or something like that.

**Simmons:** [Laughter] Changing the subject considerably, General Wilson had begun a series of combined-arms exercises or CAX usually of battalion size at the Corps' Air Ground Combat Center at Twentynine Palms [California]. You continued the development of that training. Would you comment on its value?

**Barrow:** Well, there's no other training anywhere that's in any way comparable to it in that you have out at Twentynine Palms, more than 50,000 acres almost all of which is useful in terms of maneuver, in terms of firing every weapon that we have in our inventory, and done in a way that you don't have to impose extraordinary safety measures because there are no highways going through the area. It is an area that is very visible. It has a lot of observation points so that's good for safety purposes to see where things are. Any targets that you put out there are easy to distinguish because there's no competing things that would give you a chance for error, and it also gave commanders and others opportunity to see fire and maneuver as it's supposed to be done.

It was a great initiative on the part of Lou Wilson, and it was an easy one for me to continue to follow, philosophically easy because I believed in it and saw the merits of it. The difficulty in doing it almost at all, but say to the extent you'd like to, fell in the category of transportation of units to get there, East Coast units, and so we worked that out. We had a certain number of airlifts. I'm searching for a good word. We had a certain number of airlifts, budgeted for it annually, and it never was quite enough, and sometimes we worked out exercises with the [U.S.] Air Force that achieved the same thing.

The other thing is that the bogeyman that raises his head all the time is our tempo of operations. It's fine to go there and it's fine to go north of Norway and it's fine to go down to Panama. It's fine to go to a lot of places, cold weather mountain warfare training center in the high Sierras [mountain range in Nevada], wherever. Marines historically have responded with enthusiasm. That's sort of in our, that's part of our trade, but there's a price to be paid for a high tempo of operations, with families is one, and with equipment abuse is the other and even with the Marines themselves. There's a limit as to how much one can find pleasure in being gone most of the time or a good part of the time.

I'm not saying that that caused us to reduce the CAX. I'm just saying that it was something that added to the tempo of operations. Just making an observation more than anything else.

**Simmons:** I raise one question on the CAX among other comments that are raised in my mind. To what extent would the battalions carry their own equipment and weapons to Twentynine Palms as opposed to moving into a set of equipment and weapons that were already there?

**Barrow:** Well, we did it both ways. If the weapons were already there, and excess equipment, you could be sure that the receiving unit never found them to be up to what he would have himself done had he been the delivering unit, which meant he was always given his chance to prove what he was saying in leaving it for the next guy.

That had a lot to do with space available for airlift, obviously. So, they fell in on any of the vehicles and stuff like that. We didn't airlift those. Mostly individual equipment went with the individual and that was about all, but getting those to keep the exercises as one would is going to abuse it very severely in the depths. It's not on roads. It's out there bumping around on rocks and what have you.

Then you only have so much time to get it ready, and usually the fellow that used it didn't have that time because he does his exercise and comes home so that the maintenance of it, the readiness of it for the next fellow, was done by people that hadn't used it on the base itself. Kind of a complicated business in a way, but it seemed to work all right.

**Simmons:** In April 1980, we had the terrible failure of Desert One, the hostage rescue attempt. Would you review for me the Marine Corps' role in this effort? What was your personal role as a Service chief and a member of the JCS, and what lessons did you draw from this botched operation?

**Barrow:** Well, there are a lot of questions there, and I don't take umbrage at your last one, but it's a commonly held view that it was botched and it was. Maybe that's an acceptable term. Sometimes, it's used. Some people say debacle. Some say the disaster. The truth of the matter is the failure, and that's probably a better term, related more to accident than a failure on the part of the individuals being able to do what they were expected to do in this thing. Mechanical problems, in other words.

This is a very complicated subject, and I'll try to be as brief as possible. Just say enough to be clearly understood as to what I thought at the time and what I've thought since then. Again, as I had mentioned in an earlier tape, the hostage situation in Tehran was Jimmy Carter's albatross. It was hung around his neck by the press and by the public, and it preoccupied I suppose most of his waking hours, and there was—it's important to realize how much that—how important that whole issue was to everyone, but the focal point for it would be on the White House. "What are you going to do about it?"

That translates down to the people in uniform, "You find a way to get the hostages out of there." I want to make that clear, that it was not a JCS or a Service or a CinC out in the field or anyone else's initiative to do anything except some sort of contingency plan in the matter of exercise almost.

The onus on the Services to do something came from on high. "We want to do something." So, we had a charter. We didn't go fishing in calm waters. We had a charter. So, every kind of

thought that you can think of was put on the table about how would you do that. The difficulties are obvious. Iran was in itself a great distance from the United States where you would logically send the forces from. In that general sphere, general area, it was isolated and distant from other places. You didn't have ready access once you were in that theater. You were still a long distance away from Tehran. You could not be sure where the hostages were, and not only you couldn't be sure of their physical location, but you couldn't be sure of how they were guarded.

You had so many of them that it wasn't a simple thing of getting one or two people out of some place, a snatch if you will. So, you had to go to more than one place, so you had to go great distances, and you had to have a substantial amount of transportation means to get that number of people out, you had to have a substantial, the same transportation and more to carry folks to do the knocking the door down part [of] the operation and provide some sort of ability to protect the operation to make it happen if countermeasures were employed against you.

So, the concept evolved. I must digress. There are two or three [tape interruption] factors that were most unusual. They never happened before and they will never happen again. The chairman of the JCS, [Air Force General David C.] "Dave" Jones . . . I guess a view shared by many was that the most overriding thing that must be observed was operational security. No one can quarrel with that. If you're going to mount some kind of operation that this one was, and your security of it for any reason was compromised, it would be truly a disaster, but it in of itself can become such a fetish, such an overriding consideration, such a dominant, almost dominant theme in and of itself that it adversely affects getting the operation cranked up, and the other thing was that the chairman himself in a sense, and I just want to underscore that, in a sense, became the action officer. He was the one individual that knew all the parts better than anyone else. He was devoted to that daily. This took this on the front burner.

While the other members of the JCS were kept informed, you can only be fully informed if you asked a lot of questions and we did, but you have to ask the right questions to be fully informed also. I failed to ask a right question. When they talked about the enormous amount of devotion given to the selection of the participants, that's one thing. The enormous amount of devotion given to the training of the participants, what it was they were going to be called on to do, that in and of itself was a substantial task. I hate to admit this, but I was under the clear impression that if we advanced in our training, that that included coordinated training, meaning all elements were going to do a kind of rehearsal, over and over again, a rehearsal of what it was that they were going to do.

It wasn't until afterward that I learned that they rehearsed the components repeatedly, but they never rehearsed the entire operation at all. How much did that cause the failure, I don't know. It certainly was not the thing to do. And operational security was such that you could not have, or did not have, third parties looking at this thing, physically looking at it, like pulling it out and saying, "I want to see this and how it's being done."

It was the people that were going to do it were the only parties. There were no supervisors other than the chairman being kept informed as to where they were in their training and how they thought they were in terms of being ready, and he informing us, and we asking questions and not always able to get a specific answer, but sort of . . . no one at Headquarters Marine Corps knew about this other than the Commandant and the head of aviation. Even the Assistant Commandant didn't know as much as I did, and I didn't know as much as I should have.

Most people think that all the helicopters were flown by Marines. Wrong. We had a Marine colonel named . . .

**Simmons:** [Colonel Charles H.] "Chuck" Pitman.

**Barrow:** . . . Chuck Pitman, who worked for the chairman by the way, and was designated by the chairman to organize the helicopter part of this, and they screened and checked out lots of pilots, and they ended up with a couple of Air Force, a couple of Navy, but predominantly Marine pilots. You might have a Marine pilot and an Air Force copilot. A Marine was flying a helicopter of a similar type as a [Sikorsky] CH-53 [Sea Stallion], but the kind of helicopter that they were going to be using was the Navy version of that helicopter. That was because of its range and the fact that it would be compatible with being seen on a Navy platform from which they were launched and these kinds of things.

I would only tell you that at no time did any member of the JCS show any opposition to this endeavor proposed. No one said, "I will not sign on with this." Probably in some part a reflection of the mood—do something. Speaking for myself, I frequently raised one question, and it simply was this, more a statement than a question, "I think we're asking too much of the helicopters." Helicopters by their very nature are not as reliable as fixed wing, and they're subject to the vagaries of weather and other things more than fixed wing and they're just difficult to maintain. And I didn't have the same degree of confidence in them that apparently others had.

Be that as it may, there was a long time between picking people, training them, and as I now know, rehearsing the component parts of it. And if any group could be declared ready, I would

guess that would be it. You had a very flamboyant commander of the operation. You had certainly extremely skilled and courageous soldiers from the [Army's] Delta Force down at Fort Bragg [North Carolina] to do their part of knocking down the door and security of things. The Air Force [Lockheed] C-130 [Hercules crews] were extremely competent people and devoted and courageous. The helicopter components were the same. Those were the three main components: the Delta Force, the C-130 Air Force, and the helicopters.

The intelligence, while sketchy, was better than one might expect. We in time did learn where they were and all of the ways one could get at them and get out. There was transportation arranged inside Tehran. There were safe houses for that transportation, so it wouldn't get scoffed up in a traffic violation or something. There were reconnaissance made of the area where the marry up of Delta Force with helicopters brought in by C-130s, and signal devices were established there, radio devices, to bring in the force so that they knew they were going to come to the right place. Did you know all that?

**Simmons:** Not all that.

**Barrow:** In other words, to those people who are critics and there's plenty of reason to be critical. There are a lot of critics out there. This was not something that just happened. A lot went into it in intelligence and in doing all the things that would provide control measures and some reasonable degree of confidence that if everything worked, it could happily be brought off. High risk? Yes. Impossible? No.

So, I'm going to jump forward to the execution. I don't want to get into the personalities of the commanders and who was doing what with respect to . . . there may have been excessive confidence on the part of some as to their readiness. That'll go back to, "Had you rehearsed the total force and not just the components?" The commander, when he appeared before the JCS, was—and I supposed if you're going to sign up for something like that, you ought to be upbeat about it—but he was very confident that it was doable and that everybody was as ready as they could be, and he was sure of that. So, let's get down to execution.

Again, because of OpSec [operations security], when the chairman got the word from the White House to execute, he sent for each member of the JCS individually. We didn't meet because then somebody, God knows who, would have been suspicious. So, when he sent for me and I went over, he said the president had given the decision to go ahead and that was my last comment on the subject before execution; it was once again the expression of concern about the helicopters' reliability.

Now, let's move on to the execution. The helicopters were out on the [USS] *Nimitz* [CVN 68], which positioned itself in the upper Arabian Sea. The flight was a very long flight and would require you be, in other words, you'd be nearly out of fuel (this is layman's talk) when you got to where you were going. You didn't go there and turn around and come back if something didn't work right. It was a long-range flight.

All the weather reports and forecasts or history, I should say, weather history that we heard for that time of year gave no reason for concern that this was going to be executed at night, and it would be clear weather, blue skies. The helicopters would fly not in formation but in visual contact, not radio contact, visual contact at night.

So, they took off, eight of them, and I want anyone who reads this to realize that there was a lot of courage to take off from an aircraft carrier in the upper Arabian Sea and go over this very rugged inhospitable terrain to a point on the ground that someone had picked out and had a radio beacon. That's just the beginning. It would be touchy all the way. And they had volunteers to do that.

Those eight planes made landfall and one of them had mechanical problems and had to sit down in Iran at night. That's not the pilot's fault. It's probably not the mech's [mechanic's] fault. That's just the nature of helicopters. They get mechanical problems, in my judgment, more than fixed wing. He had to sit down, and one of the other helicopters went down and picked up the crew.

So, they now have seven, and they're going along and encounter what had been described to me as a dust storm. After it was over, one pilot said to me, "It would be like flying in a container of milk." It was just white all around. They lost all of their visual contact. One of the helicopters developed navigational problems, the key to getting where you had to go.

Now, the details I don't [know], don't push me for those, but it was the right thing for him to do what he did. He turned around and Chuck Pitman was on that helicopter. He was a young colonel who didn't just pick and help train all these people and say, "I'm on the ship. Goodbye. I'll wait for you to get back." He went with them. He happened to be on that airplane that developed the trouble.

They made the right decision. They turned around and they went back to the *Nimitz*. Whatever was wrong would not have permitted the mission to be carried out by that helicopter. So, he landed, they landed on the *Nimitz* with 20 minutes of fuel left. That's how touchy it was. So that



leaves you with six, and those six made it to where they were supposed to go through all of that soup.

To me, instead of a criticism from anyone about the deployment, because the deployment ended when they got to where they were going. To me that was a great feat of airmanship. Not criticism, praise, extraordinary praise individually because that's how they got there. They had lost all visual contact so you couldn't say, "Follow the leader. He knows where he's going." They all got there, and they had purposely because they had lost visual contact spread themselves out even more. They did that without radio contact because they didn't want that. They had the sense enough to know you don't continue to fly visual when you might fly into one another so they went, they spread out and still they got there, staggered getting there because some went at different speeds and different altitudes and I suppose the weather was like the youngster said to me "flying in a container of milk."

It was a pretty long spread between when the first one got there and the rest of them did, but they got there. One of them that got there had had hydraulic problems that rendered it ineffective. It's not the pilot's fault. It was clearly not usable for the operation planned. So, we've gone from eight to five, and it was decided that five was too few. They needed six. In retrospect, they might have said, "Well, you should have started with 10."

So, they made a decision to refuel the helicopters, which is what refuelers are capable of doing right there on the ground, and they would fly back to the ship. Everybody else would fly back in the C-130s to where they were going to take off in the desert and land there. I might add this was near a road that was reported to be never travelled. This shouldn't even be called a road. There might be an occasional somebody during the daylight hours, but it's never travelled. While they're sitting there agonizing and doing all the things they were doing and along comes a bus load of Iranians, and they scarfed them up I might add, they were going to do something with them. I guess if the operation had continued, they would have gone out with the 130s. Who knows?

In the maneuvering of C-130 airplanes to refuel and the helicopters to get the refueling in the desert where the wash from the props from the helicopters, the cranking up of the engines on the 130, or any of these kinds of things would just create a dust storm, and so visibility was pretty poor and it's at night to make matters even more complicated. In the maneuvering around, a 130 and a Marine helicopter, not a Marine [but] one of their helicopters with a Marine pilot, copilot hit, and there was an explosion and a fire, and it was terrible. As I recall, there were eight people

killed. Three Marines in any case; I think there were five others. The commander of the mission made the decision then to refuel and everybody get on that 130 and get out of there.

So, the helicopters were put to the torch. Some of the bodies were not recoverable because they were burning inside the helicopter. It must have been a maddening, horrible scene in and of itself. A terrible experience, but to tie that in with what was clearly a failure to people that wanted [inaudible].

So, they got out. This all happened on Friday, and I got the word Saturday that all of the helicopter people would come in that night during the night (we weren't sure what time) and be put in Camp Upshur down at Quantico in an isolated, away from it all, facility Quonset huts. So, I had my driver (I don't think I had an aide) the next morning bright and early, I drove to Camp Upshur, the only Service chief that went there during the time. They were kept there in isolation.

So, I caught them at a high emotional point, and yes, there were a lot of Marines, Air Force, and the Navy, but they had bonded beautifully. All the talking was about not themselves, but the others. What so-and-so did and how great he was, and there was no self-criticism. There was no criticism of another aircrew or individual. There was no criticism of any person. There was great disappointment and grief over the loss of some of their people and disappointment that the mission had been aborted.

Furthermore, maybe not untypical, but it was there universally, we would like to do it again and do it right, make it work. Do something, in other words. These were all volunteers. So, my role was mostly to listen, which I guess helped them plus I talked to them collectively and individually and in groups. I stayed quite some time, and returned, and I'll tell you that's about the end of it.

**Simmons:** Very good. Very illuminating. In the last session, we discussed for a bit the formulation of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force. The RDJTF was indeed activated on 1 March 1980 with Lieutenant General Paul X. Kelley as its first commander and with headquarters at MacDill Air Force Base, Tampa, Florida.

The Marine Corps developed a number of initiatives stemming from the RDJTF concept and designed to improve our strategic mobility. We talked a bit about that earlier, but I'll tick them off once again and ask you to comment on their significance. First, the near-term prepositioning ships program, NTPS; second, the maritime prepositioning ships concept, MPS; and third, the formation of the 7th Marine Amphibious Brigade, the 7th MAB.

So, we'll go back and talk a little bit about near-term prepositioned ships again.

**Barrow:** Well, the near-term prepositioned ships were an interim measure until some time down the road the MPS would be dedicated, constructed if necessary, or reconfigured commercial ships for a more permanent kind of arrangement. These were ships that are pressed into service, commercial ships too. They weren't the ideal ones but they served a purpose.

The Marines had a short deadline to deliver. This is one of the great achievements during my time in watching our logisticians, both G-4 [logistics] and some G-5 [civil affairs] types, on embarkation nights load the ships down in Wilmington, North Carolina, the pulling out of the things that were going to be put aboard from [Marine Corps Logistics Base] Albany [Georgia], maybe some from [Marine Corps Logistics Base] Barstow [California]. I don't recall any from Barstow. The people from Albany, the people from force service support group at [MCB Camp] Lejeune [North Carolina], the people from the 7th MAB who at least wanted to have a hand in seeing what was being done and participate to the extent they could. Their embarkation people, the movement of all this by rail, in some cases from Lejeune by trucks, and the loading of these ships in a fashion which would facilitate that they be available to be looked at while they are anchored some place waiting to be used, that they would be taken off in an orderly fashion like we are so good at doing in the Marine Corps, combat loaded, in terms of what's going to be used first comes off first.

So, it was a major exercise and kind of a different kind of embarkation, because no troops were going to be with the equipment and it was going to be sizeable, but it was going to be in mostly commercial ships. The unique thing about it was (one of the good things about it was) that all of this was dehumidified shipping, which would have been absolutely phenomenal. You didn't have a problem if you hadn't had dehumidification in the holds of the ships. You had to have all the tie-down, all the chocking, all the rest of it that goes with embarkation. All of this happening, just piling in because we're talking about 30 days of water, 30 days of fuel, 30 days of ammunition, 30 days of spare parts, tanks for a tank battalion, LVTs [landing vehicles tracked] for an LVT company, artillery for an artillery battalion, a multitude of trucks, all of which were themselves combat loaded or loaded I should say. It was a major undertaking, and it went extremely well.

To jump ahead, proof of how well it went, when it was first pulled back to be looked at and reworked if anything was found to be not working, it was really a surprise to most people of how good it was. That's not to say that there weren't things that needed to be replaced and something was wrong here and something there, but overall you'd have to give it a very high mark of how good the dehumidification was and how good the equipment that was put on there was in terms of its reliability.

I had an opportunity on a WestPac [Western Pacific] trip to add Australia. This was much later, but we're still talking about this subject so we might as well get it out now. And at Perth [Australia], there was a good facility to do it whereas we had lighterage, to do things offshore. This was to be a pier-side unload, and it was not everything, but it was to do a substantial part of it to see how the system worked, the checkoff, you know, what's going where, the bookkeeping.

So, I flew in there and there was an exercise going on independent of that. There was a MEU, MAU as we called them then, a Marine amphibious unit, landing on a very isolated, desolate beach north of Perth, the western shores of Australia, the Indian Ocean. There was an A-6 squadron, 232 [?] as I remember, that was there as an aviation deployment. They did more than support the MAU because they came early and stayed longer. They did some work with the Australians, as I recall, use of ranges, whatever. We had that going on, and by the way, this is not an unusual thing. Marines, during my tenure and before and after, all over the world training with all kinds of people and all kinds of climatic conditions.

So, we had that going on and then we had to unload the NTPS [near-term prepositioned ships], independent of that. We brought down the people that would be responsible for the unloading, so there was a sizeable detachment of brigade service support group people flown out from Twentynine Palms [and] probably some people from Okinawa and probably some from Albany, logisticians that wanted a look-see and be ready to rehab something on the ground if it needed it.

So, they unloaded it and I was impressed with how smoothly that went and how well the bookkeeping went, on what was going off, [and] how they moved it away from the area and did all that, and then they put it back on. So, I was really satisfied to see something like that. This was a good concept.

The MPS, which was to follow, quite clearly viewed as a significant undertaking for the Marine Corps and as we talk maybe the only thing I can think about as a plus for having waited so long to resume my oral history with my friend, Ed Simmons, is that we now know on December 20th, 1991, last year, really the year before that, the MPS was probably the number one star in the early days of the [Operation] Desert Shield as no operation.

**Simmons:** It certainly was. It was the cornerstone of our deployment effort. The MPS and the 7th MAB. Everything else built on that.

**Barrow:** The MPS went in. I guess all three of them.

**Simmons:** All three were used. On 30 May 1980, the press broke the story that the Joint Chiefs of Staff were at odds with President Carter over the fiscal year 1981 defense budget, which the chiefs did not think adequate to meet the Soviet threat. The chiefs were called to hearings held by Representative Samuel S. Stratton. Do you recall the gist of your testimony?

**Barrow:** I think, as I recall, it was pretty brief. He asked the questions (It may have been one of the other committees too that asked the question; my memory is not always good.) of each chief, “Did he consider the Carter budget adequate?” Each chief gave a relatively brief answer along the lines of, “No, sir, I do not consider it adequate.” When I answered, I said in a word, “No.” I probably gave the briefest answer. We got no repercussions on that.

You can always fall back on the way it should be. When the congressman or senator asks you a question, you’re supposed to sort of give your personal honest answer. You’re not supposed to be evasive, and although there are many instances in which either out of fear of repercussion or wanting to be a team player, you line up and say, “Everything is hunky-dory.” That’s a safe way to do it, I guess, with the administration, but the Congress already knows what’s going on in this area, that it’s inadequate, and they just want to have it on the record that the chiefs said so.

I think too much is made of that, what would the chiefs otherwise do? “It’s adequate?” Congress would beat them up royally. Or, some say it was; some say it wasn’t. So, I think it was not really a big story.

**Simmons:** On 20 June, the press reported that the Navy’s CNO, Admiral Thomas B. Hayward, had said—I’m quoting—“The all-volunteer force is gradually slipping into a failure mode.” President Carter had asked the Congress to require the registration of 19- and 20-year-olds, but insisted he had no intention of drafting anyone in peacetime. You were reported as saying that the military was running low in quality volunteers. Were you in effect endorsing a return to the draft?

**Barrow:** I’ve been very ambivalent about that subject. I reckon that’s a little bit unlike me. Most people might think of me as being inflexible, but in that case, I was ambivalent. A lot of it had to do with what was going on at the time. If you were looking for quality people and you have all the mechanisms in place to make it happen—policy, good people on recruiting duty, good supervision of those people, if you know what you’re looking for and if it’s of a certain quality—and you can’t get it, you get interested in other things like, well, the draft, but I never was a . . . but I did an evolution. I would be jumping ahead to say how I evolved because it evolved when [Ronald W.] Reagan took over.

I was skeptical about the all-volunteer force working, yes. I wanted it to work, yes, but I would gladly accept the draft if it was done right and there was no other option to make things, the all-volunteer [force], work better. But the all volunteer, as we now know, did work better after we put some money into it to improve the pay and more that the spirit of America. It worked, but at this particular time that he was doing this, middle-class America was not interested in coming to the colors for some peacetime service of three, four, six years, whatever. So, if you had any standards, you had a hell of a time getting them.

**Simmons:** Ronald Reagan, of course, was the successful presidential candidate in the November 1980 elections. Had you met President Reagan before this time or when did you first meet him?

**Barrow:** I had not met him, but I can tell you based on what we all read about his beliefs and heard in his speeches and saw in the transition team contacts we had which we began to have in December (November really; November–December). There was a growing optimism among the Service chiefs, and I certainly was optimistic about the future of the military. It really exceeded my expectations.

There was an expectation of course, it was going to be better funded, but I didn't realize how much the man himself contributed in his demeanor, his words, his firmly held convictions about a strong America, the honor of service, and no personality ever on the American scene—I know it's in vogue in some places to criticize Reagan for this or that—no American figure has ever in my judgment so transmitted a feeling to those in uniform about themselves, a good feeling, as did Ronald Reagan. That in turn got transmitted up into the hinterland of the civilian world where a young man said, "Hey," (maybe it was even in their subconscious) "I think I'd like to take a look at the Services." I think he made the volunteer service work more than the fact of increase in pay and increase in services. He talked more about them and all that sort of the thing, the spirit, one way to put it. Back to your question, "When did I first meet him?" If you want to jump ahead, it had to be inauguration day.

**Simmons:** Well, before we get to the inauguration, a 9 November story by George C. Wilson in *The Washington Post* led off with a statement. "The U.S. Marine Corps, which celebrates its 205th birthday tomorrow, is taking the first step toward becoming a bigger outfit during the Reagan administration." Wilson goes on to say, "The new idea is to let the Marines cover the north and south flanks of NATO and to be the spearhead, or at least a good part of it, for the rapid deployment

force being organized to respond to Persian Gulf emergencies. These roles contrast with the old image of the Marines as a Pacific force.” Are these fairly accurate statements?

**Barrow:** No, they’re not. It’s George Wilson discovering what was already well established, for the most part, and brings up a digression.

Before I came to Washington, I believe that throughout the Marine Corps in the early 1970s after Vietnam, we used to run around and talk about an identity crisis within ourselves. We didn’t know who we were. “What might we be called upon to do. Are we going to be in the center front of NATO? Are we going to be purely maritime? Are we going to be this? Are we going to be that?”

It was after I came to Washington and had a chance to meet and talk with the people who had participated in shaping who we are and more importantly what we would be expected to do that I learned that it wasn’t an identity crisis; it was a recognition problem. The recognition problem being that so many people who talked about Marines didn’t really know what Marines were capable of doing. They didn’t understand our size, our structure, our capabilities, any of those things. So, that’s why I have talked to the outfit on these tapes today on the 20th of December. I try to do missionary work to explain the Marine Corps in the context of maritime things.

It was already—it had been for some time—a requirement for Marines to be on both flanks of NATO. Pick out of George Wilson’s article—what he says. That made good sense because that had a maritime character to it. You get on both flanks from the sea, and I’ll qualify that in the case of the northern flank in a minute. Whereas to get into the central region, you exhaust your identity with the sea and you really become an army, part of the land army. [Tape interruption]

I was talking about NATO and the Marines could, of course, serve in the central region like part of a big land army, but the nation would be losing a very flexible capability of having the Marines ready to go to a number of places in support of NATO, as part of NATO, but being used at the opportune time in the right place. Those opportunities were best on the flanks. So, that’s how we ended up on the flanks, quite simply. There was another part to that that George Wilson . . . I forgot what it was now. Oh, he mentioned about . . .

**Simmons:** The old role as a . . . he also spoke of the Marines being the spearhead for the rapid deployment force.

**Barrow:** A logical thing. We were America’s most ready force of any size. The [Army’s] 82d Airborne [Division] is a ready force, but it is very limited in what it can do. And it would be sort of logical to have the Marines identified right up front as kind of a lead force for the RDJTF, and that’s

what it was. A MAB for the NTPS and a MAF [Marine amphibious force], MEF [Marine expeditionary force] otherwise. So, I didn't find anything unusual about that.

**Simmons:** Would you risk an assessment pro and con of the effects of the Carter administration on the Marine Corps?

**Barrow:** Well, there's nothing about the Carter administration that showed any desire to do harm to the Marine Corps. The fact that they did not fund it adequately was more of a political decision related to defense, not specifically to the Marine Corps. The fact that they year after year refused to fund the AV-8 Bravo, for example, falls into that category. In the final analysis, one could say that the Carter administration was a plus because it was under that administration that we got the go ahead on the MPS concept. Whereas there were others who wanted us to have a bigger role, an independent part if you will, to play in the RDJTF, that was just politically impossible. It never would have happened, but we certainly weren't cut out. We were recognized as major players.

**Simmons:** Obviously, you were pleased with the election of President Reagan. In a 15 December press interview during a visit to Camp Lejeune, you said that you were encouraged by early signs that the Reagan administration planned to emphasize national defense, but you went on to say that you felt the country should put more emphasis on routine military hardware instead of new strategic weapons.

You also said that the international situation demanded that the United States reconstitute the Navy and Marine Corps as they provided the only means of moving military forces to a crisis area without crossing foreign soil. You may have been well thinking of the Iran crisis and the Persian Gulf. Would you like to expand on this?

**Barrow:** Well, there was every expectation that Reagan was going to be more pro-defense and build a stronger defense, and in that context, it appeared to me to be any reassessment of national strategy, national policy, or what not that a major player would be, again mindful of the kinds of conflicts we might end up in, would be the Navy and Marine Corps, and it needed to be improved in every sense of the word, naval gunfire, amphibious ships, training, etc. And, yes, the situation mind you, the hostages were still [being held] hostage when we talked about them when I was visiting Camp Lejeune. There was still a focus on the Middle East. The Soviets were in Afghanistan. The hostages had been taken.

There were a lot of Soviet forces poised up in the Transcaucasus, which I wouldn't have said at that time because that was a classified thing and one could draw the conclusion that maybe



allied with Iraq or someone, they'd make a move down into either Iran or on down into Saudi Arabia. It got people's attention, I tell you.

I would not say that sending a bunch of Marines to that kind of situation would have put a stop to it, far from it, because I think there was inadequacy of capability to really deal with a serious threat in that area, but and I don't like to use the word "trip wire"—it's a terrible term. It suggests something being sacrificed, but if the decision was made to put up some sort of resistance, symbolic and maybe enough to stop somebody from doing something because the ultimate might of the United States would be brought to bear, then the Marines again and all of the Navy were a logical force to do that, from the sea.

Otherwise, to get not only overflight rights but rights to land airlifted forces anywhere in the theater was a very uncertain thing. In those days, unlike Desert Shield (again, here we are looking at something that's happened 10 or 12 years later) there was excessive caution on the part of countries like Saudi Arabia for any kind of show of U.S. military presence. It would not have been at all a certainty that they would have given us landing rights in Saudi Arabia for large forces to come pouring in there for whatever reason.

So, again, from the sea seemed to me to be the only answer. Of course, as we will find out later on when we talk about how RDJTF evolved into a separate, major command, a unified command, we'll talk about the disagreement about that, but that all had something to do with naval forces.

**Simmons:** This might be a good point to end this session.

End of SESSION XV

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION  
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Interviewee: General Robert H. Barrow, USMC (Ret)

Interviewer: Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons, USMC (Ret)

Date of Interview: 27 January 1992

SESSION XVI

**Simmons:** This is session 16 of the oral history interview with the former Commandant, General Robert Barrow. This interview is taking place at the Visiting Flag (officers') Quarters, Washington Navy Yard. This is Monday the 27th of January 1992.

General, we ended the last session on the eve of the Reagan inauguration. What are your recollections of that inauguration?

**Barrow:** Well, it was done in grand style, which I suppose you could say about all of them, but a lot of formality. The opposite as you recall of when President Carter had his inauguration and he walked down Pennsylvania Avenue.

It was a pretty day. The JCS were on the inaugural platform at the Capitol, and we also were in the stands somewhat almost immediately behind the president on Pennsylvania Avenue where he reviewed the parade. This provides me an opportunity to give you an insight into Reagan. Each Service chief when their contingent of marching units was going to pass by went up and stood next to the president.

So, the Army general did that and then the Marines were next, and I went up and stood next to him and he said, he was always very affable as I learned later, routinely so, he said, "General, when I was in the Army Air Corps, there were restrictions as to when I could salute, indoors, outdoors, etc. I know I'm going to be saluted. I'm in civilian clothes. What do you think about my returning the salute?" To which I said, "I think it's a great idea. After all, Mr. President, a salute is a form of greeting. And when one salutes you, they're greeting you, but when you don't acknowledge it, you're not returning the greeting." We sort of chatted about it. That's a paraphrase. My words may have been slightly different, but in any case, he seized on that, and if you recollect, thereafter, wherever he was and someone saluted him, he returned it.

We might not get to this in some follow-on session so I'll tell you now that that little brief episode on the busiest, most exciting day of his life stayed with him, which tells you something about the man's memory, ability to recall, and which disputes the popular wisdom that Ronald Reagan was some sort of near inanimate object that someone wound up every day and pushed out on whatever stage he was to be on.

That was '81 and he came to, I like to say, my retirement. I'm sure [General] P. X. [Kelley] would say his installation, but when P. X. Kelley relieved me as Commandant in late June of '83, a picture was taken of the president in the middle, I on his right, and P. X. on his left. P. X. and I were saluting. He of course did not salute when they played ruffles and flourishes at the top of the steps of the Commandant's House before we came down and took our seats.

Apparently a White House photographer took that picture, and about two months later, I got a big envelope from the White House. It's about a 14-by-17 [inch] blown-up picture of that, and underneath it written in his own hand, he says, "Dear Bob, I should have asked you if I could salute too!" Signed, Ronald Reagan. I think that's interesting that he would; it shows a sense of humor among other things. He knew he was doing the right thing not saluting, but typical Reagan humor.

But the transition team that preceded the inaugural ceremonies hit town with a lot of big interest in many things, but the ones related to defense had offices in the Pentagon and saw most of the Service chiefs, I suppose all of them, and sought our views on where we should be going, what we should be doing, both in terms of weapons, equipment, size of forces, kind of forces, etc. And it was during the same period of inaugural time that there was a big reception at the State Department, which I went to in uniform, and [Secretary of Defense Caspar W.] "Cap" Weinberger, whom I had not met, came up to greet me, and I think I was the only Service chief there. I can't remember the event, but that little brief meeting and maybe two minutes worth of conversation was the beginning of a long friendship, a sincere, I don't mean a very personal friendship. I never, in terms of family gatherings and that sort of thing, but I would see him at church sometimes. He went to St. John's, which was the church Patty and I went to. And long after I retired and even after he retired, we exchanged notes and I always felt that he was not only a good secretary of defense for that particular time—hard driving, determined, and all that—but he was someone I admired personally, and it all came out of that little early meeting.

**Simmons:** One of the dividends of the inauguration, of course, was the release of the Iranian-held hostages. What are your recollections of the return of the Marine hostages?

**Barrow:** Well, they came back, stepped off the airplane smartly in Marine uniforms as you would hope and expect they would and within hours had presented themselves to me in front of my desk at Headquarters Marine Corps. And I put them at their ease and talked to them about how proud we were of their conduct during that period and also listened to them. They wanted to talk. That's sort of typical of people out of captivity, I suppose. That was an unusual group. It was a typical cross section of young Americans and none of them were a disappointment. Some of them have gone on to various successes. Some have sort of disappeared out of the public eye. I don't remember anything beyond that.

**Simmons:** Do you recall Sergeant Johnny McKeel, who said, "The Marines would be all right once they got back to chasing women!"?

**Barrow:** He said that to some interviewer, and I do remember that he also said, erroneously, I don't know why I remember this in some later interview, that I had called him and said in effect that his comments in that connection were typical Marine and in keeping with the . . . and of course I would not call him to tell him that.

**Simmons:** As you've already mentioned, the new administration brought a new secretary of defense, Caspar Weinberger. It also brought a new secretary of the Navy, John [F.] Lehman [Jr.]. When did you first meet John Lehman, and what were your first impressions?

**Barrow:** Well, it turns out that I had met him some time earlier at some ceremony involving P. X. Kelley. He appeared as a guest of P. X.'s. I mention this because they obviously had some earlier relationship, but I invited him to come over before he was installed as the new secretary to give me several hours worth of time, which he did, and we had one on one in the Commandant's office, and then we retired one to one to lunch.

And I did most of the talking, and the thrust of my talk to him obviously had to do with my favorite subject about most of the problems that we would have to face in this world were best addressed by naval forces. You can call it sea power or employment of maritime forces or whatever, but there's no sense in rehashing all of that, but it had to do with the power of projection and specifically forcible entry, which can only be really achieved by amphibious forces. Those who have any capability you can't compare like the airborne.

We talked about all the things that we needed to make that what it should be. It was wide ranging. We talked about recruiting, quality of people, training. I knew that he was a naval officer active in his reserve status. He came on duty often to fly as a backseater in the [Grumman] A-6 [Intruders], and I was concerned that he might be so pro-Navy that the Marines would be a little left out of things.

That was not the case. As I say this as I sit here and answer your question, I do believe that he came with an open mind about the Marine Corps, but certainly not prepared to embrace it and enthusiastically advocate.

**Simmons:** Be your advocate.

**Barrow:** But he did become our advocate and he did embrace the Marine Corps. And in some respects, his admiration for the Marine Corps might have even transcended that of the Navy, because we do, I believe as individuals and collectively, present ourselves in a very professional way, do our homework, have answers. We're forthright. We are sensitive to cost and all of that. I guess I'm saying that from the very outset we hit it off and it remained that way.

**Simmons:** Very good. By early February 1981 the press was reporting a split amongst the Joint Chiefs of Staff over the rapid deployment force. George C. Wilson in a [*The*] *Washington Post* story said that the chiefs were divided over which theater commander should control the rapid deployment force. In this story, Wilson says, "The feuding between this operational commander, Marine Lieutenant General P. X. Kelley and his present theater commander, Army General Volney F. Warner, has become so bitter that the whole future of the outfit is in jeopardy the chiefs believe." Is that a fair statement of the issue?

**Barrow:** Well, the issue had several faces. One, clearly some new kind of command arrangement had to be made. You could not forever have something called the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force, who had a very almost uncertain command arrangement. He was under the, I'm going to say, commandless OpCon [operational control] of Volney Warner who was the commander of the [U.S.] Readiness Command and the commander at RDJTF [Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force], [which] had a staff but no forces assigned permanently, only some designated to be assigned when some crisis emerged and for training purposes.

He also had an office in the Pentagon in the Joint Staff area, somewhere in there, and he also had free access to call the chairman. In many respects, the RDJTF was controlled, if that's the right word, by the JCS, most specifically the chairman. It became sort of the chairman's

special interest. [Air Force General David C.] Jones met with P. X. from time to time and talked to him on the phone. All of which provoked, antagonized Warner who believed that he should have absolute and total control over the RDJTF. He probably didn't believe there was a need for it, that that was duplication, and he already as readiness commander, commander of Readiness Command, had the same tasking: to be ready to put forces together and go most anywhere.

I think he took exception to the fact that it was created for a specific area, which it was, more or less. There were other hints that it might be employed other places, but it really grew out of the crisis in the Persian Gulf, Iran specifically, and the threats that the Soviets had come up with.

So, that's one thing. There were grounds for the commander of the Readiness Command to be upset, and he fired a few volleys in public, and it took on a personal character between he and P. X. I'm not going to tell you that P. X. was to blame for any of this, but he was not totally blameless. He will accept an explanation that says people don't usually take volleys without firing back. So, he fired back and some of this was public. Some of it was perhaps leaks. It got up on Capitol Hill. It was in the press, and of course, what you asked was right on the mark.

The JCS [members] were very sensitive, had always been, to any suggestion that they weren't totally unified and in great peace and harmony about anything, and this looked like a reflection on them so they were very resentful of this, and they were prepared—I'm a member, but I'm excluding myself because but other members were prepared to draw and quarter both of them. I mean, they were just really outdone by this.

During that period, and I will say in some subsequent period, I had the occasion to put a protective barrier around P. X. Kelley, and I won't say much more than that. That's not to say that I disagreed with him and just defended him because he was a Marine, but the point is that there were folks out after him. I believe it was unjustified, and I think I defended him and successfully so, and we may get to some of that later when it came up again.

So, that's one face of it. The other face of it is that the administration had announced that they wanted to change that command arrangement, not out of this brouhaha that had been going on, but just because it didn't make sense. That introduced a whole new issue of what that arrangement should be. Now, is that what you were asking me? Do you want me to talk about that now?

**Simmons:** We get into a kind of month by month a little bit later here. You've given a very good summary. I'd like to go back and pick up on a few points. You mentioned the word "leak." Let's explore that for a little bit. How do you suppose George Wilson got such information?

**Barrow:** I suppose it could come from a congressional staffer, someone in the Pentagon. The place was overrun with people who had different views about what it should be, so there were plenty of advocates of something different from what it was, and I just can't answer the question.

**Simmons:** One reason I ask was that at about that time I heard a luncheon speech by Ben Bradlee, then the editor of *The Washington Post*, and he made the statement that 95 percent of the leaks came to *The Washington Post* from the principal parties, and that these indeed did serve a purpose because they made a matter of national debate, issues of national defense. Would you care to comment on that statement?

**Barrow:** I think he's maybe a little bit high on the percentage, but I don't think there's any question that within the administration, whatever department (defense happens to have a lot of issues in which not all parties agree on) that people do contact the press and give them enough of a story for them to bore in on it and make a story out of it. As to whether it leads to national debate or not, only rarely I would think that it does.

**Simmons:** Well, the chiefs were in apparent agreement that the RDF [rapid deployment force] had to be taken away from the Readiness Command. Wilson, again in *The Washington Post*, said that the chairman, then General Jones, the Army chief of staff, General [Richard B.] Myers, and the chief of naval operations, Admiral [Thomas B.] Hayward, all favored putting the RDF under the [U.S.] European Command, which was then headed by Army General Bernard [W.] Rogers. You were cited as being bitterly opposed to this and that you argued for putting the RDF under the Pacific Command, then headed by [Navy] Admiral Robert L. Long. You supposedly said that the Pacific Command had the ships and know-how to get the RDF troops in gear to the Persian Gulf. Was that a fair statement of your position?

**Barrow:** A fair statement, but inadequate. Let me try to talk about all of this without getting into too much detail. Let me put one thing out of the way first. The JCS, I think historically but particularly the one that I was serving in at the time as a member of, had a fetish almost about unanimity, that any dissent among the group would be contained within the group and resolved,

and anything beyond the group would show total agreement. This included, if you will, our relationship with the secretary of defense.

I used to say that this didn't make sense, that this was a suppression of views, which is what the whole purpose of the JCS as an advisory body was all about. That if the president or the secretary of defense wanted clear-cut views on something, he expected to have it from each personally and not collectively.

If it happened that we all agreed, the force—the power of five persons, the chairman and the four Service chiefs, the other members—was obviously very powerful, but it's one of those things, especially when you have clear options that can be done and addressed. That if there is a member who thinks he has a solution better and it's different from the others, I can think of no better way to drive a decision to be made than to present the secretary with diverse views. He's got to say, "Well, I've heard what you all have to say, and I come down on X." So, that's a little background.

In other words, I'm saying I never felt like if I stepped out of line (didn't agree is a better term) with my cohorts, it didn't bother me. That was my philosophy anywhere. If you don't like something, stick with it. Now, that's the first thing.

The second thing is the RDJTF, which became RDF and many months later became the [U.S.] Central Command, grew to be the thing that it was, that it is today. But in those early days, it was not a formidable all-Service force in a way that you think with most unified commands.

I saw it in terms of the realities of what was there then at the time of heightened crisis. We had naval forces of considerable number, ships in and around the Arabian Sea [and] some of them in the Persian Gulf. We also had modest, true, but Marine forces afloat as part of those naval forces. We had just created the near-term prepositioning ship fleet at Diego Garcia. It started out with six ships and we subsequently added a seventh to increase the days of supply from 15 to 30 for the 12,000-man brigade, the 7th MAB.

In other words, the only presence, the only showing of the flag in the theater of interest was naval, and it would never be otherwise unlike Europe where you are welcomed by the nations of NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] and you have the flag all over the place or in so many other areas of the world. That was the one area where no Arab nation or any other



nation would ever let a headquarters establish itself on their soil even if they were allied in some way and recognized that that force might be needed some time.

Furthermore, any introduction of forces to stop something or to do something would in all likelihood run right into that obstacle called overflight rights and base rights, again even if it was in their interests. Whereas, naval forces have the unique ability to be near the scene of the threat and concern which in and of itself provides deterrent and if they're needed, they can come from the sea whether it's naval aviation or whether it's things amphibious or a combination of the two or throw in some naval gunfire if you will.

Not necessarily that this would be the only answer to what might be required in some situation in that area, but certainly an argument can be made that they would be the precursor force, the ones who would be the beginning. Most of our efforts where we start from zero are sequential in nature, and naval forces historically have been the first part of the sequence. And if it was amphibious or if it was somehow going into some port where the near-term prepositioning ship could arrive, the first people ashore in my thinking would be part of naval forces, Marines if you will, and you obviously have had them in a sequential fashion. You would have the buildup of more Marines, Army, Air Force, whatever was necessary that would eventually become part of a land campaign complete with the joint task force commander and all of the Services represented.

That to me made sense because it recognized the reality that the naval forces were the only forces there [and] that the naval forces could stay there and move about as they chose. They didn't have to worry about base rights and overflight rights. They could be made larger or smaller depending upon the need. Had some threat began to emerge, they could build up more and more naval forces, and it made such good sense. I just could not understand why we were going to have something else that would be totally out of theater as indeed it became down in Tampa, Florida, with visits to the area, but no representation in any of the countries involved.

Now, I even went so far as to suggest that we should have the forces there given a fleet number, that it shouldn't be part of the Seventh Fleet in that area but given another just as we in World War II used to change fleet designations. Sometimes they were fictitious just to confuse the Japanese in the radio transmission, but in any case, we did task organize fleets, and you had this one and that one and then the other one. I felt like that this should be given a fleet designation which would only mean one thing, give it visibility. Oh, you know, everyone

knows about the Sixth Fleet in the Med [Mediterranean] and the Seventh Fleet in the Pacific. Now, by golly, we've got whatever you wanted to call it, the Fifth Fleet in the Persian Gulf, Arabian Sea, those waters.

I got absolutely no support from the Navy. Quite to the contrary. They didn't want any part of it. Interestingly, the commander in chief, Pacific in later years told me that he wished he had supported that solution. So, the chairman and the other three members came down hard on the idea that it should be given to the European Command, and that brings another argument.

Let's just assume I didn't have a solution of naval forces. I would argue against that just on the basis that it's a d——n poor way to do it. Here's a fellow sitting in Europe with a full plate of things to worry about and now you're going to give him something that is totally alien to his responsibilities, a different culture, a different world, different physically, and a threat and everything else. Plus, you are certainly bringing into question a commander who is dedicated to one allied situation here, and he has responsibilities beyond that if there isn't some implication that he is de facto committing those nations, those forces to that theater, if you follow me.

The Europeans, I'm confident, thought that it was a terrible idea. But at any rate, that was the basis of the debate. It became more public because Capitol Hill had hearings on it, and I was asked if I wouldn't come around so we could go over there with a unified united front, and I said, "No. Why would I do that?" If I believe in something, I believe in it whether it's public or private or anything else. It got so bad that the CNO [chief of naval operations] the night before we were to testify called me at my quarters and said, "Would you please change your mind?" I said, "No, I will not."

**Simmons:** Picking up on this, General Kelley is cited as being in favor of the RDJTF becoming a brand-new unified command and that, of course, is what it eventually became. Any comment on that?

**Barrow:** That was his position, but he was very quiet about it because he was working for the chairman and the JCS who he recognized had a lot of emotional feelings on the subject, and he was not about to stick his head up and say, "I don't agree with either one of you, the Commandant or the rest of you." So, whereas, those were his views, if they were expressed at all, they were done in an, extremely "only when asked" kind of way. This whole issue was most unfortunate because for one thing in some respects my relationship with the chief of naval operations weren't as good thereafter, which is unfortunate.

From my point of view, I think it was one of the best things that ever happened to the JCS. It showed to those who were interested that these weren't a bunch of guys who sat around and had to agree on everything or they had no idea. In other words, if we can't all agree, then we have no position was the way they were viewed by a lot of people anyway, and a lot of people viewed them as seeking unanimity to the point where you went down to the lowest commonly held view on the subject, which meant it was pat by the time it was presented. It has so many caveats as to some forceful view.

Well, to continue with this, we not only had our session, which made it public on Capitol Hill, but in the tank we met with Cap Weinberger and Frank [C.] Carlucci [III], who was the deputy secretary of defense. And I was given a chance to express my convictions, which I must tell you this was now 10 years ago. I'll do the best that I can now. But I had it all wired as to what I believed about this and the rest of them spoke in favor of the European Command solution. Cap listened to all of it and ended up with the decision that it be a command established down in Tampa, Florida.

Now, footnote. Not too long after that, recognizing the passion and disagreement and all the rest, Frank Carlucci said to me, "Bob, if it's any consolation, had Cap not ruled as he did, he would have accepted your solution over putting it in Europe."

**Simmons:** Let me go back and explore a couple of the points that you have made and also establish the chronology. As you've indicated very well, the debate for the theater commander of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force continued. The Senate Armed Services Committee hearings to which you alluded, that was in March. My readings of those hearings indicate that it seems to have evolved into a debate between yourself and the chairman of the JCS, General Jones. You mentioned your problems with Admiral Hayward. Do you recall the gist of your testimony and how it might have been contrary to that of General Jones?

**Barrow:** Well, it was just that he stood firmly on a view that it should be out of the European solution, and I stood firmly on mine, and I don't recall all that was said. I don't think we showed any hostility, and I think the other members didn't say much because they only needed the one spokesman for their view.

**Simmons:** You've already alluded to Secretary of Defense Weinberger's position. During this period, he took this issue to Europe on the advisability of having the RDJTF under EuCom [U.S.

European Command], and came back convinced that it should be a separate command. You've already alluded to this, but did you have anything you want to add to that?

**Barrow:** No, I don't think so.

**Simmons:** Going back a bit to February 1981. At that time, you delivered your second posture statement, this time covering fiscal year 1981 through 1985. How did this posture statement differ from the one you delivered the previous year? What new issues had emerged?

**Barrow:** Well, we continued to talk about the usefulness of maritime forces. We brought forth our concerns about amphibious lift that we had had, what year?

**Simmons:** February '81.

**Barrow:** That we had had some promise of a one MAF, one MAB simultaneous lift capability, which we were far from being there. I expressed concern about a strategic lift both air and sea and Marines. You must remember, we are interested in that subject just like the other forces because our assault follow-on echelon in amphibious operations is MSCS [Military Sealift Command Shipping] shipping or commercial shipping, and we simply had to do better.

I talked about the need for modernization, and we did in fact have a lot of things that were just on the brink of fruition if you accept fruition as meaning anywhere from one to several years down the road. Much of the R&D [research and development] and so forth had already been done. We just needed the money to finish the R&D or go into procurement or both.

We also talked about pay and the need to improve that so that those in uniform were . . . there's no way to match what a person in uniform does with some civilian counterpart, but the difference in pay between the civilian world and those in uniform had been greatly worsened. [Tape interruption]

. . . benefit area of our personnel would not only be the right thing to do, but it would have a positive effect on recruiting and retention. Back to things naval. Beyond shipping and strategic lift, we also came down hard with respect to naval gunfire, medical support, and even things like mine countermeasures capability in the Navy, which here 10 years later I'm smiling as I say that because that's still a problem. But an old Commandant 10 years ago made an issue out of it in his posture statement. I probably talked as much about Navy things in my posture statements during all four years as I did about Marine things, which is a strange piece of irony.

Of course, your posture statement in part is to express your feelings about things. Kind of talk a little bit about the immediate past. We did some of that too, which we always did. There

may be some specifics that modernization was the main thing and sustainability and an increase in numbers. That's another thing. Don't let me leave that out, which we in fact got for better manning of the force. We had I might tell you now because it came about that we corrected it to a large extent.

Coming out of the combat arms in my career experience, you would think that my interest would be largely in that area, but I had been persuaded for a long time that one of the areas of neglect that always takes second, third, fourth seat to everything else is the combat service support. So, it is our intent to seek additional manning, in part not totally, but substantially take care of that problem that we had, which is to man new units and increase the manning of existing units in the combat services.

So, a request for additional people was in that posture statement. It was a task, if you want to call it a task. It was a pleasure that would be a better word that I welcomed because there was every promise that much if not most of our wants, requirements if you will, would be satisfied with the Reagan administration. So, we didn't pull any punches. We covered the waterfront. It all, in effect, came to pass that way.

**Simmons:** In April, Secretary of the Navy Lehman testified to a Senate subcommittee on the desirability of bringing two battleships out of mothballs. Was this a Marine Corps initiative?

**Barrow:** Not a Marine Corps initiative, but very much supported by the Marine Corps. Lehman and I met every week at least once, one on one, and the relationship was very comfortable. We could talk about what I think, we each felt that we could talk freely about anything on our minds. I had a good relationship with John Lehman. I must tell you I think part of it came from the fact that he was much younger and I was older and maybe not wiser, but very much more experienced. And there were times I used to think and I have to be careful how I say this without sounding strange about it, but almost like a father-son sort of relationship. He respected my views on things and they need not be purely Marine views or things.

So, I'm sure we probably talked about the battleships, but I'll have to tell you that the initiative was his. There was some Navy reluctance. Lots of congressional reluctance that it was a terrible thing bringing out these old antiquated ships that came from another era and a refusal to recognize that this was a platform on which you could change the weapons systems on it, but you in no way, shape, or form could ever get the dollars to build a platform that had so much to offer in the way of survivability as a battleship.

So, the Marine Corps climbed onboard with enthusiasm for the 16-inch guns. If they had to take off some of them, they still had enough left to be helpful. And so if you want to continue to explore that, the Marine Corps has what one calls a lot of blue chips on Capitol Hill, which is to say goodwill, which you don't treat lightly. You don't go to that well too often. You go when it's important. I felt sufficiently strong about the battleship, and Lehman recognized the fact that the Marines could be helpful, that I spent some blue chips on that, both in terms of my initiative plus I had calls from senators and congressmen, and it typically would be like this: "General, I don't know a d——n thing about these battleships, but I'm going to have to vote on it tomorrow. Do we really need to get them back? Is this a good idea?" And they would give me a chance to make my spiel.

Am I saying that we carried the day? Of course not, but we contributed, and the fact that that's recognized was when the [USS] *New Jersey* [BB 62] was commissioned, and the president was there, and the CNO and the secretary of the Navy, so was the old Commandant of the Marine Corps sitting on the front row.

**Simmons:** That's a very good case study, I think, a very good case study. In the fall of 1981, there was a news story that the Madison Group, identified as a "network of conservative congressional aides," was seeking to organize support for you to succeed General Jones as chairman of the JCS. Did you have such expectations?

**Barrow:** Absolutely not. I almost refuse to talk about this because to bring it up or to answer someone's questions raises more questions than the initial question. To begin with, I don't even know who the Madison Group is. I don't know where the word "Madison" came from. There were both rumors and a couple of overt conversations directed at me on this subject; all of which I attempted to divert. I will tell you something that I have maybe told only one or two other people, but it has to be brought out some way, some time. One Monday morning, and I don't remember the time, but it was some time during this period of when it was known that Jones was leaving and the successor was being sought. One Monday morning after the armed forces [inaudible] Cap Weinberger, as we got up, brushed by me and said, "Bob, I need to see you for a minute." I went in, just the two of us, and he said to me, "You're on the president's short list to be the chairman of the JCS."

Now, you think about this. How wonderful it would be for the Marine Corps, after so many years of being left out of things, could possibly perhaps have a Commandant move to

that position. It wasn't but a couple of years before that they didn't have full, equal status. [General Louis H.] "Lou" Wilson [Jr.] changed that. So, I had to do some fast thinking and responding, and I told Cap that I respectfully declined to be a candidate. I wanted my name taken off the list. He said, "Well, it may not be."

So, I had to dig a little deeper into the reasons why. I said, "It would not be good for the Marine Corps, Mr. Secretary. In a sense, the three bigger Services—Army, Navy, Air Force—tolerate the Marine Corps. They probably admire us, but don't necessarily like us. We're a little bit of a thorn in their side. We are seen by some of them as duplicating, etc. And a Commandant moving to be chairman would never, irrespective of his personality, get the loyalty that one needs to have to do that job well. I would even go so far as to say that there might even be some folks that would hope that you wouldn't do it."

I didn't say it exactly this way, but the implication was there. You either have the risk of folks working to make you not look good at the job so that it would never ever happen again. That moved him a little bit, and my name was taken off the short list. At least, he said he would. Obviously, nothing ever came of it.

Do I have any regrets? Not one bit. I think my answer was still right. It was not time. There may have come a time. In retrospect, how did my name get up there? Would I have been a good candidate? Probably not. There were some things that the JCS were involved in that I just despised. I've already alluded to one. That's arms control. I hated to talk about arms control. It was such a nebulous, not nebulous in one sense because they're great on counting things like nothing you've ever seen counted, but the whole thing had an aura about it of unachievability and that it was something you could talk about forever and nothing would ever happen. I don't like to involve myself in things like that. I like to see things you throw your full weight of whatever it is you have to offer into something expecting at the other end something's going to happen. So, I found arms control just an absolute abominable frustration, and yet, I would have had to embrace that with enthusiasm and go to meetings and talk about it like it was something that was going to happen. So, that's the kind of thing that would have made me less than an ideal candidate.

Well, then one might say how did I get . . . why was I considered? I'll give you an explanation. It's beyond Bob Barrow. I think the Reagan administration was as much interested in image as they were in reality about the armed forces, and I think they thought that a Marine as

chairman of the JCS would send a message [that] you raise the level of toughness if you will. The Marine Corps has that reputation. You might try that out on someone some time if you thought that maybe in someone's head. "Why don't we name a Marine? That'll give the Soviets something to think about." Is that far-fetched? Maybe it is, but that may be an explanation. That's all about I know. I not only never sought it but I discouraged it, and I believe I was right in taking that position.

**Simmons:** This might be a good place to end this session.

End of SESSION XVI



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION  
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Interviewee: General Robert H. Barrow, USMC (Ret)

Interviewer: Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons, USMC (Ret)

Dates of Interview: 20 March 1992 and 28 April 1992

SESSION XVII

**Simmons:** This is session 17 of the oral history interview with the former Commandant, General Robert Barrow. This interview is taking place at the visiting officers' quarters in the Washington Navy Yard. This is Friday, the 20th of March, 1992.

General, in our last session, we reached the end of 1981 and we ended the interview with a discussion of the possibilities of a Marine being the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In today's session, we are going to explore some of the events of 1982. I will note that on 1 January 1982 the strength of the armed forces was 2,093,032, of whom 190,039 were Marines.

On 13 January, the first Marine Corps [McDonnell Douglas] F/A-18 Hornet aircraft went on the assembly line at the Northrop plant in Hawthorne, California. Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 314 was to be the first Marine squadron to receive the F/A-18 to be followed by Marine Fighter Attack Squadrons 323 and 531. What was your personal involvement and interest in procuring the F/A-18 for the Marine Corps?

**Barrow:** Well, it goes back to [General Louis H.] "Lou" Wilson's days when he first took over in 1975. There was a movement afoot very much supported by the Navy that the Marines would ultimately replace their aging [McDonnell Douglas] F-4 [Phantoms] with the [Grumman] F-14 [Tomcat], and he had a number of sessions deliberating that and made the decision "No," and I supported that.

I think that our conclusions were based in part on what we saw as the limitations of the F-14. A fine carrier-based fighter aircraft, not very good, could be made a good attack aircraft. And so, when the F/A-18 came along, dual purpose, it was an easy thing to support because it had—based on studies and analysis and all the rest—it was going to be, according to the experts, a super airplane and we did in fact need to do something about the aging F-4s.

So, I supported it. It looked like it would be the new aircraft dual emission, dual capable for the '80s and '90s and maybe even beyond. In other words, it was a fairly easy thing for me to do. We didn't have much [inaudible] options, but my decision to pursue it was vindicated in my view to my satisfaction when after the first squadron had stood up for a while. It was [Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS)] El Toro [California] in 19 . . . the summer of '82. I was out there on one of my visits, and I made a special effort to talk one on one with F/A-18 pilots.

Now, most of them had transitioned from F-4s so they knew something about dual capable. F-4 pilots and most dual-capable aviators really, if you squeeze them hard enough, will tell you they like to fly the air-to-air, anti-air dogfights. They don't do that anymore, but that sort of thing. To many of them, the attack mode sort of takes second billing.

But I was struck by the enthusiasm these young fellows had for what this airplane could do in putting ordnance on the target on the ground, and so there was so much enthusiasm and no suggestion at all that it had any limitations or needed to have something fixed, which is not an uncommon thing even with a brand-new airplane. They wish they had this, wish they had that.

Ultimately, of course, they did talk about dual seats because it got pretty busy to fly the . . . that's essentially it. Here we are in 1992, and we can say that it performed extremely well in [Operation] Desert Storm. So, everything says that was a good decision way back.

**Simmons:** On 20 January, you announced that the urinalysis test results received from drug testing laboratories could be used in disciplinary proceedings involving Marines accused of drug usage for any drug except marijuana. You followed this up with ALMAR 246 issued on 1 February in which you launched a concentrated campaign to eliminate the use of illegal drugs in the Corps. The language of the order was simple, beginning with, and I'm quoting, "The distribution, possession, or use of illegal drugs is not tolerated in the United States Marine Corps."

The order further stated that all Marines were subject to random urinalysis testing. Would you comment on the effectiveness of this antidrug campaign?

**Barrow:** I consider this to be a subject of great magnitude. One in which I involved myself personally as much as any other thing I did as Commandant. We need a little bit of history. If one looked at the drug scene in the country, we know that it was bad as it still remains, and much of that simply got moved into the Marine Corps when we brought people in, some of whom, many of whom, had been on drugs and continued to be on drugs after they came in despite the fact they wouldn't have access to them while they were going through recruit training.

It was a problem that just sort of fed on itself. I made a bad assumption during my first couple of years that yes, we had drug usage, but our commanders [and] leaders at all levels were aware of it and working the problem. And we were doing about as good as we could do and it wasn't by any means good enough, but it wasn't all that bad.

Well, a couple of things happened that awakened me. One was OSD or DOD [Department of Defense] had a survey test made of the military, and we came out with a very high percentage of people who were involved in drug use. About that time, I was making some trips. I remember I was in [MCB] Camp Pendleton [California], and I asked the CG of the 1st [Marine] Division to arrange for me to talk to captains that were from the infantry, artillery, wherever. And I had about 10 or 12 in the room, and I selected captains because they're the fellows who are closest to the problem with some maturity as officers. These are fine people who were handpicked obviously.

And I was absolutely floored to see that there were generally two attitudes among them. One characterized as apathy: it's terrible but there isn't anything we can do about it. It's a reflection of society and there's no tool, no nothing that's available to make us do better. Then a lesser number also had the belief that so long as these fellows perform well during their workday, that's all we ask of them. What they do after hours is their own business. Which is a terrible way to look at it.

Well, I came back. This is maybe the first time I ever talked about this. I came back absolutely floored. I did more questioning, asked more questions, did more looking, [and] did more listening, and I came to the conclusion that we had a serious problem. I also came to the conclusion that the only way to address it was to put the full authority, power if you will, of the Commandant's office in a very personalized way in behind this thing.

I started with my sergeant major, who had some good skills in straight talk to the troops, knew how to do that. We blanketed the Marine Corps. We didn't have time for me to talk to everybody, so he talked to the bulk of the enlisted, particularly the NCOs [noncommissioned officers] and staff NCOs, and I talked to the officers. I remember the figure that I gave 17 talks to theaters full of officers in every major command in the Marine Corps.

I began by not fussing at them, not taking them to task. I began with an admission. It went something like, "Who is responsible for our serious drug problem in the Marine Corps?" That was my lead-in comment. Then I would say, "You are looking at him." Not a bad technique to make your own admission that you're largely responsible, and I guess I was the guy that was responsible for it being as bad as it was.

That made them all kind of sit up. “Well, he didn’t come here to fuss at us. He came here to say that he’s part of the problem and now let’s get with it.” I said, “We’re going to give you the tools to fight this, but you must fight it.” I don’t want to spend too much time on this, but I became something of an expert. Not so much in the technical part of it about how many milligrams of this would do this to you and all that, but in terms of what was behind it.

For example, we talked about . . . we used to excuse ourselves about peer pressure, that people used drugs out of peer pressure, and I used to ask the question, “Well, there are two kinds of peer pressure: good peer pressure and bad peer pressure. What you’ve just said is that we have more bad guys than good guys. Where are the good guys, which I still believe to be in the majority, exercising their good peer pressure?” What we often seek to have in all of this is a sense of pride about being Marines and a recognition that that’s mutually exclusive to say, “I’m a Marine and still use drugs.” The two are just not consistent, and we are looking for the day when everybody is so proud to be a Marine that a great deal of that comes from being proud that they’re in an environment in which there is no drugs, that they are the exception to the outside world.

I talked about the importance of leadership, but I also talked about the certainty of punishment, that we could not have a lot of forgiveness in the system, that at the lower ranks where they may have been less mature and already have had the experience, we would give them a second chance but with punishment. In the case of staff NCOs and officers, no second chance. Out! Gone! We would encourage probable cause searches, searches at the gate. We got sniffer dogs trained and brought in, and the biggest thing of all—and it got a little bit of a shaky start in terms of its reliability or people not knowing how to use it—was the urinalysis testing, which of course made all of this work because that was the absolute proof that you needed to be successful in any kind of constancy of the search and effort.

So with drug testing, an excited energized leadership, the emphasis on good peer pressure, the emphasis on “you can’t be a Marine and be a druggie too,” we just busted our butts working the problem and with success. It went not dramatically down at first, but it went down, and again we thought of jumping ahead. But as I sit here and talk, I know my interrogator, General Simmons, knows this, but that’s not the purpose of these interviews, for me to assume he knows something. The purpose is for me to say something. So, I’m going to say this because it’s a fact. As we sit here in March 1992, you can go to sizeable Marine units in the Marine Corps like a Marine air group or a regiment or a battalion or whatever and randomly test everyone in that unit and you might come up

with something in the vicinity of 1 percent or a half a percent. That's better than any institution in America. Hands down. Maybe the Girl Scouts can do better, but I mean, that's just the best there is.

That just didn't happen. A lot of hard work and now we have indeed, and have for some time, reached the point where people who are in a drug-free environment don't want to accept or tolerate some fellow that's fooling with it. And they'd be quick to in fact identify him and have him thrown out or punished or both, whatever, and I think that's a dramatic achievement, and I'm not saying I did it. I said I had a hand in doing it. It was done by the people that were close to the problem and what the people up above did was give them the tools, the encouragement to do it.

The whole idea even of enlisted people with the testing of them before they even come into the Marine Corps has been a big plus too. But I just think it's remarkable and a great achievement. Before we get off of this, we had, I had a lot of experiences.

I remember one in which I think it was Marine Air Group 26 or 29, whichever one down in [MCAS] New River [North Carolina], had an inordinate number of officers and pilots and copilots, all of that, must have had 350 officers and had a very vigorous CO [commanding officer]. And he got the idea that you couldn't double standard this thing too much, and we weren't. We were testing officers as well as enlisted, but he was going to be a little more dramatic. He was going to test all of his officers, a surprise sort of thing, and this was well after this program was under way.

He tested the entire group of 350 or whatever it was, and they came up [and] someone said to me, "What's he going to find?" I said, "Well, the population is so large, there is bound to be three or four of those young fellows doing this business." It came up zero. Also, the second MAU [Marine amphibious unit] that came back from Lebanon. The one that had been out there after [Colonel James M.] Mead and before the fellow that was there when they . . .

**Simmons:** [Colonel Thomas M. "Tom"] Stokes [Jr.].

**Barrow:** Yes. They had done most of their six months in Lebanon, and I remember *Newsweek* had in their "Whispers" section where they put those gossipy things, it said, "Reported that Marines in Lebanon are deep into drugs because of its ready availability." Well, I hit the ceiling, not at the Marines but at that report, because I knew it was not true.

In the first place, there's no liberty. There were officer and staff NCO and NCO presence with the troops 24 hours a day. The opportunity . . . and no contact with the civilians; it was not permitted, not encouraged, or anything else except in a very official way. So, there wasn't some situation where the troops were just running wild in some foreign country. I knew it not to be true, but I said I've got to try to make sure that's the situation.

So, when that outfit landed at Morehead City [North Carolina] and any drugs would have still been in their systems, you know, we hit it with everything we had. We borrowed sniffer dogs from the [U.S.] Air Force and the Army and had the Navy's permission to do it, and we searched every ship that came in, we searched every Marine, and ultimately within days gave urinalysis, and there was nothing. It was something like three or four people, and we traced that down to three or four Marines who had succumbed to the temptation after they left Lebanon riding in a ship where some sailors had procured this in a liberty port in the Mediterranean. Well, that's about enough of that story, but anyway, it's one that excites my attention, even now.

**Simmons:** For the record, who was your sergeant major at that time?

**Barrow:** [Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps] Leland [D.] Crawford, and maybe before we get through, Ed, we can devote much of some part of the last tape on people that I served with and particularly those that helped me so much when I was Commandant and make comments about any of them.

Crawford was picked by the selection committee that most recent Commandants have used in looking at some number of sergeant major prospects and narrowing it down to some four or five that they would then suggest that the Commandant himself interview those in person, which I did. Crawford, whom I had not known, was interviewed by me, and I just liked him. In some respects, you could say he was rough, rough around the edges, and rough in general. Not a high school graduate. His use of the English language was not perfect, but he's a man of great concern about people. Beneath that rough exterior, he had an abiding and sincere interest in people, young Marines in particular. He was a master of direct talk. He served me so well that I did an unkind thing in that his wife had a very fine job on the West Coast and did not choose to give it up to come east with him, so he would try to take leave and go see her when he could, and she would come over to see him, and that was expected to be a two-year thing. But I liked him so much I did something I probably shouldn't have done, but I asked him to stay, and he being the kind of fellow he is, he wouldn't have said, "No, I've had enough." He stayed.

So, he had what amounted to an unaccompanied tour with me for four years, and I admire him tremendously. And I'm not sure how we were perceived as we moved about in the Marine Corps, but from my perception, I thought we had a nice harmonious relationship. We saw things alike. He could bring problems to me that perhaps no one else could, and I would also be sure that I

could be confident that he wasn't being superficial. He wasn't flying off the handle at something that irritated him. He would have looked into it, and if he brought it to me as a problem, it was a legitimate one, and it was also one he couldn't have done anything about, because he would have not brought it to me if he could solve it himself. I can't begin to tell you how many of those kinds of situations he did. Anyway, so, he was the sergeant major at the time.

**Simmons:** He was a very handsome impressive looking man and had a great deal of presence, and he and his wife made a very impressive combination I think.

**Barrow:** Yes, they did. I remember, let me give you a little anecdote. We were in Perth, Australia, the summer of '82. I wanted to see the NTPS partially unloaded to see if we had indeed acquired the capability that was as advertised, and furthermore, the WestPac Marine expeditionary unit was conducting an exercise north of Perth, and an A-6 squadron was coming in there from [MCAS] Iwakuni, Japan, and exercising with the Australians and doing some support of the MEU. So, there were really sort of three things going on, not all tied together.

The NTPS unloaded at Fremantle [Port], which is a port near Perth, and it was as advertised. It went very well just to make that comment since we're talking about the subject. Anyway, we went to see the MEU both ashore and onboard ship. I remember talking to all of the officers in the wardroom, and Crawford got a number of the enlisted people who were still onboard ship down in the flight deck, I mean in the hangar deck, and talked to them. And I'm not saying that I didn't, I'm not saying that I never talked to troops. I did, but it was very easy in many instances where we were limited by time to have him talk and take questions. And he was a master at knowing the details about pay and reenlistment bonuses and all those things. He knew them backward and forward, so some kid would raise his hand and ask some question, which I couldn't have answered, but he had the answer.

Anyway, that night Patty and I were in our hotel in Perth, which incidentally is a pretty city. It reminds me of San Diego, 50 years ago. And the evening news came on and this Aussie voice with film footage along with it said, "And the head of the Marine Corps, United States Marine Corps, is telling his troops in no uncertain terms about what's expected of them," or words to that effect. So, Patty and I both whipped our heads around, and we were dressing and here's a picture of Crawford standing on a table in his typical dramatic fashion. And we both laughed, and I remember saying to her, I said, "I don't resent that one bit because if he had had the opportunities of education, etc., he probably could be head of the Marine Corps because he has it in his heart and whatnot, the kinds of things one would want in a senior leader." Enough of that.

**Simmons:** Back to January 1982. Once again it was posture time. I will read some key quotations from the fiscal year 1983 posture statement, and you can comment if you wish.

The first is, "My personal observations of your Marines convince me that they are as tough and ready as United States Marines have ever been."

**Barrow:** I believe that to be true. Some of which had to do with the quality of the people we had been for the past five, six years bringing in. A lot of it had to do with the quality of officers, which was superb. A lot of it had to do with the enormous amount of training we were engaged in. We were in an era of that. Unlike any we had ever been before. Before Vietnam and during Vietnam, we trained in very limited situations. We could go typically down to Vieques [Puerto Rico] and make great claims about how great that was. And we would do some stuff out in the Western Pacific, but this time, Marines were training in a way which not only enhanced their readiness, improved their relationship with other foreign nationals, but demonstrated to those who would look at it and hear about it that they had really sharpened their edge of readiness. They were training at this time each fiscal year in something like 90 to 100 places around the world, exercises throughout the Mediterranean, Northern Norway, Australia, Korea, and before long it was East Africa. Oman was during my tour as Commandant. We had MEUs go in there.

So as I moved about and talked to them and looked at them and what have you, it was just [that] they were the top standard. Probably got better because the quality even got better after I left, but that was . . . we had turned the corner. Commanders were no longer occupied with that 10 percent that would always give them trouble. As a matter of fact, let me . . . am I making too much of all this?

**Simmons:** You're not.

**Barrow:** It doesn't look . . . I went to the dentist yesterday and had two hours of agony in the chair, so I'm half groggy, and what's happened is that I'm more talkative than usual.

We were bringing in all these good Marines and, for example, in 19 . . . in calendar year '81, we brought in . . . the quality had improved such that the ones we had brought in in '80, which we thought was a great year, about 30 percent of them would have been ineligible by [the] '81 standards, and we kept exceeding our standards.

Now, the interesting thing was that while we were doing this on accessions, we still had some people despite the big flush job we did on bad guys when Lou Wilson took over. We threw



out 25,000 over a period of about one year. We had [been] still harboring people that should not have been still in the Marine Corps, and I'll tell you how we made great strides there.

I used to get serious incident reports, SIRs. These were usually just what the term says, serious. Some Marine had done something to a civilian or to another Marine or to the society at large or what not that was of such a serious nature that it was put in a report that goes to the Commandant of the Marine Corps. I would read the thing and maybe doing some horrible thing to whomever, and I would say, "Profile him for me." That means going back to the command and getting his essentials out of his record book, what other prior offenses that he had, [and] a little bit about his background. I never got one of those that didn't fall in the category of what I'm talking about. Hanging on [to] people who should not have been retained.

These would be people with repeated offenses and often offenses that merited punishment much greater than what they got. In many instances, they should have been thrown out and they were still around. Thrown out by the nature of what some of their offenses they had done and certainly by the accumulation.

Now, there's one explanation for that, which I don't really buy too well, but it's there, and that is that Marine officers don't like to admit that they command troops that they can't make them all do well. And it's a test of their leadership they say to have some fellow who they believe to be temporarily out of step with life, so they're going to straighten him out and he's going to be a great Marine. "Just leave him to me. I'll take charge of him."

Well, I'm coming to the point. I found it to be a most effective technique. I'd get this profile of horrors, and I would pick up the phone and call the commanding general and I was never very pleasant about it, very businesslike. I would say things like, "Jack?" "Yes, sir." "I am absolutely appalled at what I am looking at." "Yes, sir, general." And I would read the essential facts. That's all you had to do. In no time at all—the record showed it—they . . . I had told them many times to keep screening your people to get rid of these that are marginal, submarginal, and they made that effort they should have been making all along. After you make a few phone calls like that, like 2d Division, 1st Division support, you're going to get results, and so, we had a little peak of people leaving the Service. End of story.

**Simmons:** Here's another quotation from your posture statement: "The Marine Corps' ability to deploy rapidly and accomplish its mission, however and whenever called, depends on quality individuals who can endure rigorous training, accept firm discipline, respond to sound leadership,

and perform with intelligence and capability.” That virtually speaks for itself, but I thought we should read it into the record.

**Barrow:** Yes. And we’ve been talking about that. We surely have. Yep. That’s the key to the Marine Corps, the people who are in it. We can harbor a few characters and always have that make the Marine Corps colorful, but when you get right down to it, we want people who are trainable, who are amenable to discipline, [and] who make a commitment, which is what they do when they raise the right hand, sort of a simple act of faith, “Make me a Marine.” And then the recruit training experience stands apart from all the other Services in getting that commitment. That’s it, the people part of it.

**Simmons:** This next statement from the posture statement is also relevant, builds on what we’ve been saying: “Our recruiters are doing a fine job particularly in view of the fact that 29 percent of the accessions in fiscal year 1980 would not have qualified in fiscal year 1981.” You alluded to that earlier.

**Barrow:** Right, yes.

**Simmons:** In your appearance before the congressional committees, you were concerned over the shortage of amphibious lift and the slowness of which obsolescent amphibious shipping was being replaced. You noted the total of 67 amphibious ships fell far short of the goal of being able to lift simultaneously the assault echelon of a Marine amphibious force and a Marine amphibious brigade. Isn’t this a chronic shortage?

**Barrow:** It is absolutely a chronic shortage. It is a perennial problem. I think every Commandant has considered the business of trying to do better with respect to amphibious lift as one of his top priorities, and they had gone about it in different ways. You obviously have to have the Navy do more than just give you tokenism in this area; you have to get some real serious positive commitment. It surely helps to have a secretary of the Navy agree that this is a problem that must be improved, but most importantly, you have to be in an era in which the funds are a little bit better than they have been, and in this time, we were in that kind of beginning. This is now ’82.

[President] Ronald Reagan had been in office for a year and there was every promise that we could get a lot more of the things we needed than we’d been able to get in years, and so the time was right to emphasize this, and we did. I didn’t do anything any other Commandant hadn’t done, but my good fortune was that we then began to see some correction of the problem because we were faced with block obsolescence. Had nothing been done, we had large numbers of ships, even those that

had maybe already been SLEPed [included in the service life extension program] once or twice going out, just plain worn out in service, and we started the first ship coming along was [USS *Whidbey Island*] LSD-41. I remember going out to Seattle [Washington] when the keel was laid, and I guess [General] P. X. [Kelley] went out when it was commissioned, that was at Whidbey Island [Washington], a great improvement over the previous LSD [landing ship, dock], and then we started on the LHD [multipurpose amphibious assault ship], which was to replace the LPHs [amphibious assault ship helicopter]. And now, I don't know how many we have, but it was in this era that the recognition to improve ourselves was not just made, but something was done about it.

Now, the other thing that we did, recognizing that we were short of one MAF, one MAB lift simultaneously, was to take a hard look at the assault echelon, which was what determined the MAB, MAF lift to see if we couldn't migrate some things out of what we call the assault echelon into an assault follow-on echelon to bring some relief that really [was] more than just to show on paper. You didn't want to get to, you certainly didn't want to shave that too close, because our friends in the Navy would say, "See there, you don't need any more ships." But that was a drill to reassure ourselves as to what we could in fact load out and do the job with [in] respect to the assault echelon.

**Simmons:** You used a term there, shipping being "SLEPed." For the benefit of future generations who might not know what that means, that is S-L-E-P, service life extension program for ships, which was essentially a rebuild of the shipping, bringing its communications and habitability up to standard.

**Barrow:** Yeah.

**Simmons:** On 12 February as a refinement of our MAGTF [Marine air-ground task force] doctrine, you reached a decision to have the East Coast Marine amphibious units or MAUs redesignated. Under the new system, the first digit "2" would indicate the MAU was drawn from the II Marine Amphibious Force. Thus, the MAUs from II MAF would be designated as 22, 24, 26, and 28. These numbers would be very much in evidence in later Marine operations in Lebanon, Grenada, and the Persian Gulf.

Similarly, MAUs drawn from the West Coast, I Marine Amphibious Force, would have numbers beginning with the first digit "1" and those from the Western Pacific based III Marine Amphibious Force would have numbers beginning with the first digit "3." As I recall, during your years as Commandant, we were moving toward permanent command elements for the three tiers of

the MAGTFs; that is the MAUs, the MABs, and the MAFs. Do you have any comments regarding the MAGTF structure or doctrine?

**Barrow:** Yes. We obviously have great reason to be proud of the structure of the Marine Corps as relates to its uniqueness in terms of having a sizeable add-on, a good mix of ground weaponry, [and] a good combat service support capability. It's sort of like a three-prong air, ground, combat service support, but the fourth element of this sort of diamond, if you would, sitting on top of all of it was one area of weakness and that's the command echelon.

You had good strong command arrangements in the division, in the wing, and in the combat service support, but it was MAGTF headquarters where our weakness was displayed, and we had always tried to deal with that by calling up by line from T/Os [tables of organization] in the division and wing and various other techniques calling up from the unit below, the people necessary to flesh out the command headquarters.

No matter how these people were identified, no matter how frequently you might have exercised them, which was usually not very often, you had a basic deficiency. This is just not the right way to do it. One, you were robbing Peter to pay Paul. You were taking people away from their commands where they were needed if you were going to be going to war, and you were bringing them together, converging a bunch of strangers in a sense, meeting one another for maybe the first time in charge of a bunch of strangers. It's not the time to get one self-organized and get the kind of cohesiveness that you need in the command echelon. So, this was an effort, not a total one because we by no means provided full strength MAGTF headquarters, but there were cadres as we had indeed done before, but much more modestly. And this was an effort to have permanent people, not total numbers needed but heavily cadred, so that you could have that continuity and the cohesiveness and do the planning for exercises. Some of the planning for contingencies and to in fact do the exercises, many of which related to contingencies, and I'll never forget—I think I mentioned this in one of my earlier episodes—about being rustled up in the middle of the night on Okinawa when I was the G-3 [operations] of the Marine expeditionary force to start planning to send a brigade airborne, bobtailed, to Saigon [Vietnam], and I worked all night in my civilian clothes, and it was early the next morning when [Brigadier General Raymond G.] “Ray” Davis, who was going to take it out . . . I said, “Who's going to be your 3 [operations officer]?” I had a multitude of things I was doing all night long. This was just a question of I need to turn this over to whoever's going with you, much of what I've been doing.

He said, "I've already checked it, checked it out with the boss," who was [Major General James M.] "Jim" Masters. "You are my 3." I said, "God, I have to go home." I dashed back to my Quonset hut. Fortunately, I had my pack all ready, and I got out of civilian clothes and put on my utilities and grabbed my pack and came back, and within minutes we were on the way to the airport. We didn't take off. We never went, but we were in the starting block, so to speak. Well, it was memories of things like that that told me that someday I might be able to make a little bit better correction of that situation. So, that sort of went by.

**Simmons:** Great story. This next one sort of builds on it perhaps. In February, Marines from III MAF took part in Team Spirit '82, the annual exercise held in South Korea to test deployment, reception, and employment of ROK [Republic of Korea] and U.S. forces responding to possible contingencies in the Korean theater. Do you have any specific recollections of the Team Spirit series of exercises, and how would you rate their importance?

**Barrow:** I rate their importance probably higher than any other exercises because as one looked at what we did in Europe, and this is not being retrospective here in 1992, in some ways you could say, "You're so smart in having it figured out." But the likelihood of the threat materializing and . . . [Tape interruption]

. . . and in the Korean Peninsula, you've got a situation that's a tinderbox. It's déjà vu; 1950 all over again waiting to happen with an enormous capability in the north, and the only deterrence is the assurance that you have troops, which would come as they did before except they'd be better equipped, organized, and whatever else.

So, this was an annual display of what it is that we would do if required plus we needed to be attentive to how to work with the Korean forces and how to integrate our air capability with the U.S. Air Force air that is in Korea and to be major players, early-on major players, in the defense of the Korean Peninsula. So, I considered it to be probably in terms of importance number one for reasons I've just given.

**Simmons:** I'm going to ask this question of you cold. From time to time, there have been some misunderstandings between the Army commander and the III Marine Amphibious Force commander in these exercises as to the utilization of III Marine Amphibious Force as a MAGTF. I'm thinking of things that Lieutenant General John [H.] Cushman of the Army has said to me vis-à-vis [Major] General [Lloyd H.] Wilkerson when he had command of the 3d Division. Do you recall any kinds of doctrinal problems?

**Barrow:** Oh, yes. And most of it turns on one thing. It's not that the Marines want to go off by themselves somewhere in Korea and fight their own war. It has to do with who is going to control Marine aviation. And so when we talk about the integrity of the MAGTF, we don't mean that we're looking for our own special piece of real estate and we'll fight it while you fight something over here just like 1950 revisited, and [U.S. Army] I Corps and X Corps one place and the rest of it somewhere else.

It had to do with aviation and the argument about control of Marine air is most evident in this particular set of exercises and in the Korean Peninsula in general, and it goes something like this, that the Air Force fundamentally, and I'm sure they teach it in all their schools, fundamentally they believe that there should be centralized control of all aviation assets. And when anybody brings them into the theater where they are the dominant air service, air component commander of the overall commander, that they must be folded under for tasking and determination as to what they're going to do, how many sorties, where, what kind, etc. And the Marines have always been sort of hanging by their fingernails to make sure that they preserve their authority over their air while at the same time recognizing that they would provide support in general, both in a situation of extremes where though the Marines might have had a need that day, they would cancel their need, cancel what they were going to do to let the air do something for somebody else if the whole U.S. command was under extreme circumstances and excess sorties—sorties beyond those required for their own operation.

They did that, but they never were able to get it pinned down in writing, so to speak. It almost had to be [an] ad hoc thing agreed to. It turned on the personality of the commanders. It was something that came up almost every year. I had forgotten this until you brought it up. I went out there fairly early on and went to call on the commander of the U.S. Forces Korea, of all these multiple hats, and he was not available to see me. He had gotten called out and flew back. His name escapes me, but his deputy who happened to be an Air Force three star named [Charles A.] "Charlie" Gabriel, whom I had never met, who later became chief of staff of the Air Force and, I might hasten to add, became a good friend and still is a good friend of mine.

When he was chief of staff of the Air Force and I was the Commandant, we occasionally, not nearly as often as we would have liked, played golf, but in retrospect, I think maybe I was a little bit overpowering. I came in there bristling with determination to resolve this thing for all time. So, I held school on—later to become Charlie Gabriel's friend—on the subject, and in no uncertain

terms, I was talking like you know, we were going to be independent as all get-out about what we would and wouldn't do. But it left the message about as clearly as I think it had ever been stated about how the Marines regarded their air component, that it was like flying artillery and all those arguments we've talked about, and it didn't mean that we wouldn't play, but you cannot just take it away from us. We'll give it to you when you need it in desperation. We'll give it to you when we have elements in excess of what our requirements are, and we are fully capable of tying in. The old argument about air defense: we can tie into every system you put on the ground, and we can and do regularly. And so, that was the beginning of something in my tour still valid.

I came back and went up, and this subject was brought up in the tank in the JCS meeting, and quite clearly [Air Force General] Lew Allen [Jr.], another friend of mine who was chief of staff of the Air Force, a fellow I liked very much, a very taciturn quiet sort of fellow, brilliant. He's a physicist and more. He followed the Air Force line, you know: if Marines come in the theater, they're going to have to give up their air. So, we sought as a JCS document to get this thing doctrinally squared away, and I had some sharp people in Headquarters [Marine Corps], both down in the Division of Aviation and in Plans, who fought with their Air Force counterparts and dug their heels in, and we worked the problem. We worked it to the point that I had a special meeting with Lew Allen, and I said, "I'm interested in avoiding acrimony. This thing is almost getting out of hand. I would not like to see you and me in some sort of loggerheads over this thing in the JCS. And you need to know that whereas I'm a student and admirer and practitioner of compromise on a lot of things, we will not compromise on this one. So, do you want to be reasonable and yield to our desires on the subject, which we think are reasonable, or do you want to go to the mat and we're going to go right all the way, and I'll take it up to the secretary of defense and to the White House if necessary?"

Well, the thing has a happy ending out of all this. We came up with a doctrinal statement that is not perfect, but it is about as . . . have you read it?

**Simmons:** Oh, yes.

**Barrow:** It's about as favorable as the Marines could ever expect to get the JCS to agree to. Don't you agree?

**Simmons:** Yes. That was a very useful, very useful account. In April 1982, some 10,000 Marines and sailors making up the 7th Marine Amphibious Brigade or 7th MAB took part in [exercise] Gallant Eagle '82 at Twentynine Palms, California. The 7th MAB, along with forces from other

Services earmarked for the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force totaling some 25,000 in all, was to train in a simulated combat situation in a desert environment. Would you comment on the importance of the Gallant Eagle series to what eventually happened in [Operations] Desert Shield and Desert Storm?

**Barrow:** Well, as a consequence of Soviet threats, posturing in the Transcaucasus in [President] Jimmy Carter's waning days, the Iranian hostages, the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, the continuing turmoil in the Middle East, brought to the fore not only to the RDJTF, which became RDF and that became [U.S.] Central Command, but it brought into the fore the reality that we would be in a different environment, climatic, topographical, whatever. In a word not that there aren't other kinds of areas in the Middle East that are nondesert, but in general, a desert kind of environment. It would be a high possibility or probability, I should say.

So, our ownership of Twentynine Palms, use of it, was a natural fit. We were trained in that desert; though not exactly comparable, it still had some of the features. The Army meanwhile had activated for the same reason. We happened to already have Twentynine Palms. They had Fort Irwin [National Training Center in California], but they had never really done a lot with it, and they then started making major improvements in the ranges, and introducing all kinds of fire control techniques, etc., and having various scenarios of movement of armored forces, fire, and maneuver on a larger scale than we were doing at Twentynine Palms. But they got some ideas from us, and we in turn made it work together because we were separated only by Route 66 going through east of Barstow [California].

So, in the desert and working with the other Services with a contingent going to the Middle East—which was subsequently done, not subsequently but some years later done, this past year—says that we were on the target, you know, on target in terms of what we were doing.

**Simmons:** On 28 April 1982, Lejeune Hall, the physical education center at the U.S. Naval Academy, was dedicated. As I recall, you spoke at that dedication. Would you wish to elaborate either on Lejeune Hall or [John A.] Lejeune himself?

**Barrow:** Well, Lejeune Hall is a fine facility. It has . . . that's sort of the athletic hall facility. You have your basketball gymnasium and football and all that. This was exercise rooms, weight rooms, swimming pools, and all those kinds of things, and it was a nice day. I remember [Lieutenant] General [Henry W.] Buse [Jr.] was there, a man I always liked. I spoke seemingly extemporaneously about General Lejeune, but in fact I had boned up on him. I didn't need to too



much because I was a big admirer, and he was an 1888 graduate of the Naval Academy, and I think it's generally agreed he could be called the "father of the modern day Marine Corps."

One special appeal to me about the man is the fact that he, as the crow flies mind you, he was born and reared about 12 miles from where I was born and reared in a totally different culture. He was over on the French side of the Mississippi River, and I'm on what's called English Louisiana, one small pocket on the east side of the river, and the river is sort of like the English Channel in that respect. And when he was growing up, there was no way to go back and forth unless you rented a boat or something. When I grew up, you had a ferryboat and indeed you still do, and now, we're going to have a bridge.

But he was a product of the Old South. His father was in the Civil War as a captain, and I may be repeating myself, but a very touching story that he went one or two years to LSU [Louisiana State University] and got his appointment to the Naval Academy, and the requirement at that time was that you arrive properly attired. You just didn't show up. One of the things that appalls me, Ed, in these modern times in which we live is wherever you go you see people who are respectable people in every sense of the word except they don't dress that way, and they see people getting on the airplanes (this is a classic example) [with] no socks on and all kinds of things.

Anyway, he had to have what amounted to a suit with a tie. He had no suit. His family was extremely poor. Not that they had always been, but as the consequence of the Civil War. That's another thing we have in common.

So, his mother took his father's Confederate gray uniform and tailored it into what would be a civilian suit and that's how he was dressed when he arrived at the Naval Academy. And the person who told me that story was [retired General] Lemuel C. Shepherd [Jr.] who had been his aide and to whom he had told that story.

**Simmons:** Again, we may be repeating ourselves, but I think it's very interesting and very important. You had this "English Channel" separating you from French influence in Louisiana. Where were you in growing up or in the Marine Corps when you first became aware of Lejeune as a Commandant of the Marine Corps and as a fellow Louisianan?

**Barrow:** I knew sketchily about him as a boy, but it wasn't really until I came in the Marine Corps that I realized that he had done what he had done like commanded the 2d Division in World War I and a two-and-a-half-term Commandant, ended up [at] VMI [Virginia Military Institute] and that sort of thing. I did not know those things.

**Simmons:** I think it's safe to say I'll make the conclusion and then you can validate it or reject it. I think it's safe to say that Lejeune, his life and the traditions he instilled in the Marine Corps, have been a great influence on you.

**Barrow:** Yes. Yes.

**Simmons:** About this same time you testified before the [Oversight and] Investigations Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee that you opposed a proposal advanced by the chairman of the JCS, then [Air Force] General David [C. "Dave"] Jones, that the powers of the chairman be increased. Jones's proposal was that the chairman be made the final arbiter of policy rather than the Joint Chiefs as a corporate body, and that the chairman be the primary military advisor to the president. Isn't that where we are now as a result of the Goldwater-Nichols [Department of Defense Reorganization] Act [of 1986]?

**Barrow:** Yes, it is, and it is a shame. I would say most of what has brought us to where we are can be traced, its ancestral roots, in David Jones. I don't like to deal in personalities, but Dave Jones—a smart man, a man of obviously some talents and capabilities—was dead wrong on this one. Dave Jones, I'm told when he went to Europe as commander in chief of Air Forces [in] Europe, he reorganized the thing and it was not better off when he left than it was when he got there.

When he took over as chief of staff of the Air Force back in the '70s, one of the things he did was to reorganize it, and I'm told it was not better off as a consequence. And so, here he was, another opportunity to "reorganize." And he waited until the 11th hour. It's almost like "fouling your nest" when you leave it, and he dropped this bombshell on everybody, and to get support for it beyond—which he knew he wouldn't get out of the then other members of the JCS—he sort of went public, made speeches on it, and when he'd be interviewed, he'd readily tell anybody that the thing that was wrong was that he could not get . . . there was no unanimity and worse there was no good product being offered up to the secretary of defense and to the president coming out of the JCS because of the quest for unanimity. We had to all agree to the lowest common denominator of acceptability, whatever that was. It's all watered down. There's a lot of truth in that, but that's the fault of the chairman, not of the system.

Interestingly enough, the most powerful chairmen of the JCS in modern times, which is when the JCS has existed, have been against the single-man concept. And you can understand why, because they didn't feel the need for it. In other words, Dave Jones's personality and the way he did things felt the need to have that kind of authority as opposed to exercising his leadership to get the

kind of agreement and direction out of the body called the JCS, for which he would be the spokesman as he went up.

So, I said at the time that, and I'm sure it wasn't lost on people, that this whole thing turned on personality. It's just like people saying the CinCs [commanders in chief], the area CinCs, CinCPac [commander in chief, Pacific], [or] CinCLant [commander in chief, Atlantic] did not have enough authority over their components. Nonsense. That's pure nonsense. I remember reading after I retired about some of them whining and complaining that their air or ground component, Army, Air Force component commanders dealt more directly with their Service chiefs than they did with him in matters that were under his purview, and that's his fault.

You take a guy like [Navy Admiral Thomas H.] "Tom" Moorer. You can't imagine him putting up with some of the components bypassing him on things that came under his authority, jurisdiction, and the same when he was chairman. Tom Moorer says that he didn't need any special authority. He thought he had all that he needed to be the principal advisor, so to speak.

Well, I guess I was the last person to speak on the subject. They had all the Service chiefs there talking on that. It's not a perfect system, but it provides checks and balances, which are now absent. It provides for the collective wisdom. No one in his right mind would ever want to go someplace or do anything in which you were doing it by committee, and that's what it appears to be. But there is a guy who is the chairman, and you can force a position by the authority vested in you as chairman without having to be told that you are the only one, that you only get advice from these other fellows.

As a matter of fact, there's strength in diverse views because it drives a better decision. There's strength in even having disagreements, which has to be resolved by the secretary of defense. It's even beyond resolution within the tank. You have two that favor this and three that favor that. It will compel him to weigh the options. It will compel him to give serious thought as to who might be right and who might be wrong in this situation and compels him to make a decision. I sat on the president's Blue Ribbon Commission on Defense Management, the so-called Packard Commission, for over a year, and it was focused primarily on the procurement, logistics, program manager, how to buy better, state requirements better, work the system better, [and] all those things, but it also because the total title was the defense management, they took that to include the JCS. And so they had all these people come up and testify about what we should have.

So, they came up; that body was supportive of a single voice. I remember standing up with

one of these butcher paper things and I had sketched out the relationship of the president and the secretary of defense and the chairman and the JCS as a whole, and then I talked about the personalities that had occupied these various positions and why no matter what kind of arrangement you had, you had these personalities. And I won't go through them again, you're just going to have a you're not just going to have a very good "how to go [to] war" arrangement because you have these kinds of personalities. You would be well served in however you did.

Anyway, Goldwater-Nichols is a piece of mischief in many ways, and I have nothing against [Army General] Colin [L.] Powell, present chairman and was chairman during Desert Shield/Desert Storm, but I think history will show you that some of the decisions made with respect to Desert Shield/Desert Storm were not as good as they could have been had there been more participation on the part of the Service chiefs in their roles as members of the JCS.

**Simmons:** With respect to personalities, you said earlier without naming him that the most powerful chairman of the JCS had not needed this explicit authority. To whom were you referring?

**Barrow:** I said any one of several, but Tom Moorer is an example. He and I are good friends and have been for years. We stood on the advisory committee to The Citadel [Military College of South Carolina] together, and so I've kept up with him since the days when he was in [U.S. Navy] Seventh Fleet, and he was also CinCLant and he was also in CinCLantFleet [commander in chief, Atlantic Fleet] and SACLant [supreme allied commander, Atlantic], and then he went over to be CinCPac. So, he's commanded both major naval area commands [and] unified commands, and he was CNO [chief of naval operations], and he was chairman and a very forceful personality. I think the people that had worked with him like General [Leonard F.] Chapman [Jr.] probably admire him. I'm sure they do. He served on The Citadel committee too. We all were there together. And he opposed all of this reorganization. That's interesting.

**Simmons:** In June, things began heating up in Lebanon. On the seventh of June, the U.S. embassy was the subject of a rocket and machine-gun attack that caused minimal damage and slightly wounded one Marine security guard. On the twenty-third, the evacuation of the embassy began with the Marine security guards providing security. A day later, the embassy was abandoned entirely because of the severe fighting in the vicinity. Remaining personnel relocated in the ambassador's residence. Do you have any recollections of these events and did American forces in the Mediterranean go on a heightened alert?

**Barrow:** Yes, they went on a heightened alert. This was the beginning of what is a dark page in the

history of our country and to some degree in the Marine Corps. The commitment to actually become physically involved in the Middle [East], in the Lebanese crisis, and I'm sure you have some follow-on questions that you want to ask on that.

**Simmons:** The 32d MAU was withdrawn from . . . excuse me, I'm ahead of myself. Because of the worsening situation in Lebanon, the 32d MAU or Marine amphibious unit under Colonel James Mead landed its ground elements at Beirut [Lebanon] on 25 August. They were to form the U.S. element of the multinational force called in to assure the safe and orderly departure of Palestinian [Palestine] Liberation Organization forces. The 800 American Marines were joined in this effort by 400 French and 800 Italian troops. What are your recollections of these events?

**Barrow:** Well, we know that all of this was brought about by the Israeli offensive, which at the outset promised to be a limited objective kind of offensive but which in fact I'm persuaded they knew all along would be to go as far as they could go and to get rid of not only the Palestinian [Palestine] Liberation Organization, the PLO, but, for that matter, Palestinians in general who were refugees all over the Middle East.

And so, the question of how well this would go with the Palestinians retaining their arms and being in effect thrown out of one of the countries they had used as a base, you might say. And where there were refugees, would there be some last-minute resistance or problems, things done that would embarrass the U.S. government if the Marines suddenly get into a clash with them or what have you?

If you remember the newsreels when the actual execution of the evacuation of the PLO took place, they were all armed, riding in open trucks, and firing their weapons up in the air. People don't realize that all those bullets come down some place and there have been people killed that way. So, it was a sensitive situation that proved not to be a problem, and they were successfully evacuated, and I thought the Marines did a most commendable job.

**Simmons:** That 32d MAU was withdrawn from Lebanon on 10 September after that evacuation, reportedly on order of President Reagan. What are your recollections of the circumstances of the withdrawal?

**Barrow:** Well, they had finished evacuation of the PLO, which was the only reason they went in in the first place. They went in in August, and about the first week or first day or whatever of September, somewhere in early September, they had completed that and were pulling out of there. And they were still afloat off shore, because while they got rid of the PLO, the Israelis were still

down there, and whenever the Israelis go in [to] an Arab country, you're going to have problems. So, I think it's a matter of prudence that the MAU and associated shipping was kept right off of Lebanon for whatever might be subsequent requirements, which proved to be within days there was one, the massacre in the refugee camp.

**Simmons:** In retrospect, this withdrawal seems premature because as you say just 10 days later on 20 September, President Reagan announced the U.S. forces would once again be joining the French battalions in aiding the Lebanese government and regaining control after the massacre of hundreds of Muslim Palestinians in the two refugee camps, Sabra and Shatila, by the Lebanese Christian Militia, and if you would, continue with your recollections of these events.

**Barrow:** Well, this is one of the situations where on the one hand the U.S. government was reluctant to get itself involved as they had been for many years, but on the other hand being driven to be involved, and then wanting to say, "Well, we're going to put a time limit on it. When we've evacuated the PLO, that's it; we're coming out." Now, again, maybe we should have stayed, because as I say there were still conditions that required some sort of what peacekeeping, if you want to use that term, but the acts of massacre in the two Palestinian refugee camps, public opinion, and everything else; enough is enough. We've got to go back and protect these people or do something to help stabilize this situation, so there we go back in again, always with the understanding this is not anything even quasi-permanent. It's going to last days, weeks, at most a couple of months, and then you're going to get out of there.

So, the danger they never stated but implied that there were limited objectives in terms of time if not in terms of what they were doing, and it certainly was that, but in fact they were open-ended. They just kind of . . . there was always something that made you stay a little bit longer, just a little bit longer, and if this happens, this would be all right and you can then go. That was the problem here. It was a scene, it was a situation designed for great problems as we subsequently had.

**Simmons:** On the 26th of September, you presented to Colonel Mead and the 32d MAU the Navy Unit Commendation for their first 16-day landing at Beirut, 25 August to 10 September. The ceremony took place aboard the USS *Guam* [LPH 9] about 60 miles off the coast of Lebanon. What are your recollections of the ceremony? What were your thoughts at the time as to the future of things in Lebanon?

**Barrow:** Well, I was accompanied on that by the commander of the Sixth Fleet, [Navy] Vice Admiral [William H.] "Bill" Rowden, whom I always liked. I liked Rowden. He was still

commander of the Sixth Fleet when the tragedy occurred in October '83 [?]. I did more than make a presentation of the Navy Commendation to the 32d MAU on the *Guam*, which was where the largest number of troops was, the reason why the *Guam* was selected. All the proper fanfare, made remarks, and so forth. I visited all the ships, and I obviously did a lot of listening to what they saw and heard and felt and thought about things. I also had a son there, a platoon leader in the 8th Marines who was his rifle company of which he was platoon leader.

**Simmons:** This would be [Lieutenant] Robert [H. Barrow]?

**Barrow:** “Rob” was embarked on the [USS] *Manitowoc* [LST 1180], an LST [landing ship, tank]. I mention that because here’s a young Marine lieutenant who had only had his platoon a few months by the time I saw him out there. In his letters home, both going out and after they got there, had as much to say about Captain Rich Butler [?] and his officers and crew of the USS *Manitowoc* as any other single subject. And I mention that. I couldn’t wait to meet this fellow on the *Manitowoc*, because he is the best example of those Navy officers who bust their butts to treat the Marines not just fairly but with great consideration and go out of their way to make them feel wanted aboard ship instead of “What are you doing on here to mess up my ship” sort of attitude, which some have had.

He did things subsequently when they were back in there and stayed around the airport until they were finally pulled out. He would send a boat over with all the food cooked on the *Manitowoc*, and all of his mess crew people in their containers and feed the Marines, get them off of rations, and he did that regularly. He was really quite a fellow, and what a great way to have a relationship, and Rob to this day still talks about him.

**Simmons:** Captain Rich Butler. I wonder if he made admiral.

**Barrow:** I don’t know. Probably not. Too nice.

**Simmons:** On 29 September, the 32d MAU did land again at Beirut. A day later Corporal David L. Reagan was killed and three other Marines were wounded when they tried to defuse some live ordnance inside the grounds of the Beirut International Airport. I suppose that these were the first of our casualties in Lebanon.

**Barrow:** Yes.

**Simmons:** Speaking of sending food ashore, on 15 October, great publicity was given to 3,000 precooked and frozen hamburgers being shipped to Beirut for our Marines as part of the reaction of several American companies to news stories that the U.S. Marines were not eating as well as their French and Italian counterparts. Do you have any recollection of these events?

**Barrow:** Well, I know that one could say that in modern times if the Italians and the French fought one another, nobody would get hurt because they'd be too busy eating, but that's a little bit too facetious. But they have a thing about eating, both the Italians and the French, and they have a thing about taking time out to do it, and if it takes longer than what one would think reasonable to prepare it, so be it, and I've been in the company of the Italians in exercises, and they stop when they want to stop and everybody brews their coffee and sits around, and that's the way it is.

It's not incidental to what they're doing; it becomes the centerpiece of what they're doing at the time they're doing it. Whereas, I think the U.S. Army and Marines, for example, have a great interest in food. My gosh, you know that. How they love to talk about it and pretty ingenious at doctoring it to make it taste better and all that sort of business, but it's still incidental to what it is they're doing. That's why you see sometimes a guy eating in the old C-ration days walking and eating his rations on the move out of his can.

So, it's an incidental thing; whereas, the French and the Italians, it becomes the focal point several times a day to sit down and have all the trappings of eating.

**Simmons:** Also, on 15 October, it was announced that the Marine Corps had not only met its recruiting goals for fiscal year 1982, but that 90 percent of the recruits were high school graduates and there had been the second largest number of reenlistments on record. This must have given you considerable satisfaction.

**Barrow:** Well, it did, and it proved that we could do whatever we set out to do with respect to raising quality. It was helped by the fact that about this time we got pay increases. That helped reenlistment. It also, to some extent, helped enlistment. Now, Ronald Reagan must be credited with establishing an aura of great respectability with respect to serving the country. I'm not sure that people consciously made a decision to enlist because Ronald Reagan created that aura, but it was there, and that had something to do with it. Patriotism, duty, service, [and] all these things he manifested in his words and his demeanor whatever, so, that [combined with] our policies, our determination to have only the best people on recruiting duty, and we used to speak to that often, and that pays off. Indeed, it does.

**Simmons:** On the 18th of October, it was announced that the High Mobility Multipurpose Vehicle, the HMMWV or humvee, would replace the jeep and some of its younger brothers. The initial DOD contract was to be for 50,000 vehicles. What was your first exposure to the humvee, or said in another way, when did the Marine Corps first become interested in the humvee?



**Barrow:** Well, we were interested from the outset when the Army first stated it as a requirement, and it came up as a prototype. I saw one of the prototypes, looked at it, and rode around in it. Easy to be turned off by its appearance. It's kind of an ugly looking thing. But one—the jeep is not really much of a vehicle in terms of capacity and lots of other things. We have a sentiment about it, but we needed some multipurpose thing that could be truly a command vehicle that could carry more stuff. It could even carry the troops, which the jeep never carried more than three or four people hanging on, and so, it seemed to have great promise. And I think I'm correct on this; it proved in Desert Shield/Desert Storm to be a real workhorse. People found it to be a good vehicle, so I don't think we anguished at all about signing up for the humvee.

**Simmons:** This is really a follow-on to an earlier question. On 19 October, your Headquarters announced a decision to establish three Marine amphibious force planning headquarters, each headed by a brigadier general, each permanently staffed by 47 officers and 45 enlisted men. Six Marine amphibious brigade headquarters, two for each of three active duty division-wing teams, were to be manned by 65 officers and 85 enlisted. What are your recollections of this plan and how it developed? You've already talked to it; perhaps you have some additional . . .

**Barrow:** Well, we did talk to it and at this point, particularly as relates to the MAF, we had become increasingly more involved with planning with the RDJTF, later to become CentCom [U.S. Central Command]. And the other representation other than the Navy who were never big players in this sort of thing, but the Air Force and Army had . . . [Tape interruption]

**Simmons:** This is Brigadier General Simmons, and this is a continuation of session 17, the oral history interview with the former Commandant, General Robert Barrow. This interview is taking place at the headquarters of the Washington Navy Yard. This is Monday, the twenty-eight. Excuse me. Tuesday, the 28th of April, 1992.

Picking up where we left off, on 22 October 1982, the results of a test at Camp Lejeune in which the troop satisfaction with the new meal, ready-to-eat or MRE rations was compared with the old C-rations. It was reported that 91.5 percent of the Marines in the test preferred the MREs over the old C-rations. One of the most important features was that the new ration came in a flexible pouch rather than in a tin can. By the end of Desert Shield/Desert Storm, the MREs were almost universally d——d. Do you have any comment?

**Barrow:** Well, I think it said something about the lack of reliability of testing, testing for anything

almost, because I do remember there was enthusiasm. And on the face of it, it would appear that the variety of menu and what they have to offer and the way in which the foods are preserved, it would be a quantum improvement. But as you pointed out, when it got the real test of prolonged use in difficult circumstances, specifically out there in Desert Storm, it was not well thought of at all. As I recall, one of the things they said, “MRE stands for meals rejected by Ethiopians!”

**Simmons:** Do you think that’s possibly because in these processed rations we get too far away from a natural diet?

**Barrow:** That probably has something to do with it. I think as in so many highly specialized things and people that are working the problem, while they are well intentioned and very capable, they sometimes get wrapped around the axle in detail that should be avoided, like . . . I don’t know specifically about the meals, ready-to-eat, but these are all done. It’s all derived from some process of PhDs working the problems, looking at nutrition, and all the rest of it and missing out [on considering] the taste factor, probably.

**Simmons:** On 29 October, the 24th MAU under Colonel Thomas M. Stokes Jr. began replacing the 32d MAU at Beirut. Did you know both Tom Stokes and Jim Mead?

**Barrow:** Yes, I did and under different circumstances and both very well. Tom Stokes served as a battalion commander in the troop training battalion at [Marine Corps Recruit Depot] Parris Island [South Carolina] when I was the commanding general there. This would be in the early ’70s. A very professional man, quiet for the most part, very attentive to his responsibilities, a good battalion commander there, and I’m confident was a good MEU commander, MAU commander, in the situation we speak of.

Mead worked for me as a colonel when I headed up Manpower. He’s an aviator, gregarious, even in some respects flamboyant, likes to laugh and be congenial, and he’s a big tall fellow, and I would also think he was probably a good MEU commander, a different personality.

**Simmons:** Almost immediately, the Marines ashore at Beirut assumed a more warlike posture. On 4 November, they began patrolling by jeep out to the Green Line, which separated the Christian from Muslim sectors of the city. This move must have been decided at a very high level. What are your recollections?

**Barrow:** My recollections are that most of the things related to the Marines being there were decided at a level beyond either any Service chief, myself being Commandant, or the collective process called the JCS. It was frequently discussed obviously in the JCS and most often with serious

misgivings as to what it was we were doing, perhaps getting deeper and deeper into something that was inappropriate and not likely to be successful and likely to cause us problems. And of course, I probably said more on that subject than the others because the Marines were involved.

But this is one of those instances in which there was not clear communications from the chairman as to who was driving the train on this, but I do believe it came primarily out of the National Security Council, specifically the national security advisor, who at that time was [Robert C.] McFarlane. If he wasn't specifically at that time, he soon was to be, and I think that, aided and abetted by some people over at the State Department, made much of the decision as to what was to be done.

So, the system wasn't working as well as it should, and of course, the command chain had a tortuous trail from Beirut through the Sixth Fleet all the way through the commander in chief, Europe, who has a full platter of things he must be concerned with. And here is a situation alien, very alien from what his major concerns are, NATO and fighting a war in Europe. I'm sure that didn't help matters any, his remoteness from being able to see that what was going on was not what it ought to be and perhaps sending his staff officers instead of himself at times. I'm not being critical because that was [Bernard W.] "Bernie" Rogers, a general of the United States Army whom I liked very much then and I like now, but I think there are perhaps no end of reasons why things were fuzzy about the Marine commitment in Beirut. The State Department, the White House, the . . . if you like, I'd be happy to share some of the blame because maybe I didn't resist hard enough, but I thought I did appropriately enough.

**Simmons:** On 9 November, you issued a statement elaborating on the Marine Corps' approval of the M16A2 [rifle], pointing out that it was significantly different than the M16A1. The replacement of M16A1s by M16A2s was to be completed by fiscal year 1989. Do you have any personal feelings about the M16?

**Barrow:** I could never have the same feelings that a rifleman would have, and I've talked to many a rifleman about the M16 and later about those who had something to do with development of the M16A2. I never thought from what I could garner from the troops, and my conclusion was that the M16 was not a bad rifle, but it could have been not nearly the disaster that was ascribed to it by some critics early on when it came into Vietnam. But like many weapon systems, it could clearly be made better, and that's what the A2 has done very, very well.

And the most interesting thing about that is that all those changes—despite the fact that we

have this enormous mechanism, the Joint [New] Weapons Committee or whatever it's called, that all the Services are involved in, and the United States Army takes the lead in small-arms development, and you have all the manufacturers involved, not so many of those anymore—but the changes made to it came right out of a handful of Marines down at the Marksmanship Training Unit in Quantico, Virginia, and it was their work that resulted in improved stock, barrel, sights, [and] hand guard. I can't remember all of the improvements, but it is a very decidedly better weapon than the M16A1, and this manifested itself in various ways to include a jump in the qualifications at recruit depots and rifle scores at the depots.

So, I think there has been a test of time since then as we talk to bear out that we have a winner, and all of the Army and the Marine Corps think that the A2 is a quantum improvement.

**Simmons:** Your [Marine Corps] birthday message on 10 November included the phrase, and I'm quoting, "On this special day as always those who rely on us feel confident that if needed, we are ready." I don't have any question to ask you about that, but I did want to read it into the record.

**Barrow:** Thank you.

**Simmons:** On 13 November the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on the [National] Mall was dedicated. Did you have any part in that ceremony?

**Barrow:** No, I didn't. I made no issue out of not being there. No one questioned why I wasn't. I was not a big enthusiast for that particular memorial, and as time went on I became less of an enthusiast for I don't think that some, indeed perhaps many but by no means all, of the people associated with it and who have paid such great attention to it in the years that it has been in existence are not in many ways representative of the people I knew in Vietnam and the people I know now as veterans of Vietnam. I want to say not all, certainly, and maybe I should only say some, but it seems to me like it's more than some. It's somewhere like many who continue to carry a chip on their shoulder, who if I may say so tend to whine and moan about the horrors of Vietnam—how it scarred them for the rest of their lives and how unjustified the war was and how terrible it was. They have 101 complaints to make when, in fact, I believe the overwhelming numbers of people who served in Vietnam very quietly came back to their country and put themselves back in the fabric of society, more or less the same one that they left, the jobs, whatever they were doing, and have been pretty quiet about their Vietnam experience. Some that I have known like that when you bring the subject up do not act critically about it and would tell you things like, "Well, I saw a lot of things, was involved in some pretty heavy fighting. I'll say this, if had to

do it again, I would do it again.” I think they tend to represent, not tend, I think they represent what really is the Vietnam veteran.

Now, that’s not a very nice way to answer the question because you asked me about the memorial, did I go. I’ve never been, and I don’t like seeing the pictures of these fellows there with a set of combat fatigues, camouflage uniform, whatever you want to call it, with all these patches and headbands and things that I just can’t accept as being either the trappings of a veteran or in any way, shape, or form represent what he looked like when he was on active duty.

So, I’ve come to this sort of question: who’s to say they were ever in the Service? You can go to a surplus store and buy a camouflage uniform and go down there and wail and moan at the wall and to have sympathy extended to you by innocent people who don’t know that you maybe never heard a shot fired in anger, maybe not even in uniform. Then, you can carry that on and say, “Well, maybe he was in uniform. Well, where was he?” He may have never gotten to Vietnam, or if he did, maybe he was in the rear area and didn’t have the combat experience that they all seem to want to claim. If every man was in combat in Vietnam that claims it, we would have won hands down when in fact we know that the overwhelming numbers were somewhere in the rear area maintaining the logistics activities and all the other sorts of things. So, I just frankly resent what is depicted as a typical Vietnam vet, and you don’t only see them there. You see them on talk shows on TV; you see them in the press when someone wants to use the word “Vietnam veteran.” They pick out some fellow that doesn’t represent me. I’m a veteran. You are too, Ed, and they’re just not in step with the rest of us.

**Simmons:** Your thoughts are very much like mine on that. I call it theater. So much of it is theater, acting.

**Barrow:** Yes.

**Simmons:** On 24 November, the 32d MAU arrived at Morehead City on its return from Beirut. Did you perhaps go down to Camp Lejeune to greet the MAU?

**Barrow:** Yes, I did, and they—other than the fact that they had been out there in a difficult time, not as difficult as it would be for the next MAU that replaced it—but they did a pretty fine piece of work in moving the PLO out of Beirut, out of Lebanon, and started the so-called peacekeeping process.

**Simmons:** This is a digression, but if we go to a 159,000-man Marine Corps, it means by current projections that a member of the Fleet Marine Corps will spend six months in country and six

months overseas. Do you think that's sustainable? Do you think we can get enough young men who want to serve under those . . . ?

**Barrow:** No.

**Simmons:** . . . conditions?

**Barrow:** It's not sustainable, and it will, if someone starts out with that formula, it will fall under its own weight. It will become so onerous and it will be revealed in so many different ways that they will have to do one of two things: increase the numbers, which I would doubt they'll do since they already know the arguments, and they're going to go down in spite of the arguments. Then, they'll have to do away with some of the commitments, which historically have been commitments which had little to do with the Cold War and NATO, had something to do with it because we were committed to certain tasks and certain areas where the Russians were also there making mischief. But much of the mischief that is in such places now and the potential mischief isn't Russian-sponsored and need not be, and so our need for being there is just as great perhaps.

Let's just take one element of this. Our young enlisted Marines marry at a much earlier age than they have done historically, and I have my own explanation for that. It is not certainly because they are encouraged to do so or the lifestyle of young people in general has changed. I believe that it relates in many ways to the fact that we have recruited such extraordinarily fine young men to the Corps that they are the kind of people who as a natural function of growing up and becoming responsible young adults are willing to accept the responsibility of marriage, not run away from it as someone with less moral character might do, and so it's part of what he's finding in life.

He found the Marine Corps and he liked that and now he'd like to have a wife and he'd like to have a family, and he's not afraid to take on that extra responsibility even as a PFC [private first class], and that's a difficult thing for a young couple to do. There's still a lack of maturity even though he's a Marine, and if we start whipping him back overseas every six months, we'll put his marriage to a trial that would be found in no other circumstances like that equal to it, and that's not fair. You can't say, "Don't get married." If you want to take that step, you're really going back to the 1930s or some time like that where people didn't get married when they were commissioned for the first two years, and I think we had restrictions on enlisted as well. But that's my reason for the number of early marriages that we are experiencing. It's a function of more responsible people willing to take the responsibility of marriage.

**Simmons:** Continuing the digression, one of the economies contemplated—in fact, it's more than

contemplated, it's being implemented even as we speak—is the elimination of the 6th Marine Expeditionary Brigade headquarters—the elimination of the brigade as part of the tier of Marine air-ground task force. For 100 years, we have deployed by brigade, sometimes by plan and design, sometimes by improvisation. We've seen what happened if you try to do it with a pickup staff. In Vietnam, we tried to paste together MAGTF staffs.

A good number of years were spent trying to remedy that, bringing into being permanent MAGTF staffs. A lot was done during your years and a lot was done with respect to compositing, bringing the building blocks together on the battlefield and putting them together. The Persian Gulf War seemed to validate that concept. The marriage of the brigades with their MPS shipping seemed to work very well indeed.

Now, we are abandoning that. I know that it's driven by economy of numbers, but would you view the elimination of the brigade-level headquarters with some concern?

**Barrow:** Indeed I would, and we all know this, but it needs to be stated every now and then that the pre-active duty MEFs, and they each have a little different size, are yes, MEFs that are capable of going to war as MEFs with, I might add, great difficulty, and that relates to amphibious lift or how that might go. It's the mobility that gets them there that's the hard nut, but in addition to that, they are, as we know, pools from which you task organize lesser size units, MABs and MAUs, now called MEBs [Marine expeditionary brigades] and MEUs.

And you're absolutely right that historically we rarely have ever done anything on the division-wing scale, which would be the MEF, but we've done an inordinate number of them or a sizeable number of them at the MEB level. And so that's a good place to sort of focus on, because it is the most likely one to be called out. It is the one that fits the movement, means to get some place, and that's important to know that as we went from the near-term prepositioning ship concept to the maritime prepositioning ship concept where we've got these 13 ships all designed specially to carry the equipment and supplies, spare parts, and everything for a 16,500-man brigade for 30 days. We had to create MABs to make immediate use of that. That technique, that innovation, which to my way of thinking is one of the most dramatic that we've had in the last three or four decades, would not measure up if we didn't have the forces as ready as the stuff that's on the ships, which can be sailed innocuously from wherever they are to near the point of threat without alarming anyone, and everybody's in the starting blocks to go and be there literally within a couple of days.

So, you had to have three MABs for that purpose. Then you still have the amphibious

capability, which can be called out on short notice, and the two can be involved in the same project if you will, the same threat, and they need to have . . . geographically, they're so separated. You can't run a MEB headquarters out of Norfolk, Virginia, to Okinawa and say, "Now, you're double duty. You're going to do what may be required in the Atlantic; now, we're going to send you out to the Far East." So, the geography drives it to some extent.

So, we have, well, you can come up right away with six MABs. I keep using it interchangeably, MABs, MEBs, because we've changed the names, but you can legitimately claim a requirement for six. Now, as to how they're structured, whether they are really fleshed out with all the people they need to be a full-blown MEB headquarters is another debate. You can have some better fleshed out than others, but the days should be gone forever that we go to war with improvisation, creating headquarters where strangers meet strangers for the first time and command strangers when the troops are assigned to them. I hope those days are past, but I surely . . . headquarters are kind of a natural target for downsizing. I can hear people in Congress or some place, "You don't need all those headquarters," when in fact they fit very nicely when it is needed.

**Simmons:** In fact, you can even look at the historical example of the Third and Fifth Fleets in the Pacific war. The same ships, two different sets of headquarters.

**Barrow:** Yes. Yes. And back to— Let me add this. I think the record will show that I was the first person in headquarters to talk about compositing, and I remember doing it very specifically at one of the general officers' symposiums. And it was my firm belief that if we say we're the masters of task organizing—which we are task organized for the threat, for the uniqueness of weather, and terrain, whatever—then we surely should be able, if we have the existing headquarters that can lend itself to this, we should be able to have forces arriving from different geographic areas and different command entities to a common point and with little or no effort meld themselves together into a single unit and fight the war.

I call it compositing, and I think that Desert Storm was a classic example of that. We had some people that were forward deployed in the MEU category. We had some that forward deployed as a follow on to that that were sea-based brigades, and we had the MPS brigades coming from several different places as they would have to do, of course, but they all got there, and they ended up being all part of (except for those that remained at sea) that MEF. It seemed to work pretty well.

**Simmons:** I thought so too. On 7 December, President Reagan announced the activation of U.S. Central Command, the expected evolution of the Joint Rapid Deployment Force [or Rapid



Deployment Joint Task Force]. Do you have anything to add to what we have already discussed concerning this command and its responsibility for protecting U.S. security interests in the Middle East, Persian Gulf, and Indian Ocean areas? Do you think anything would have been gained if the responsibility for Lebanon had been placed under the U.S. Central Command? You previously spoke about the convoluted . . .

**Barrow:** Yes. I think it probably could have. And there was a lot of discussion about how far to draw the line west of where it was drawn, and a lot of it—well, not a lot—almost entirely it was a political thing and not a military choice, a political being that Central Command was inordinately caught up in the Arab world and in the Persian world and so forth, and that singleness of kind of that's not the right word because it's a mixed up world too, but at least it had a certain common factor about it, a mostly Arab world, that seemed to facilitate having a command with that responsibility. But if you threw in something else that was viewed as the enemy of much of the other responsibility you had, then you've got a mixed bag of problems there.

So, I think politically they said, "Let's leave Israel out of this geographic grouping of people." Then, it sort of followed that that would include Lebanon because there was such an enormous presence of Israelis in southern Lebanon and all that. But to answer your question, militarily, certainly it made good sense to head it all under Central Command.

**Simmons:** That's the end of my prepared questions for this session. Does anything come to mind that you'd like to enter into the discussion at this point?

**Barrow:** Well, let's see. We're now in we're talking about December '82. It was in December '82 that the USS *New Jersey* [BB 62] was commissioned, recommissioned. And I was invited to be part of the official party, which included the president, the secretary of the Navy, and the chief of naval operations. And I want to make note of it, because the reason why I was invited I believe was because I spent a lot of Marine Corps blue chips in causing that to happen. There were a lot of people who were either neutral and needed to be persuaded or they were actually opposed to bringing out the battleships, recommended be done, and some called me and asked for my views on it and that sort of thing.

I'm very much an advocate of the battleship, and as we sit here in April 1992 and realize that after a considerable amount of money was spent on commissioning four magnificent ships of the *Iowa* class, the [USS] *Iowa* [BB 61], the [USS] *Missouri* [BB 63], the *New Jersey*, and the [USS] *Wisconsin* [BB 64]. They performed well in Desert Storm even though that was not a naval kind of situation.

As we turn to possible conflicts of the future in which there would be an emphasis on those things from the Navy and Marine Corps that are littoral or whatever—some people say it one way; some say it another, but the shore lands of distant places—the battleship would be an invaluable weapon, and particularly these upgraded ones with the Tomahawk [cruise missiles] and Harpoon [missile systems].

And permit me to digress and let my thoughts drift along. Had we had four battleships equal to what we presently just decommissioned, offshore of North Vietnam during all of the time of the Vietnam War or most of it, we would have engaged all the targets that were engaged by air. They were well within the range. That's the way it was. They would have been engaged with greater accuracy by the battleships than much of the bombing that was done, bombing, bombing, and repeated bombings to try to knock out the approaches to some bridge or whatever, and perhaps more importantly, we would not have the POW/MIA [prisoner of war/missing in action] problem that we have. In other words, I'm telling you the battleships could have been a good substitute for all the air activity we had placed up in North Vietnam. That's what I think of the battleships. It was a mistake to decommission them.

**Simmons:** Any other subjects pertinent to this period, do you think?

**Barrow:** No. We're at the end of calendar '82, and we have six months left.

**Simmons:** Six months left of your commandancy, and then we'll go through your retirement years, and then we'll do a retrospective, picking up things that we've missed.

**Barrow:** All right. Somewhere along the way—and I might as well put this in the record because someone will read it, if anyone ever does—they'll say, "Well, that guy is so self-centered; he hasn't mentioned anybody else but himself." That's the nature of the questions you ask me. You ask me and I answer, but undergirding all my answers and lurking in the background of my life has been an inordinate number of people, good people, who have made me look better than I deserve to look at times and who have served me loyally and well. And somewhere in the scheme of things, I'd like to say something about some of them, and either that, Ed, or you can just throw names out at me

since you know a lot of the people that served with me and give me a chance to comment on them. But they rank from, you know, sergeants to generals, and they all played a major role, a role, an important role in my life.

**Simmons:** We shall certainly do that. I think this might be a good place to end this session.

End of SESSION XVII

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION  
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Interviewee: General Robert H. Barrow, USMC (Ret)

Interviewer: Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons, USMC (Ret)

Date of Interview: 6 June 1994

Session XVIII

**Simmons:** This is Brigadier General Simmons, and this is session 18 of the oral history interviews with the former Commandant, General Robert Barrow. This interview is taking place at the visiting officers' quarters in the Washington Navy Yard. Today is Monday, 6 June 1994, [the] 50th anniversary of D-Day.

General, in our last session, we reached the end of 1982. In today's session, we will take up the last six months of your term as Commandant. In passing, I will mention that on 1 January 1983, the strength of the armed forces was 2,112,500, of whom 195,700 were Marines.

The first of January was also significant, because it saw the activation of the U.S. Central Command as the successor to the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force, which we have discussed in some detail.

On 7 January, VMFA-314 [Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 314], the first tactical squadron of any Service to receive F/A-18 Hornets, began flight operations at [MCAS] El Toro. Do you have anything further to say about the F/A-18?

**Barrow:** Well I will, but first let me say that this session 18 is a gap from the last session, of what? Three years or so. And I want the record to show that's my fault. I have been either lazy or just simply unavailable. But in any case, it was all of my doing.

The F/A-18 was a much welcomed airplane, because it was replacing an ancient one that had served us well, the F-4. And not just simply replacing it, as a new fighter attack, but one that was different with the upgraded capabilities. When I went out to El Toro on several visits, I met with these young pilots, some of them over in [Naval Air Station] Lemoore [California] still being trained. There were three squadrons that stood up, 1, 2, 3, out of the 12 that we ultimately got, replacing the 12 F-4 [squadrons].

When I talked to these young pilots, I would ask them what they thought about it. And the thing that impressed me most was that they were overwhelmingly enthusiastic about its attack capabilities. How easy it was for them to acquire a target, and just in accuracy and obvious lethality goes with all of that.

And so I was persuaded then we had a winner, and I was persuaded we do now. The only shortcoming that was ever pointed out to me at that time has been largely corrected or is being corrected, and that is making a two-seater out of it, instead of just a single-seat with F-18A model work. So it was definitely a winner.

**Simmons:** The beginning of a long service life for the F-18 in the Marine Corps. During the last week of January 1983, you hosted the visit of the commandant of the Philippine Marines, Brigadier General Rodolfo M. Punsalang. Do you recall any highlights of that visit?

**Barrow:** Well, the central highlight was that I had gotten to know him earlier. He had been the commandant of the Philippine Marine Corps for a number of years. I was out in the Far East, as I recall, when I first met him. In any case, he's one of those fellows that you almost immediately take a liking to, not because he had any unusual personality. As a matter of fact, he was very shy, quiet, unassuming sort of fellow. Slightly built, like most Filipinos. But the more you got to know him, the more you realized he was a quiet leader and someone who could get things done.

I remember the height of the Mindanao uprising. Marxist-type guerrillas in Mindanao were giving the Philippine national government a lot of trouble. He had only six Marine battalions and nothing else, a small headquarters. All six were in the field. No rotations, just in the field. You can definitely stay there until those things were corrected.

So he was welcomed here, and I think he enjoyed himself. I didn't accompany him on this tour, but he's one of those people that I like of the various foreign marine commandants.

**Simmons:** Of course, now we are entirely out of the Philippines. Is this good or bad? Do you have comments on this?

**Barrow:** Well, it's bad for both parties. It's bad for the Filipinos in terms of economics; though, in time, that may be changed. It surely is bad for the U.S. in terms of access to forward, multipurpose bases. They had everything, as you know, from dry dock facilities to taking carriers alongside, big ammunition dumps, large supply depots, a deep-water port of course, and proximity to many of the trouble spots of the world and some training areas.

Indeed, all of that is gone. So it appears to me we are still in search of where we can bed down. Some talk of Singapore and some of Guam, but none of it will equal what we had there. However, I can understand the Filipinos' actions on this business.

I don't think they were moved so much by some strong feel of nationalism to just "get rid of the Americans so we could go it alone." Nor do I think they were motivated because there might be some sort of economic gain. They would have a free port and invite the Japanese and everyone to come down and participate.

I think they were simply fed up with conditions at Olongapo [Philippines]. I've held that view for a long time. I don't think the Navy leadership simply tolerated the bar girl, whoring, whatever activities you want to call it, activities that went on at Olongapo. I think they condoned it. They even perhaps, maybe not publicly say so or even in private say so, but probably many of them thought that this was a good way to let young sailors let off steam on liberty.

Well, it's degrading. Never mind that the girls who did all of this, willingly did it. They did it because of the money. But it's degrading to the Filipinos, who are a proud people. And I think they were moved as much by getting rid of that cankerous sore on the body as anything else.

**Simmons:** Very interesting. During the first half of 1983, we began to benefit in an increasing way from the Reagan administration investment in new and improved weapons and equipment. For example, in February, the 1st Marine Division began receiving the M198 155mm [howitzer] towed artillery piece. Do you recall some of the debates that went into the selection of this piece, specifically the abandonment of the self-propelled 155[mm] and the putting of the towed 105[mm] on the shelf, so to speak?

**Barrow:** Well, there was a great deal of debate. One can begin by saying that Marine artillery almost has to, by its very nature, follow Army artillery. They are the big purchasers of artillery capabilities. They run the artillery schools, and the Marines historically run the gunnery section out at Fort Sill [Oklahoma].

The debate centered on the logistics that would be required, the enormous amount of heavy ammunition that would have to be brought along with the guns. The prime mover, what would it be that could do this job? It would pose a problem in certain terrain conditions. In other words, you're dealing with a great big gun and larger shells.

And there was a lot of sentimentality for the 105. However, the Army had announced

they were ceasing to purchase 105 ammunition. I don't know if there was ever a reversal of that, but anyway the best we could on our decision making on this was to put the 105, as you have alluded to, on the shelf and train with it enough, so that if we went into some situation where weather or terrain dictated the necessity for some lighter piece than the 155, that we could easily revert to the 105 until the ammunition stores are depleted.

But the 155 had obviously greater range, a wide array of ammunition some of which were like small mines that could be fired out of it, out of the shells to where you had mechanized forces and troops; so you had even some antitank capability with it and the promise of more of that. So the lethality, the range, the variety of ammunition all said it was the prudent thing to do.

Now about 155 self-propelled, the M109 [howitzer], in consideration of the maritime prepositioned ships, which in large measure [was] the first one in particular targeted toward the Middle East Gulf region, in general, and knowing that the terrain there, if you have never fought in that area, you got to be moving over a number of miles and terrain that would probably favor the use of tracked vehicles.

So as I recall my '84 (which was my last budget) the '84 budget included several batteries of M109s and another number in the follow on. However, it is my understanding that they are now out of the system. There are 10 battalions in the days of the Marine Corps—we're talking 1994—10 artillery battalions, 30 batteries, M198.

**Simmons:** Problems in Lebanon were increasing. Do you recall the incident of 2 February, when Marine Captain Charles B. Johnson drew his pistol while blocking an attempt by three Israeli tanks to pass through his checkpoint near the Beirut university library?

**Barrow:** Yes, I remember it quite well. And I was moved to send him a personal message, commending him for his courage and decision to stand up to what was clearly a planned provocation to see what they could get away with.

I don't know if we covered it in one of our last sessions, because we really got started in Beirut, Lebanon, in '82, June of '82. We went in to evacuate Americans and back in to take the PLO out and then back in to provide some stability after the massacre in the two refugee camps. And so we're still there. Things only got worse, not better.

**Simmons:** What I'm leading up to is on 14 March you wrote a very strong letter to the secretary of defense, Caspar [W. "Cap"] Weinberger. In it you demanded, and I'm quoting, "firm and strong action" be taken to stop Israeli forces in Lebanon from putting Marines in "life-

threatening situations.” I’m sure that you remember this letter. Did it have any perceptible effect?

**Barrow:** Well, I think so. What happened was the letter was a little different than what I thought might have happened. The origin of that was a meeting I think with the Armed Forces Policy Council in which I vocally registered my concern to the secretary of defense, saying that things had become intolerable. That there were clearly provocations and not just some sort of routine contact being made between Israelis and the Marines.

And he said—he acted surprised and said, “I’d like to know more about that.” And this was not the setting to try to give him more, and I interpreted him to mean some details. So I went back, and we started you might say researching it. And we had examples beyond what the Marine Corps had experienced in which some of our United Nations, Marines, and Army Service [inaudible].

Let me pause to say that for a long time the United States Army and the Marine Corps have provided United Nations observers, the majority of them in the rank of captain and major. Sometimes they are the senior ones, maybe a lieutenant colonel or a colonel. And there had been many incidents involving these chaps, perpetrated by the Israelis, trying to embarrass them [and] trying to provoke them. And so we dug up some of these from my own files and got some from the Army.

In any case, the letter was fairly long. It included specific examples, not just an opinion, the best example being the one you just talked about, Captain Johnson. Now I don’t know what Cap Weinberger thought that the final resting place might be, but he sent it over [to] the secretary of [state], George [P.] Shultz. And then they, I suppose, purposely released it, or parts of it, to the press.

Now, I don’t know the policy for all this. There are some folks who say that a large Arabic group in the State Department who would take something like this, if that is so, and exploit it. But in any case, it hit the press and there was a lot of flurry about it.

And then Ambassador [Israeli Defense Minister Moshe] Arens (I can’t think of his name) he responded publicly in a way that I could read between the lines that they were going to restrain themselves from these kinds of incidents. And in large measure, that was done.

I’ve never understood the Israeli attitude toward the Americans. All of our troubles and problems in that part of the Middle East have stemmed from our generous and constant support of the Israelis. And yet repeatedly they have played dirty tricks like spying, shooting up the USS



*Liberty* [AGTR 5], and being very provocative in this action, which they were the root cause. Well, you could say the root cause is the animosity between the Arabs and the Israelis, more specifically the PLO and the Israelis.

But the next root cause, if want to say the second root cause, is the Israelis' decision in '82 to not just foray across the border but to go all the way to Beirut, which was about 50 miles from the Israeli-Lebanese border, and in the process, with some of their allied Christian militia and what have you, beating up on anybody that was in the way. You know the massacre at those two villages has been pretty conclusively proven that Israelis maybe didn't direct it, but they knew it was going on and did nothing to stop it. So it's been an ugly, unpleasant situation. It has been for a long time.

The only other thing I can add is William [L.] Safire, a highly touted, recognized, noted, whatever you want to call it, correspondent for *The New York Times*, and at one time a speech writer for President [Richard M.] Nixon, wrote a column taking me to task because of the misuse of one word. He fancied himself an English user purist, and he was right.

But, in writing the letter, he said that I had written a letter evidently at the request of my superiors. And so I fired back a letter to *The New York Times* acknowledging my use of the word. Oh, I've even forgotten what it was now. I accepted that. But where does he come off saying that without any knowledge, any facts, that evidently . . . I said that's not the Marine way. So that's the end of that, except his office called me years later and asked if they could have my permission to use my letter to him in some book he was publishing, so I said sure.

I got nothing but positive comments on that subject, I reckon because I didn't do it for that reason. I thought the thing would be kind of close hold. But just an amazing number of people in positions of authority in the government and people outside who have no restraints on them have sort of been silent on the U.S.-Israeli relationship over the years.

**Simmons:** Two weeks after the Johnson incident, on 15 February, the 22d Marine Amphibious Unit, under Colonel [James M.] "Jim" Mead replaced the 24th MAU at Beirut. Jim, as we discussed at an earlier time, had commanded the 32d MAU back in August and September of 1982. Now you have already mentioned them, and they are obvious, these danger signs, that things were getting worse in Lebanon, not better. Do you want to expand on that a bit?

**Barrow:** Well, you couldn't have a more complicated situation. You had starting out with the Lebanese Civil War, which is still unsettled between the Christians, which the name may be

inappropriate, but they were Christians. They didn't act like Christians. And there was a couple of them acting like old-fashioned warlords. And you had their historic rivals the Druze at one another's throats. And then you had other various sects of armed militia. And you had Muslim Shiites and Sunnis. You had patrons like Iran and Syria.

And in the midst of all this, you had the Israelis, the number one bad guys to all these other people I've named, except some elements of the Christian militia. Once [Bachir] Gemayel had been assassinated, president[-elect] of Lebanon, a second one had taken his place, it was chaotic. And our presence there was just that. It was declared [that] we would maintain a presence.

And even under very restrained, carefully considered and executed rules of engagement, it was still destined to be something bad or could be something bad. Our position around the airfield area was untenable. It was looked down upon from the heights, which was under the control of people that didn't like us. We had sniper fire, occasionally maybe a mortar round or two.

I think perhaps I am, to begin with, I'm a Reaganite, whatever that is. I like President Reagan. I thought he did a lot for the country, especially defense. I think this might have been his biggest mistake, bigger than Iran-Contra. It's not something he made, a decision he made on his own. After all, he gets his advice from a lot of people, State Department people, secretary of state, secretary of defense, chairman of the JCS, the collective opinion of the JCS, his national security advisor.

However he arrived at it, to put the Marines there in that position was just a bad show. And you have every reason to ask, well, if you felt that way, what did you do about it? Well, we talked against it, all of the JCS did [and] thought it was a bad thing to do. And we didn't say it just once; we said it repeatedly that it was a bad thing to do.

But, it came to be a commitment. And when things got really bad is when we started almost unwittingly, although that's not the right word, taking sides with the Lebanese Christians. There were even, as I recall, Army advisors [and] some Marines who were serving in an advisory capacity.

And when they tied into some of the Muslim groups, the thing that probably triggered what finally happened, it was so bad was that with the not encouragement, it was more like a directive, which could have been ignored, but I could see the young fellow on the ground not

doing it. In one of [Robert C.] “Bud” McFarlane’s visits out there (he being the then national security advisor, a former Marine, a lieutenant colonel, artilleryman), he directed, requested, approved, or encouraged or whatever the word is, and I ought to know, I guess it’s in someone’s account of it, the MEU [Marine expeditionary unit] commander, Marine expeditionary unit commander, to use naval gunfire. Which it might have been helpful to the Marine presence, but I doubt it. But it d——n sure gave the signal that we were taking sides. They knew the advisors were over there working with the Lebanese Army. And now we were giving them naval gunfire support. We ceased to be in anyway neutral. We were part of it. And they didn’t like us to begin with. They had already shown that.

So that’s really the genesis of all the bad things that ultimately happened. And all of that is pointed to as being a problem that would make things worse to no avail. So I think it was just not just a regrettable tragedy [or] a bad experience; I think it was a stupid one.

**Simmons:** Backing up a little bit and looking at some of the events that led to the final tragedy, in the third week of February, the Marines in Lebanon conducted humanitarian relief operations in Qartaba [Lebanon] after the worst blizzard in memory. We also flew some helicopters into Syrian-held territory to rescue snowbound Lebanese. We don’t think of Lebanon as having winter blizzards. Do you have any particular recollection of these relief operations?

**Barrow:** I think, well, two things. One, they did a super job. As always, our helicopter community are real can-do people. And the other thing is that we had no resistance to that. That was one of those exceptions. It would have appeared like an opportunity to take out some of this resentment. People might have been able to do that, let it all happen. So it was, as you point out, humanitarian and successful. That’s about all I can remember about it.

**Simmons:** On the 16th of March, five Marines from BLT 2/6 [Battalion Landing Team 2d Battalion, 6th Marines] were slightly wounded by a fragmentation grenade while on patrol northwest of the Beirut International Airport. An Islamic fundamentalist group known as Jihad Islami claimed responsibility for the attack. Wasn’t that again, a fairly strong signal that there was worse to come?

**Barrow:** Yes. Oh, yes. And again, I don’t recall what the timing was or what was actually said, but I can assure you that again we pointed out that this was an example of a worsening situation.

**Simmons:** Switching geography a little bit, and this next item might sound frivolous, but I think it is important enough to read into the record. On 7 February, [the] McDonald’s restaurant

opened at [MCB] Camp Pendleton [California]. This was the first fast-food enterprise to secure a beachhead at a U.S. military base. Any comment?

**Barrow:** Well, we have a number of them now. It's not all McDonald's. But someone seems to be represented on every major base. And at first blush, it might seem like an unacceptable thing, an intrusion into a purely military environment. But the facts are they are who they are. They attract the young Americans to eat in those establishments, so you know they do it well. And if the young man wants a McDonald's hamburger, I think it is only right to let him be able to walk someplace to get it, as opposed to trying to get in the car and drive way off base to get it. So I think it's a plus overall.

**Simmons:** It's obviously one more change or symptom of change of how troop life is changing in all of the Armed Services. And we'll have some more questions for you later on that.

On 24 March, President Reagan announced his intention to nominate General Paul X. ["P. X.,"] Kelley as your successor as Commandant. This came as no surprise to anyone. General Kelley was then your Assistant Commandant and chief of staff and widely regarded as the crown prince. Was this nomination as cut and dried as it appeared to be?

**Barrow:** Well, yes and no. When P. X. was promoted to three stars to take over the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force over at Headquarters Marine Corps, seated on the front row was John [F.] Lehman [Jr.], a businessman around town in defense matters. And at the time we are speaking of, March '83, John Lehman was the secretary of the Navy. He had known P. X. a long time. So unlike some other experiences in which the secretary might or might not know the prospect or not know very much about him, one would assume that this early relationship was one of friendship, good acquaintance at least. P. X. had held down several billets that gave him high visibility in the Pentagon, a particular requirement, and particularly his time down at the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force. And so he had made a name for himself.

He already had a good record. And as you pointed out, he was the Assistant Commandant [and] qualified in every sense of the word to be Commandant. But it was difficult to not recognize that there were some other contenders. I'll give you one whom I thought the world of, and still do is [Lieutenant General] John [H.] Miller—a solid citizen, extremely well liked. He would have been a good Commandant.

But without going into all the details, the process varies. Sometimes it gets to be pretty tortuous.

Sometimes it involves a number of people, interviews, all kinds of things go on. But P. X.,

without all of that kind of business, received the appointment. And that's that, unless we are going to talk about it later, I probably could share some things with you later when you talk about my post-commandancy.

**Simmons:** We'll get to that. Getting back to Lebanon, on 18 April a large car bomb exploded just outside the U.S. embassy in Beirut causing massive structural damage, killing 61 persons, and wounding at least 100 more. One of the dead was a Marine security guard. Seven other Marine security guards were wounded. What are your recollections of this event? And what remedial actions were taken to improve the personal safety of the Marines serving in Lebanon?

**Barrow:** Well, in a word, very d—n little. I went out there on a subsequent visit, in May I guess it was. And it was soon enough after the damage to see the damage and to decorate some of the people who had performed extremely well, including some French soldiers.

In addition to the inability of the JCS or anyone else in Washington [DC] to bring about a cease and desist of doing what we were doing, sitting there at the airfield of Beirut, we had a pretty, although a long and difficult looking chain of command, we had a chain of command made up of some pretty powerful personalities that weighed in. I'm talking about the commander of the Sixth Fleet, going on into commander of the U.S. Forces, Europe.

And so it was coming back not only from Service chiefs, who really don't have the operational responsibilities, but that doesn't say we can't speak out against something that we consider to be inappropriate. None of this seemed to do much to change things.

So I'll make you feel even worse. At that same visit in May, mindful that something like that could conceivably happen to the Marines down there at the airfield, I went down and looked around the building that was ultimately struck in October 1983, where the MEU commander had his command post and where it appeared that it was not only his command post but, as in most field situations, the people who work in the command post bedded down in the command post. And it was a very, very sturdy looking, concrete reinforced, thick-walled building.

And superficially, it satisfied me that if you had to have the command post, which is the biggest concentration of people you have (for instance, people out on the line, those people deal with it first during a war), that that looked like a pretty good place to have them.

What I didn't ask—and I blame myself—was this question, how many people do you have bedded down in this building? I'm not sure that in May of '83 the answer would have been the same as it was in October of '83. But if it had been, and I had asked that question, and we

said, “Oh, we have about 250 people every night. They come back from various places where they are during the day, and they bed down.” I would have then been alarmed as an outsider seeing the concentration of people, even with respect to how sturdy looking the building looked.

So you know even I would have to say that Beirut was not my finest hour either. I joined the ranks of those who didn’t do all the things that could have been done to prevent what happened. That’s all hindsight. But it may be some important lessons learned that will save lives in the future; although Somalia looks like we’ve forgotten Beirut. That’s this business of having a presence. That’s what we were called, a presence.

And the one reason why we were at the airfield, of course, was not because it was the airfield and there was some prospect of it being reopened, because it was closed most of the time the Marines were there. But it also was right on the beach. It was an airfield next to the beach, so that was a way Marines could be resupplied by helicopters landing on the airfield and by boats landing right on the beach and traffic back and forth over no distance at all.

So even if we held the high ground around the airfield, if we would have had enough forces to do that adequately, we still would have had to hold on to the airfield, just for the reasons I gave, as a part of our LOC [lines of communication], you might say.

**Simmons:** That visit to Lebanon was on the 26th and 27th of May, just to provide some statistics. You did give five of the Marines who were wounded Purple Hearts. You also gave awards to 12 French Marines that assisted after the bombing.

Two days later on 30 May, the 24th Marine Amphibious Unit, commanded by Colonel Timothy J. Geraghty, relieved the 22d MAU. Did you have any personal contact or conversations with Tim Geraghty, either before or after this particular relief? Did you have any advice or counsel for him?

**Barrow:** Who did he relieve?

**Simmons:** Jim Mead.

**Barrow:** Yes, I did have some conversations with him. I was out visiting the ship while I was there. I remember the [USS] *Guam* [LPH 9] had Marines on it. No, I’m thinking of another time. I beg your pardon. But I did visit with him, in the command post I’m talking about. I think he was there.

**Simmons:** He would have been there or offshore right?

**Barrow:** Yes. While we are talking about this again, let me make another point. When we went

back in there, that was a multinational commitment—British, French, and Italian. The French had had a long history of presence in Lebanon. All Lebanese pretty much speak French. They used to call Beirut the Paris of the Middle East. When I first saw it in 1956–57, it was a beautiful place.

So you say, well, the Americans, they may be just stupid. Well, the British were stupid, and the French were stupid, and the Italians were too, because we were all hanging out there. And the day that the American embassy was hit so was the French embassy hit. And about the time of the massacre of the 243 in October, the French forces were hit also. People forget they lost whatever, 12 or 15. Not as many, but it was just there was plenty of criticism to go around to various and sundry folks about what the hell were we doing in Lebanon. A sad show.

**Simmons:** Returning to this part of the world, during the last two weeks in April and the first two weeks in May there was another big exercise. This was Exercise Solid Shield '83 in North Carolina, the twenty-first of such annual exercises. We had about 26,000 Marines from the II Marine Amphibious Force and 4th Marine Amphibious Brigade in the exercise. Do you have any specific recollections of this exercise?

**Barrow:** No. I participated in it a number of times. I had seen them before. I did not go to that one. As I recall, I didn't. I don't think I did.

I might as well say something about exercises in this way. We all, of course, were having exercises. We benefit from exercises. But a visitor to an exercise is not likely to get a heck of a lot out of it, because of the way visits are made. You go in and get briefings and you look around. And you speak to people. And you maybe are helicoptered to four or five different places and pump hands and ask questions and leave.

Maybe they get something out of it, the senior officer coming to see them. So I'm not being critical of that. And maybe I'm trying to find an excuse, but in any case, in the spring of 1983 we had, there were about four exercises. [Tape interruption]

**Simmons:** You were interrupted as you were commenting on . . .

**Barrow:** Anyway, there were four exercises in the spring of 1983, two of which were repetitive in nature. One was Solid Shield, you just mentioned, down in North Carolina-Georgia area. The other was Team Spirit in Korea. I didn't go to that one. Another was a brigade exercise called Cold Winter as I recall in Norway. I had attended before. I did not go to that one.

There was a command post exercise at Fort Bragg [North Carolina] and Camp Pendleton

involving the Central Command, relatively new. This was important. I went to that one. You might say, well what are you doing going to a command post exercise? You don't get many Marines, even though command post communicators and staff and so forth were involved. I went because of the command relationship problems that were still clouding who controlled Marine air for example and that sort of thing.

So I went to Fort Bragg and did more than just take briefings. I asked questions and got up on the steps as to how they were approaching the command relationship issues that always happen when you involve joint forces and particularly this business of the control of air.

So it's strange, out of those four exercises, I went to that particular one. I felt a need, as opposed to a need to go to the others. But let me ask you to make this point. In March, the spring of '83, there were several things happening that in looking at it and making an option about where I would go and what I would do, I opted to stay at home so to speak.

One is the thing we've been talking about, Lebanon. I didn't want to be in Team Spirit in Korea, not that I couldn't trust what was happening back there, but I was involved in JCS on almost a three-times-a-week basis on that issue.

The other thing is the hearings were going on. The mock-up of the 1984 budget was taking place on Capitol Hill. And I am somewhat amazed at the amount of travel that some Commandants have done. Some of it is obviously beneficial to him in seeing what's going on and forming impressions, etc. Some of it is beneficial to those who have a chance to see him and to talk to him and raise points and ask questions.

But in many ways the job of the Commandant is not what a lot of people like to think it is, that he's presiding over the Marines in some sort of day-to-day eyeball, fall out and then they count noses sort of thing. It's more political than it is traditional command. It's working the halls of Congress. I can say that now with no fear of being accused of lobbying; it's working the halls of Congress about some weapon system or end strength or whatever it is.

And in those days, the way the thing was set up, minding the story with respect to the JCS. And finally, another explanation that creeps into this, I already had made plans to go to the major commands during my last six months. And I was going to go, for example, to Okinawa and Japan, in I think it was May. So I did not choose to go to Team Spirit, and then a month or so later, [I did] go back out there for visiting.

So, I didn't see all the exercises, but I'm not the biggest exercise fan, except when it's easy to do.



**Simmons:** As I mentioned, the 4th Marine Amphibious Brigade took part in Solid Shield. The IV MAF [Marine Amphibious Force] was the reserve, wasn't it?

**Barrow:** Yes. No, wait a minute, not the IV MAF. The IV MAF was out of headquarters in [Naval Amphibious Base] Little Creek [Virginia], and that's where [Alfred M.] "Al" Gray [Jr.] first stood up IV MAF. Al Gray, yes. It was [MCB Camp] Lejeune [North Carolina] and [MCAS] Cherry Point [North Carolina].

**Simmons:** As you said, there were these two other big exercises in March, the first Team Spirit '83 involving some 188,000 troops in South Korea. The other was Cold Winter '83 in Norway. During the second two weeks in May, you hosted a visit by the commandant of the Royal Marines, Sir Steuart R. Pringle, a most charming man. Was this before or after he had lost his leg to that car bombing?

**Barrow:** After. And you nailed him correctly. He was a most charming man. He was every inch a gentleman. A good conversationalist. Someone you could instinctively take a liking to. He was highly respected in his country, by his marines and by others in government, etc. And it was after the accident that had so badly injured him, killed his dog, and blew the hell out of his car. It happened in front of his house in London [England]. He was going out to crank up and go somewhere. And it was admitted by the IRA [Irish Republican Army] as one of their acts.

**Simmons:** Did you perhaps discuss terrorist activity with him?

**Barrow:** Well, yes.

**Simmons:** Perhaps the parallels between the British in North Ireland and the Marines in Lebanon?

**Barrow:** We didn't just talk about the parallel of that. He talked about the extreme difficulties they were having in North[ern] Ireland. There is something of a parallel there. One of those presence kind of things, whatever that word means. The presence of the British Army, the Royal Marines in Dublin [Ireland]. And I'm not sure that they . . . I never have understood whether that presence actually prevented worse things happening or whether they served as the provocation to make things happen. So there is a parallel.

**Simmons:** It's a thankless task.

**Barrow:** Oh, yes.

**Simmons:** Do you have any other recollections of your visit?

**Barrow:** No, other than that we enjoyed having him. And he made his rounds and was most gracious in what he had to say about everything.

**Simmons:** There was terrorist activity in other parts of the world. On 27 June, the U.S. embassy in San Salvador [El Salvador] was the target of automatic weapons fire and two rocket-propelled grenade rounds. Do you have any recollections of this incident?

**Barrow:** At the embassy?

**Simmons:** Yes.

**Barrow:** I remember the Marine guards were reported by the ambassador as acting in the highest tradition of being cool and helping to keep the embassy secure. And as I recall, they were threatened by some people at the embassy gates, which is supposed to be a responsibility of the host country to protect the gates going into. I may be shady on that. I better not let that go on the record as the facts, because that may have been something that happened later, about standing down a large crowd, may have been later. Subsequently they had three Marines killed at . . . they were on liberty, at a sidewalk café.

**Simmons:** Your term as Commandant would end officially at midnight on 30 June. This ceremony for the turnover was held the evening of 26 June at the Marine Barracks Washington, before 3,400 Marines and spectators. I was there, and it was a most impressive ceremony. What are your recollections of the event?

**Barrow:** Well it was extraordinary. It was a beautiful night. The weather favored us. Ronald Reagan favored us. He was invited as a matter of routine early in June, and it was to have been on the night of the 30th of June, and word came back, he said, "I'm not available for the 30th of June, but I want to be there. Can you do it some other time?" And the answer of course is, you name the date.

And so it was agreed to be on Sunday, the twenty-sixth so he could be there. It was his second visit to the barracks. He came six weeks after the attempted assassination, May 9th. A lot of people have said, "Oh gosh, going out in public places, never mind the Marines securing it, I think I'll stay under cover." But there he was early on, and there he was again.

And that was because he's president. He's the kind of personality that draws a crowd. I'm getting way ahead of myself, but I saw that down at Louisiana State University, where he [had been] given an honorary degree and so was I. And I walked with him and behind him, and I was absolutely astonished and astounded at the enormous reaction he got out of those young people.

They wanted to touch him. They wanted to see him. They just wanted to know that he was there and all of that.

So having him there made it very special indeed. It gives me a chance to tell an interesting story about Ronald Reagan. There are many of his critics who try to portray him as some sort of zombie that can't think for himself, and somebody on the staff winds him up every morning and points him to the door. They don't give him much credit for having a lot of smarts.

And I believe good memory is an indication of intelligence, common sense, for sure. On the day of the inauguration in January—whenever that was in 1981—when each Service chief went up alongside the president when their particular contingent of troops pulled to. You stood there and took the honors with the president.

And he said to me, “You know I was in the Army Air Corps, and we had a lot of regulations about when you could salute uncovered and not covered, indoors, and all of this.” He said, “I reckon I’m going to be saluted a lot, and I’d like to return it. Do you think that would be something I could do?”

I said, “Mr. President, you are the commander in chief, and if you want to return the salutes, I think it’s a great idea. And as a matter, as we all know, it’s a form of greeting. And when you get a salute, they are greeting you, and to ignore it is to not greet them back. So I think it would be extremely well received.”

And thereafter, when you saw him come off the Marine One helicopter and the Marines gave him a salute, you saw him saluting. And so, on the night of my retirement, he came out on that front area of the Commandant’s House, top of the steps, platform. He was in the middle, I was on his right, and P. X. [Kelley] was on his left, and they played ruffles and flourishes. And P. X. and I are saluting, and he’s not, as indeed he shouldn’t have been.

Three months later, in August, I get a package from the White House. It was about a 14-by-20 [inch] photograph of that. And it was a simple and thoughtful thing for him to do, he said, “Dear Bob, I should have asked you if I could salute too!” Signed, Ronald Reagan. Now that was from January ’81 until August ’83. And he had still remembered that. I think that’s remarkable, with all the things he had pouring in and out of his head. Anyway, it was special for many reasons, and obviously the change of Commandant is special.

**Simmons:** Well, that was a remarkable evening. I remember it very well. As you say, it was a lovely evening to begin with. And I must say that all three of you turned in virtuoso

performances. It might have been said that the three finest actors in Washington were on stage. Do you remember the gist of your remarks?

**Barrow:** Well I tried to be brief, which for me is difficult to do sometimes. I said some things about Patty. All wives deserve more credit than we are able to give them. I said some nice things about P. X. And obviously [I] said the appropriate things about President Reagan.

And then I wanted to say something about the Marines and the Marine Corps without getting too sentimental, as we often do on those occasions. And so I drew on a true story that I told many times, and here I have an opportunity to tell it again, because it's brief, and it is a good story. I may have made it a little briefer than I will make it now, when I told it that night.

When I commanded at [Marine Corps Recruit Depot] Parris Island [South Carolina], in 1972–75, in my efforts to understand the place one of the things I did was routinely every week meet the honor graduates. These were the boys that would graduate, the troops that would graduate in blues. They were tops in their platoon, the tops in their series. And they got that honor by academics, by leadership, by what they did on the rifle range, and by physical fitness.

And this is much longer than my story that night, but I'm not time constrained at the moment. I used to put them at their ease, and then I would ask them a lot of simple questions. And then I would say, "All right, now tell me what you got out of this experience? What did you learn? Now don't tell me that you learned to drill and shoot the rifle. I mean, what did you get out of it?"

And I found it most interesting that almost without exception they would say either the word or the words that mean discipline. And they may add to that, but discipline was always in there.

And then I used to sort of feign surprise, and say, "Discipline? Well, what does that mean to you?" And one day I had an anonymous private—and this is kind of getting to the heart of the story; all the rest of it is just preliminary—who when I asked that question said, speaking in the third person as they do until they graduate, he looked me in the eye and said, "Sir, the private will always do whatever needs to be done."

And I'll be candid with you; that overwhelmed me. When they left, I went to the dictionary. I found no definitions of discipline as appropriate as that. And he was saying, if you sort of dissect that, which I didn't do that night, substituting the personal pronoun for the third person, first person to third, I—not somebody else—I will, imperative will, always—not

sometimes—do. We have become a nation of spectators. We like to look at other folks do. I will always do—I'll do whatever; I won't just pick and choose—whatever needs to be done. That's powerful.

So I told that in a much more abbreviated way. And I said that private spoke for the Marines of his time and the Marines today and Marines forever. For we will always do whatever needs to be done. That was kind of my punch line of my talk.

I was back the next day to participate in the change of command, and change of responsibilities rather, of the sergeants major. [Sergeant Major] Leland [D.] Crawford was retiring and [Robert E.] Cleary was taking over. He was a rough-cut, fine sergeant major. He had a big heart, understood people, a lot of common sense.

And I wasn't fair to him, because I didn't keep him the two years that all of his predecessors had served. I kept him four years. His wife was on the West Coast. She came back and joined him during part of it, and he tried to get out there as often as possible.

**Simmons:** He's now deceased, as you know.

**Barrow:** Yes.

**Simmons:** Just for the record, on your last day as Commandant, 30 June 1983, the strength of the armed forces was 2,113,400; 193,993 for the Marines.

**Barrow:** Too many Army, too many Navy, too many Air Force, not enough Marines.

**Simmons:** Do you have anything else to add to that?

**Barrow:** No.

End of SESSION XVIII

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION  
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

Interviewee: General Robert H. Barrow, USMC (Ret)

Interviewer: Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons, USMC (Ret)

Dates of Interview: 6–7 June 1994

SESSION XIX

**Simmons:** This is Brigadier General Simmons, and this is session 19 of the oral history interview with the former Commandant, General Robert Barrow. This interview is taking place at the visiting officers' quarters, Washington Navy Yard. It is Monday, the sixth of June 1994.

General, in our last session, just completed, we reached the end of June 1983 and the end of your tenure as Commandant of the Marine Corps. In this session, I would ask you to reflect on your four years as Commandant and perhaps comment on what goals you accomplished, which goals perhaps you did not accomplish.

To help you focus on significant issues, we have provided you with copies of the green letters and white letters you issued while Commandant. For the benefit of future readers, a green letter is a personal letter, often classified, sent by the Commandant to his general officers. A white letter is similar but has broader distribution. It is sent to all general officers, all commanding officers, and all officers in charge. In other words, these green and white letters that you issued concerned matters about which you felt strongly. Some of them are transitory in impact; some have lasting importance.

I will go down the list by subject title, and you can expand or comment on them as you like, or you can simply dismiss them as overtaken by events. Also, I will append these letters to your transcript unless you specifically ask me not to use certain letters.

The first green letter you issued was 1-80 and appropriately was on the subject of roles, mission, and structure of the Marine Corps. Why did you feel it necessary to issue that green letter?

**Barrow:** Well, even some of our general officers, while they have lived with the official language, couldn't perhaps explain the obvious origins or intent. And what we were trying to do

is to remind everyone of our roles and mission as statutory, as established by Congress. And some of the background and some interpretation of what was meant by such things as “the [p]resident may direct,” etc. So I think it was just an effort to be helpful, so people would be better informed, and be able to keep the roles and missions in a little more depth, than just quoting the stiff, cold language of it.

**Simmons:** The second green letter that you issued was 2-80, and this was a green letter review in which you sort of wiped the slate clean of the green letters of your predecessors except for 1-80, which you had issued yourself, and for 1-56, which created the series of green letters; 1-56 was issued by General Randolph [M.] Pate when he was Commandant.

He set forth his reasons for doing so. He said opportunities to meet with his general officers were not as frequent as he would like. This provided a forum for the exchange of ideas and thoughts on subjects that he thought important. Apparently it was a good idea because every Commandant since that has continued it. Do you have anything to add as to your own personal philosophy on the use of these green letters?

**Barrow:** Not really. I had been a recipient of green letters for a good many years before I became Commandant. I guess it was continuous, and I thought it was a useful tool to get the word out to the key players, so that’s why I kept it.

**Simmons:** The next green letter you issued was 3-80 on chemical warfare defense. What prompted you to issue that letter?

**Barrow:** A number of things. One, it’s a fuzzy subject. Not many people in the Marine Corps then, and probably not now, understand all of the implications related to those things that are classified, what the enemy is capable of doing, the potential enemy, how we stand on countermeasures, equipment [inaudible]. And it is one of the subjects that seems to be swept under the rug rather frequently.

We found a lot of misunderstanding about how Headquarters Marine Corps, the Commandant, regarded chemical warfare defense. Somebody would make a comment like “Well, they’re not going to buy that because they make changes that we don’t need this.” Depend on something else, you know. And also it was driven by the fact that there is ample evidence that the Soviet Union used chemical weapons in Afghanistan, so it would be something more real than maybe.

So it was kind of a multipurpose letter. I think among other things it spoke to where are

we in the procurement process for certain things like gas masks, etc. So instead of being fuzzy, if they looked at this and read it thoroughly and reread it when they had to and used it as a reference document, they could get a pretty good handle on how we felt about chemical warfare and what we were doing about it.

**Simmons:** Your next, Green Letter 4-80, was on the subject of a quality Marine Corps. I know that subject is very dear to your heart.

**Barrow:** Well, we have talked at great length about this. The reason for the green letter was just to underscore things I guess I must have said 100 times to anyone who was standing, listening, is that we wanted to have more of the upper levels of mental group people, and the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery Test gives you that. It goes from one all the way down to five. Five is out of the question. And a few of those might have sifted through, but not really.

And the companion to that is the educational level, a high school graduate. And these were the most recent statistics we had. It was a chance to reinforce what I had been saying for years, and which I still hold strong beliefs on and for which I will say now on June 6, 1994. We have a quality Marine Corps out there in very large measure because of the attentiveness and emphasis and the hard work by recruiters put on these two categories of quality measurements: mental group classifications and high school graduates.

I can tell you that in the early '70s, when we were transitioning from the draft to the all-volunteer forces, as we said in the earlier tapes, we didn't know how to recruit. We put the wrong people on recruiting duty. We didn't know what we were looking for, didn't have good measurements for what we were looking for.

The Armed [Services] Forces [Vocational] Aptitude Battery Test had been badly normed, so that we were actually recruiting many more mental group [category] IVs than we in fact were showing to be recruited. All of these things and we were having disciplinary problems, as we all know. All of these things drove us to find the best measure of the promise of success, and these were the two we settled on.

And so this green letter speaks about the past, sort of what I've just been saying. And how well we have been doing currently. And as I said, I was about to finish with this '94 business. It just makes me so pleased to know that you can get there. You can do it if you have the right recruiters, the right recruit processes, a lot of accountability, goal setting, and sticking to it and just pressing on with it.



We are around 98 percent high school graduates. And at one time, we were down to 49 percent. We had people who used to say, “It doesn’t make any difference. That’s not important. We can make a Marine out of anybody.” We do not have a single mental group IV. We have very few. The only mental group category that is broken down into two is mental group III, that IIAs and IIIBs. We have some mental group IIIB, but far more IIAs, and the rest are IIs and Is. A high level of trainability, a high level of a mental ability to discipline.

We just have a quality Marine Corps, and all of it started in the early 1970s by searching for a better way to do it. So this is kind of an update on all of that.

**Simmons:** The next one, 5-80, had the subject of selection board membership. I’m going to venture a couple of comments here. First, you must have felt it necessary to restate the desired criteria for selection board memberships. Also, I think there is a kind of latent but persistent cynicism about selection boards, particularly among the persons who aren’t selected. The cynicism sort of says, “Whoever is on the board determines who gets selected.” Therefore, the appointing authority has tremendous authority to slant the board.

And the other most prevalent criticism is that a board tends to replicate itself as far as the selection process. I haven’t asked you those questions; I’ll ask you why you found it necessary to issue 5-80.

**Barrow:** Well, the biggest thing was that people who were nominated to this board would often seek off to get with what to them appears to be valid reasons. “I’m in charge of this exercise, or I’m going to do this, or I’m going to do that.” Various and sundry reasons—not to the Commandant, usually to Manpower.

And so there is a lot [of] switchy-switchy stuff from time to time, and you got the impression of what’s going on here? I thought this was sort of a sacrosanct system. Everybody speaks of the selection board process as being pretty near perfect. I have always said selection of the selection board is of greater importance almost than the selection board’s selection of prospects, of people.

Most of that had to do with you sign, that’s it. And well, the last paragraph says once these nominations are accepted, a release from board duty will be granted only in an unusual circumstance. We’re talking about all kinds of selection boards. “Why do I have to sit eight weeks on the sergeant’s board,” that sort of thing. “I’ve got more to do than come to Washington [DC] for however long it takes, six months or something.”

**Simmons:** This must have been something that lingered in your mind, because it's threaded through some later green letters and white letters. And, in fact, your next green letter is 6-80 to general officer membership on the 1981 selection board.

Looking over the names on those panels, does that bring back any thoughts or memories as to the compositions of those boards?

**Barrow:** No. Not particularly. These are all people who managed to find their way to retirement somewhere.

**Simmons:** Your next green letter was on general officers' travel, and this was another rather prickly subject, and you keep coming back to it.

**Barrow:** Boy, it's prickly, and it just keeps coming back because I believe most Marines are fundamentally honest. I think that's a given, fundamentally honest. And I believe thoroughly the more senior you become, you should have been able to resist temptation; it should have been eliminated. And you should also sense the need for additional propriety, if that's the right word, in things that you do and the more visible as a general officer.

And yet one of the things that is also a given is that people will take shortcuts on travel. They seem to be able to justify most anything. It isn't done blatantly; although I'm sure that's done too sometimes. A lot of times they just shave and make close calls on what the regulations say.

This was an attempt, and I think I revisit it later on, in saying what you can and can't do about taking a wife, about traveling with government aircraft when commercial aircraft would be much cheaper, and do the same thing or taking a government plane to do something that is more personal than real [such as] arranging some speaking engagement which puts you where you want to go hunting sort of thing. That kind of stuff.

You cannot seem to stamp it out. I venture to say that since I've retired there have been incidences. I know of one or two, of general officers that have been caught—caught, isn't that a terrible word?—traveling, using aircraft to travel someplace that they shouldn't use the aircraft. Often it's an aviator flying the airplane, and he really rationalizes that that's giving him air time.

He's getting flight time, when the answer to that is you don't need to get your flight time in. You're a general officer and not expected to be out there making bombing runs or whatever. But they will say, "I have to get my flight time in." And so they get in one of the [Beechcraft] C-12 [Hurons] or something and fly someplace, because the truth is that's what he wants to do. He

wants to go from A to B for whatever reason. He always gets caught too, by the way. That's what this is all about.

And the Marine Corps' birthday. Moving some fellow from the East Coast to the West Coast and back or somebody from the West Coast to the East Coast, because it mostly relates to people who either have some friends that have retired or people that you served under that you respect and say, "I'd like to have old general so-and-so come out for my birthday." Not to eliminate it, but you're going to lose it all if you don't do it right.

**Simmons:** I think we can say honestly though that there is more abuse on the part of appointed officials, elected officials than there [is] amongst the uniformed Service.

**Barrow:** Yes, that's right. Well, I'm not saying it's widespread, but it seems to tempt people about every four years to try the new Commandant.

**Simmons:** Next is 8-80, the subject is performance evaluation systems, another troublesome subject.

**Barrow:** Always rears its ugly head over and over again. And this is a call for some degree of being as fair as possible, avoiding inflationary tendencies on fitness reports, and worse, on ethical things all in the name of trying to be helpful.

The unethical would be in the evaluation with your peers sort of thing. You are ranking three captains, and you show this captain is one of one, excellent, and two are shown as above average. And it turns out that the two that are shown as above average are not named, but you can find out by checking out that command of the three captains, each one of them was rated by himself excellent but the other two [were just] above average. So each one of them goes away thinking, I'm better than the other two guys who are serving with me.

And I don't know how one comes up with the kind of justification for doing that, but it has to do with not wanting to bite the bullet and say that of the three, this guy is superior and I'm going to say it. You say it, and then let the other two grumble and carry on if they like.

**Simmons:** Anything else on performance evaluation? Every time we have a system, it invariably becomes inflated and far over to the right. Everybody becomes outstanding. How do you account for that?

**Barrow:** Well, it's also the section C narrative evaluation. It's so important, because you really are speaking from your feelings, convictions, beliefs in the evaluation. And that, unfortunately, is often while it's important, you have to be mindful that some people are lazy and don't want to

write much; others are not very good at writing. So that's one of the weak spots of our system, and yet it's also regarded as one of the important ones.

I think we have finally gotten around in modern times to having generally an officer corps that writes reasonably well. And we then have to worry about curbing them. They want to write pages, when that's the worst thing you can do [to] someone. People look at that and say, "I don't want to read all of that." So good, crisp words—you know that.

You can say some things in one sentence and help a guy more than you can do with 10 pages. "This is the finest officer I have ever known." Well, my gosh, I'm not suggesting that anyone has ever said that about anybody, but if you did, you would say that's pretty powerful. But you don't have to write all this other stuff, what he did, and all that stuff.

I have said things like "This is one of the finest." Or maybe I might have said, "Of the 10 officers I have had the privilege to know in the rank of major . . ." I don't know, you just make some very complimentary thing.

What's next?

**Simmons:** [Green Letter] 1-81, official visits of foreign commandants and foreign dignitaries. I think the thrust of this letter was you wanted it to be more substantive and less social.

**Barrow:** A lot of it has to do with the guests themselves. Sometimes a host command thinks that this visiting dignitary really wants to pleasure himself, and so he focuses on that. Sometimes the visiting dignitary is nervy enough to more or less suggest that he would go to this place and do these things. And they shall remain nameless, the country or what have you.

And sometimes from either way, the conclusion is drawn that he would like to stay in a suite in the best hotel, 20 miles away. Or you think that and he has asked for it, or you think that he would like to do it and you put him there, when in fact you have pretty good facilities right on the base, adequate for what this is all about. So I'm sure I had some examples at the time that made me want this to be published, but that's kind of the genesis of it.

**Simmons:** Well, isn't it true that in numbers of countries, these visits come as a reward at the completion of their term as commandant, rather than preparation?

**Barrow:** Sometimes. Sometimes. And even that would not change what we're talking about here, because it's less expensive for Uncle Sam to pay for a VIP suite on base. It may be just \$20 [more] a night, than to put him in a commercial suite in town. So you're saving money, cash dollars.

**Simmons:** The next one is 2-81, which is a green letter from you again, and what you've said here essentially is you looked over the ones you issued already and you think they are still pretty valid.

[Green Letter] 3-81 is intelligence in support of Marine Corps missions. Intelligence traditionally has been quite neglected in the Marine Corps until relatively modern times. And maybe this is part of an increasing appreciation of it.

**Barrow:** I haven't done as much as [General Alfred M.] "Al" Gray [Jr.] did. I did not do as much as Al Gray did. I have a—I think as you do—I have a strong feeling about the value of intelligence. Earlier cases of it, we talked about it on [Operation] Dewey Canyon [in Vietnam] how the first exploitation of the radio battalion, radio company, radio battalion capabilities.

I think what we are talking about here is telling people that they are national resources that are available now, this being '81, and will be more available in the future in terms of our ability to tap them and in terms of their being tasked to provide tactical intelligence for operational purposes. Maybe not down at the company level or something, but at the MEF [Marine expeditionary force] level, the kind of intelligence the MEF would want to have in some operation.

And I think that the promise that this has with respect to that, both our capabilities to receive it, theirs to give it, and tasking to do it were sort of realized. The director of intelligence now participates as an equal member on the National Foreign Intelligence Board. That's all part of the same thing I think that [Operations] Desert Shield/Desert Storm [were a part of]; there was this capability in place. It didn't have to filter down. Just go up and ask for it.

**Simmons:** [Green Letter] 4-81 is simply an announcement of the general officer membership of the 1982 regular selection board. It doesn't require a comment, I think.

**Barrow:** Another thing about that intelligence is the encouragement. You know, it's been my experience that if you take 100 officers, there are always 1 or 2 who would like to be an intelligence officer for reasons I have never fully understood; it's some quirky attitude. But in a situation where you don't have one, haven't had the MOS [military occupational specialty] training, and just don't have one, you should be encouraged to put a kind of bright son in that job.

**Simmons:** The next one is a very important one. It's 5-81, Marine Corps drug abuse policy. And you published some pretty alarming statistics.

**Barrow:** Yep. And again, in our earlier sessions we talked about how we had a problem that was worse than we thought it was, because in my naive view I had accepted that all people at all levels were working vigorously on this problem, when in fact they may have been or they may not have been [inaudible]. Nothing, not nothing but very little was being done to curb it.

It was like a burning fire that took some real effort to extinguish it. And I think we have already touched on the fact that we've got encouragement by question or comment that [Secretary of Defense] Caspar ["Cap"] Weinberger made to President Reagan wanting to know if we can't do something about drugs in the military. And we didn't have that encouragement under his predecessor. There was almost, among some quarters over there in the White House, I can name you a couple of people where there was almost a kind of a tolerance of drugs. And I didn't say President Carter, but some other people who had this policy.

So the Marine Corps being small and very responsive to our kind of a monolithic leadership we have, we aren't compartmented. The Commandant sits at the top of a pyramid. I jumped on it, and this is about—it's in that period, Reagan had already been in for some time before that it was stated, and this is December. He came in, in '81, December '81.

It's talking about this is how it is and some of the things we're going to do. I would say it didn't become totally effective until well into '82. And here again, like the high school graduate and the mental group IV categories, even today with the more sophisticated testing capabilities, go to any unit in the Marine Corps and randomly test them, and you would be shocked if you got more than 1 or 2 percent, if that. You should not be surprised if it is virtually zero. Maybe out of 100 men, you had 1.

That's a far cry. And what we had always hoped would happen, has happened. They have become so surprised that you belong to something that is drug free. Never mind that it's in our colleges, in our high schools, in our workplaces in the civilian world. We are Marines. And to be a druggie and to be a Marine are mutually exclusive terms.

**Simmons:** I think we've gotten there. On 6-81, it's just the general officer membership of the 1982 reserve selection boards.

**Barrow:** No, no comment.

**Simmons:** On 1-82 announces the realignment of the field audit service or expands on the realignment. It kind of gives your reasons for shifting the field audit service from under the cognizance of the inspector general to the Fiscal Division. Why did you find that necessary?

**Barrow:** Well, I've been a base commander twice, which is where a lot of these field audit service people do their work. It's not an appropriated fund activity—PXs [post exchanges] and clubs and all these kinds of places. And no matter how smart the inspector general may be or who he might have on his staff, but in all likelihood he doesn't have anyone who can hold accountable a guy that is doing the accountability.

In other words, the field auditor can tell him most anything. He wouldn't know if he was on the mark or not; whereas you, having been in the counsel's place, is out of their bailiwick totally. What you're really saying here is "Would you please, Mr. Comptroller, because you know so much about auditing and all those sorts of things, take a look at what the field audit is saying about whatever this audit happens to be covering?" It's an effort in professionalism.

**Simmons:** [Green Letter] 2-82 covers contacts with representatives of industry, and we're getting to the conflict of interest and things like that.

**Barrow:** That was probably an underscoring of a SecDef [secretary of defense] edit on that subject, which it shouldn't be necessary. It should be attended to, anyway. The deputy secretary of defense expressed some concern, as you see in that letter. We are just reiterating that and putting our own little emphasis to it.

**Simmons:** [Green Letter] 3-82 is illegal drug use by dependents aboard Marine Corps installations, kind of a corollary to drug abuse.

**Barrow:** Yep. We had it. But you don't have it now. In this particular case, I enjoyed . . . I didn't enjoy, that's not the right word, but it pleased me in a sense that if I had to do it, this is one of the best ways to do it, is to recognize somebody who had an answer in the field, as opposed to someone from Headquarters, because that's not where all the wisdom is.

Nothing will bring out command attention to things more than the common superior, singling one of them out for having done something well. The others say, "Gee, I better get my butt going and do something well too." That read pretty good.

So there's [Major General Charles G.] "Charlie" Cooper down there in [MCB] Camp Lejeune [North Carolina], CG [commanding general] of the base, had a serious problem—25 dependents in the school fooling around with drugs. And he came up with what his solution was and sought concurrence, as well as informing the Headquarters. And we gave it back to him, right on. And we are telling everybody else, this is an example of initiative on this subject that we think is needed, and we commend him highly on how he did it. It puffed him up, Ed.

**Simmons:** [Green Letter] 4-82, appointments to the grade of lieutenant general. Why did you consider it necessary to issue this letter?

**Barrow:** Well, it's one of the areas that it starts to misunderstand how people get to be lieutenant generals and what is expected of them. And we were reminding them that you don't pay for selection boards that it's a president's appointment, approved by Congress. But without my saying so, they ought to recognize that the genesis of any of it starts with the Commandant. Sometimes some senior official might intervene, and SecDef [or] SecNav [secretary of the Navy] says, "I think so-and-so ought to be a lieutenant general." You might be able to easily agree with him. On the other hand, you might not think that and have to talk him out of it. I didn't have that concern though.

**Simmons:** Wouldn't that ordinarily be for an appointment outside of the Marine Corps?

**Barrow:** Even that, yes. And so most appointments begin with the Commandant in the form of a recommendation, even those that are voted on, and they all now are [voted on] by the JCS, outside of the Marine Corps. If you are going to name somebody to some joint duty someplace, you say this is my nominee. They all read it and they say, "Yes." And they all vote on it, and it's then moved up the line to the president and the Congress for approval. That's part of this.

The other part is saying if you are holding down a lieutenant general's job at the Headquarters, and we send you to FMFPac [Fleet Marine Force Pacific], FMFLant [Fleet Marine Force Atlantic], you have to be reappointed, because the appointment goes for the job and not to the person that he can carry around from one place to another.

We also speak to the expectation of how long might you expect to serve as a lieutenant general. And if you read this (I think it's in this; if not it's in another one) you shouldn't expect to do more than three years, and you might not do three years.

If we nominate you with 2 years left on your 35, 5 and 35, and the major general and for others with a special dispensation, it would come going up the line to get it. And to make room for others is one thing. You will go out on, if appointed in your 33d year, you will go out on your 35. But if you get appointed on your 30th year, don't expect to be a lieutenant general for five years.

But on the other hand, there is a little bit of something else here that needs to be said. It also is implicit between the lines that if you had been appointed at your 30th year for lieutenant general, and did 2 years someplace or 3 years, which would be regarded as the maximum,



and you should ask to retire and give the Commandant an option to say, “This guy is so good, I want to move him to another job and reappoint him.”

And so it isn’t complete foreclosure. It’s the option of the Commandant as to whether he would reappoint in some other position some fellow who has already served three years. That’s not stated in there, but that is implied if you read it carefully.

Where are we now?

**Simmons:** The next one is on mobilization planning, 5-82. You seem to say, “Let’s take it seriously. Let’s familiarize ourselves with the mobilization plan.”

**Barrow:** Well, I don’t have a lot to say about that. I don’t know what prompted me to write that or have it written. It may have been an initiative that somebody dropped on me.

Oh, yes, we had that Nifty Nugget, a major exercise [on] mobilization. I remember that. And out of all that came a new Marine Corps mobilization management plan to support national mobilization. And we were going to have another kind of Nifty Nugget called [exercise] Proud Saber in Texas. So get up on the stairs as to what you were supposed to do, because it’s all in the plan, if you will read it, is what this is all about.

Here we go again, the next one is about general officer travel.

**Simmons:** Yes. It canceled Green Letter 7-80. And I think you received a directive from higher authority.

**Barrow:** Okay. A favorite topic with everybody. Okay, we simply were passing on higher level, Navy Department. It actually starts with the deputy secretary of defense. It says much of what we said earlier in our own green letter about when wives could accompany and so forth. Not much.

**Simmons:** Then we have 7-82 on selection board membership. I think this is the one where you said you are no longer going to issue membership of the general officer boards by green letter. It’s going to be done by message so there would be less time and reason for rumors.

**Barrow:** Yes, and contacts. Not trying to be secretive, but protective would be a better word, with these guys. I don’t think a lot of that goes on, but I know some of it must go on. In a green letter, all of the general officers get it right away, and they say, “Oh, let me pick up the phone and call so-and-so and I just want to put in a plug for him.”

**Simmons:** Next is on a subject you touched on a little bit earlier, 1-83, legal restrictions on lobbying.

**Barrow:** Yes. It's kind of directed more at not getting the Service directly lobbying, but getting industry to lobby for him, usually in the common interest, like getting Sikorsky [Aircraft Corporation] to do the actual lobbying for what you are both supposedly interested in, accumulating more CH-53E [Super Stallions] or whatever it might be. I think that's what this is talking about. It's a takeoff from the SecDef. And see that's the secretary of defense signed that, Cap Weinberger. Some of these other things were coming out of OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense], or the deputy secretary, he clued me on something he is really emphasizing it.

**Simmons:** And then the next is sort of termed on general officer travel, official travel, TAD [temporary additional duty]. And again, emphasizing what is appropriate and what is not appropriate.

**Barrow:** Oh, well, I have to reread to see what I was talking about. But there had been such an abuse on TAD travel; that's what this is all about. Being in some command where you could write yourself TAD orders, [this] was a good reason to be attentive to when and where might you be doing that. And what kind of travel you use, government air or commercial or all that. It's all tied in the same thing.

We had some bad examples that didn't happen on my watch, of reserves, a couple of reserve general officers who had it within their authority or, if not within their authority, they had request authority that was powerful.

In other words somebody, whoever in the command system to whom they requested it, felt like they couldn't say no. And they were requesting TAD orders in a most repetitive way beyond that which would be needed for them to discharge their responsibilities as reserve officers coming on active duty, being called to active duty for two days or three days or five days, and had to travel, but it all ties in.

**Simmons:** There was one other green letter that I wish to add to this review. [The 30th Commandant,] General [Carl E.] Mundy [Jr.] so prized your letter of 16 April 1992, to Congressman [Leslie] "Les" Aspin [Jr.], that he had it circulated as a green letter. On 1-92 is simply the views of the 27th Commandant, yourself, in sizing of the American conventional forces in a post-Cold War era. You have the letter in front of you. What does it remind you of?

**Barrow:** Well, it's surprising that he thought it was of sufficient merit to make a green letter out of it. Les Aspin, turned out, didn't write to every Tom, Dick, and Harry. Not all Army four-star generals got one. He selected; he didn't but someone did. [General Louis H.] "Lou" Wilson got one.

And I left the same language. It sort of set on my desk about what kind of answer I would give him. And somebody on his staff called me and said we haven't heard from you. [Tape interruption]

I sat down the next morning and just wrote this thing out longhand. It tells you something there, that if you are passionate about a subject, it's perhaps best if you just get with it, as opposed to sitting around, wondering about what you're going to say, and taking a long time to write it.

So I spent that morning writing it. And I don't type, so I took it downtown to one of my friends who had a secretary and had her type it up and put it in the mail. And the next thing I know—I never got an answer from Les Aspin—but the Commandant made a green letter out of it. It really has a couple of holes in it. I would have liked to have done it, if you're going to get that chance, to do it over again.

But what it takes him to task about is the fact that he just wants to do something that makes sense, sort of a bottom-up review of world threats and what kind of forces we need to deal with them, but in doing so he created a formula called "Iraq equivalents," crediting Iraq with more capability than they manifested in Desert Storm and diminishing the credibility of what we know, effectiveness rather, of what we know the North Koreans are having. So he was saying on the basis of an Iraq-equivalent scale, North Korea would be a such and such.

And I fired back at him and said, "Oh no. Heavens no, I've been there. They are who they are, and they are a hell of a lot better than the Iraqis," and I think you'd agree to that.

Anyway, that was sort of the rest of it was just trying to educate perhaps about the Marine Corps. And it did. Page six is missing, because I had a quote in there that I would have quoted for this purpose from a Navy doctor.

**Simmons:** We'll provide that tomorrow. We'll patch that up.

**Barrow:** That's about it.

**Simmons:** Well, we'll do the white letter later, probably do within an hour. [Tape interruption]

**Simmons:** This is a continuation of session 19. We're going to review the white letters that you issued while you were Commandant, in this part of the session. I have provided you with a full copy of your 16 April 1992 letter to Les Aspin. I think you wanted to add to your comments on that letter.

**Barrow:** Well, with regard to a few things about that letter, but one particular point in the letter I wanted to put on the record is not my words, but I find them to be interesting. I made reference in the letter to a letter that a Navy doctor who had served with the Marines sent to me when I was Commandant.

And he said, “I wonder if it has ever occurred to anyone that the Marines are the general tactitioners of our Armed Services, and therefore like their medical analogues, make up the backbone of their profession. What the critics of this approach, both medical and military, fail to realize is that a good generalist can handle 90 percent of the acute problems and can skillfully stabilize and refer the other 10 percent, not to mention the preventative role they are often called to play.”

Well it’s amusing, if not close in fact, to the mark. Thank you, Ed.

**Simmons:** Getting into the white letters now, 5-79, which was the first one that you issued, was amphibious landing exercises’ proper terminology concerning amphibious landing operations. Do you want to comment on that letter?

**Barrow:** Well, it came to my attention that Marines were conducting exercises, especially when they were involving other forces and working with the Navy, in which they ended up calling the exercise something that gave it—what it did was gave it an exclusively Marine thrust. Terms like MAFLEX [Marine amphibious force landing exercise] and MABLEX [Marine amphibious brigade landing exercise] and MAULEX [Marine amphibious unit landing exercise] and BLTLEX [battalion landing team landing exercise], almost like slang.

And this letter told them to get back with the proper terminology and call them what they are, to more accurately describe what they were doing. For example, if it’s an amphibious exercise, it’s a FIBLEX, FIBLEX 2-10, or whatever it might be, as a more appropriate way of doing it.

**Simmons:** [White Letter] 6-79 was unannounced visits by external reviewers. What underlay this letter?

**Barrow:** I’ve forgotten. I have forgotten who was the culprit that kicked this off. But someone in our places came to us and asked to do it, as opposed to just doing it, conduct surprise visits for auditing purposes, to the field. And we said, “No, we will not grant you that.” But that didn’t mean it couldn’t happen, and so we alerted people to the fact that they should not be willing subjects to such audits and surprise visits.

**Simmons:** [White Letter] 8-79 concerned recruiting service support.

**Barrow:** [White Letter] 7-79 is?

**Simmons:** Oh, excuse me, 7-79 is military decorations and awards.

**Barrow:** This white letter is designed to remind everyone that the old business of recognition and awards through appropriate decorations and awards is a thing we must all be attentive to. I think we all agree, but don't always practice the idea that it's appropriate to award superior or extraordinarily good service of whatever rank with an appropriate ceremony. And it's not only good for the individual, but it is also good for the morale of the unit if it is done right.

**Simmons:** Have you seen an untoward inflation in the matter of decorations and awards?

**Barrow:** I don't know what the current situation is. My impression is that Desert Storm produced a large number of awards, some of which were marginal as to what the award is intended to be and in terms of who ended up getting it. There may be quite a number of examples of when in doubt, give it, as opposed to being a little more conservative. I don't think during our time, and to the point that I retired, that I could ever point to any situation where we had excessive awards. Not at all.

But while we're talking about it, it's quite clear of all the Services, the Marine Corps has been very, very tight, some would say stingy with respect to awards, not only failing to give them but not giving a higher award for an act that in another Service would get to be a higher award than what the individual in fact got. That has been a tradition, and in some respects it has its good points.

It means that the awards the individuals receive have greater credibility, I suppose. The individual is looked at as someone having gotten something special because he did something special, as opposed to maybe getting something because, ho hum, everybody is being recognized because they all faced a certain amount of adversity or whatever the situation may have been.

**Simmons:** One anomaly that has caused me a little personal distress is the interjection of the Department of Defense awards at a higher level than the Service awards. And often those Department of Defense awards give a higher award than would the Marine Corps for commensurate service.

**Barrow:** I don't know about that.

**Simmons:** Next, we have something that you were much interested in, very much involved in the creation of, and that's the Marine Corps family.

**Barrow:** Recruiting.

**Simmons:** I'm really coming up to something, 8-79, recruiting service support.

**Barrow:** Well, recruiting service support was a white letter, the principal substance being not so much the word "support," but to simply tell everyone that's my way of telling them I place extraordinary pride on the whole recruiting business. That's where it really begins, who we recruit. And to back it up and say, it begins with who we put on recruiting duty [that] determines who we recruit. And this is saying, put the best people on recruiting duty.

I remember when I said that in a meeting once in the Headquarters, someone who could get away with asking me that, kind of smiled and said, "General, what do you mean by the best people?" And I said, "If there is any doubt in your mind, I mean it's the same fellow you would want to take to high ground, give some difficult mission, knowing he would carry it out."

And in time, we had those kinds of people on recruiting duty. The results were forthcoming. And that's what this is really about is to be attentive to who you send out there when you are called upon to make nominations for recruiting duty, who you nominate. And just be more attentive to it. Get in the habit of recruiting.

**Simmons:** An essential ingredient to achieving a quality Marine Corps.

**Barrow:** That's right. Quality of recruiter gets quality of product.

**Simmons:** Now we have 9-79, the Marine Corps family.

**Barrow:** Well, this subject will appear again and again as we moved incrementally, not cautiously, in fact somewhat aggressively, toward trying to do more for the individual Marine and those dependents, when they had dependents particularly at the lower ranks, who in many respects were so close to being helpless—away from home, a strange environment, husband off on duty, or performance.

But this is my first letter that in a general way recognizes our responsibility to take care of our Marines, which extends to their family. We were experiencing at this time, and it worsened if that's the right word, grew in any case, as a problem in subsequent years, as more and more Marines married at lower ranks.

And if you can't do anything about the marriage, as our current Commandant attempted to do a few months ago, then you have to say, "Well what can you do?" Well, you can't walk away and ignore the problem or else you have a Marine who either becomes a malcontent or disillusioned or unhappy and preoccupied and doesn't do his duties well. So we have to involve

ourselves, and this is the first one, sort of raising the consciousness of everyone that here is a problem. What are your ideas? Let's do what we can.

And I think you find throughout that we did more and more of that sort of thing, so we have a current system. The current system is very solid and very appropriate for what we have been talking about.

**Simmons:** The next one is sort of a corollary to that, 10-79, supervision of bachelor enlisted quarters.

**Barrow:** I found, in poking around the Marine Corps, and I guess I'm old fashioned. When I came in, there was a school that held that if you kept a clean barracks, you were a squared away good unit, and the people who ran it had good morale and a sense of responsibility, etc. So to the extent I could, I poked around—inspection, if you want to put it in its proper terminology—inspected bases. Sometimes bases knew that I was going to inspect them, and still under those circumstances you would expect that they would get them in shipshape condition.

The area of concern that this addresses is that in the minds of some commanders, when it went to the motel type of living arrangement, that that gave to the individual or the two or three that were in such facilities some sort of privacy rights that they did not enjoy in an open squad bay. If you walked into an open squad bay, every bunk and footlocker and wall locker looked just the same and squared away. And you did it routinely. And one of the big advantages is you could do it quickly. You could walk down one row and come back the other, and inside of five minutes you just inspected maybe 40 people in the squad bay.

Well clearly, that's not correct. And you had every obligation, responsibility to, from time to time, sometimes unannounced even, go through the motel rooms and see if they are tearing up the place or doing things that they shouldn't be doing in those facilities. And so in my looking around, I found that some of them were being abused. They were nailing things in the wall and just not taking care of it. And that's what this is about.

**Simmons:** Next we have 1-80, flexibility in MAGTF operations.

**Barrow:** This is sort of a precursor to some of the things that were on the horizon with respect to joint operations and the accusation was implied, if not made, that the Marines were rigid in their desire to not only maintain integrity of MAGTF organizations, but they would rather be off to themselves and do it alone.

And implied in all that is that we were not organizationally flexible, which as those of us

who are in the Marine Corps know is not true, because it is our bread and butter to task organize for whatever the threat, terrain, the weather, etc., is and the mission to be accomplished that we are being called upon to do.

And so this is telling people we will fight anyway the situation calls for in terms of whatever mode we enter to fight in. I'm not saying it very well, but I'm just calling for more flexibility in the head, and that's where it begins, before we actually do some of that in terms of the institution. I haven't had a chance to reread this, but I know that's the genesis of it.

And Marines can do things that in the old days someone said, "You're fragmented. You're destroying our integrity." Well you cannot, if there is a mine clearing operation going on, that if you didn't clear them, it's going to endanger Marines, and you need X number of additional helicopters to assist in mine clearing, you are not going to say you can't have them because you're calling on them to do an un-Marine like things. You are taking our helicopters away. Well, that's stupid. You lend a hand to get that particular task completed, so you can then do your Marine task. And that's what this is about.

**Simmons:** Next is 2-80, public affairs.

**Barrow:** This is our letter to all commanding officers, etc., is encouraging them to be forthcoming with respect to public affairs opportunities, requests by people in the news media and community leaders for information, [and] for opportunities to get to know the Marine Corps better. Seek such opportunities, as well as be responsive.

I think it's fair to say that the Marines, historically, but most especially in modern times have been very leery of the press. Indeed, you might say they don't like the press. Some of this stems from some of the bad press reported out of Vietnam. Many of the younger Marine officers, and getting to be fairly senior at this time, in 1994, [and] don't know anything about what Vietnam was like with respect to the press. But they seem to feed off of stories or things that they had read.

And I think this letter was intended, among other things, to remind people that this is part of how we get our recognition as Marines, what it is we do, what it is we can do, and asking them to be more responsive, more forthcoming, [and] seek the opportunity. I'm not trying to make any comments that suggest I have the answer, but it has been my experience and I have attempted to do this throughout my career. I never was resentful of the presence of the press, because I saw it as an opportunity.



After all, you only have to say what you want to say. Nobody is putting a torture system to you to get you to say something you shouldn't say. But if you feel like you are comfortable in speaking to them, speak to them. That's what we're talking about in this letter. I think that's what we're talking about.

**Simmons:** The next two letters also address aspects of public affairs. [White Letter] 3-80 has the subject of policy concerning Marine Corps personnel activities, which reflect discredit upon the Corps.

**Barrow:** This is pointed primarily to off-duty appearance, off-duty employment in which Marines might be in some sort of compromising looking situation that is picked up by the press. And a captain in Marines poses for a nude calendar, whatever. I'm making that up sort of.

**Simmons:** You're not really making it up. We have several concrete examples of that.

**Barrow:** Of recent times.

**Simmons:** Yes.

**Barrow:** And you're saying you're a Marine off base, as well as on base, 24 hours a day. Don't do anything that brings discredit. And we're really talking to the commanding officers, to remind them of that.

**Simmons:** And the next one has a more positive view of public affairs, and that is ceremonial support of events in the public dominion.

**Barrow:** Well, this is one of my quirks. I think you will see it again later on. There is another white letter. It seems like a nit-picking sort of thing, but I have seen on television or in person for many, many years, not only the Marine Corps but all the other people who have color guards, some of the strangest looking formations you could possibly imagine.

Someone who looked like he was about 5'2", standing next to someone who looks like he is 6'4". And it just looked like you threw it together at the last minute. So I don't think anything is sharper looking than not only a properly uniformed color guard carrying the national and organizational colors correctly, but that they be sized so that you had a uniformly sized color guard. Call it a quirk, but that's the genesis of this particular letter.

**Simmons:** The next is the first of several letters addressed to the same general subject; 5-80 has the subject maintenance of individual and crew-served weapons.

**Barrow:** Well, the inspector general came to me, as he always did after he had been on an inspection. He would give me an oral report, as well as subsequently there would be a written

report. And he came one time and said, as I recall, “I should have perhaps spoken to this earlier” orally to me, “because we detected a trend in poor care of our weapons,” which is surprising to a Marine that you would ever encounter that.

So this was a pretty hard-hitting thing, saying, “Get with it. It’s been found to be unsatisfactory in many parts of the Marine Corps. It’s part of our bread and butter. The IG [inspector general] is going to be checking this with great faithfulness, and let’s make sure you do it right.”

And as you pointed out, I think later on we had reason to take another turn on the screw, and then later on still, we found that we were achieving good results.

**Simmons:** [White Letter] 6-80 is related. It has the subject of weapons safety.

**Barrow:** Well, you know you and I said this the other day about several things that are almost chronic in terms of problems, like fitness reports, this being one of them—the .45-caliber pistol as a threat to one’s life. We are talking here about that particular weapon. It is a weapon that has served us well in many respects as a sidearm, but I would be prepared to say without any facts available to me that there have been more Marines killed and injured by the .45 pistol than there has been enemy.

**Simmons:** By many times, I would say.

**Barrow:** Yes. And most of it comes from inattentiveness on the part of the people who post Marines with weapons, on the part of people who write the regulations as to when you have the clip in the weapon, and the instruction to people about how to clear it, how to clean it, and not to horse around with it, etc.

And so this is a rather hard-hitting letter on that subject, which still did not get the results, and later on you’ll find one that says, “All right, if you are not going to do it, I’m going to do it for you,” and we prescribe more precisely when you can and can’t. Who likes to say to a Marine in protecting something that you can’t have your clip in the weapon ready to go; just flip the slide back and you’re ready to fire. You have to keep it in your pouch. Well sometimes you have to do things that don’t make good sense.

**Simmons:** On 7-80, you returned to the Marine Corps family. In this one, you outlined the setting up of a formal Marine Corps family service program.

**Barrow:** This is something that many people involved themselves in, both in terms of ideas and in terms of execution of those ideas, including my wife, including my sergeant major, including a

whole array of people. There are about three interlocking things here that I would like to mention. I'm sort of getting ahead of myself, but I'm going to do it anyway.

It goes back to something we said earlier, [about] more younger Marines being married. More problems were not being addressed as well as they could be. Maybe not at all in some cases. I wouldn't say that they were all addressed. We needed to formalize our support. We didn't have all of the answers. And we knew some funding would be required [and] some facilities would be required. We were trying to centralize all the discrete, all of the different, rather, agencies involved in providing some sort of service to families.

Now the first thing you expect to run into we dealt with in this letter. And that is, we are not trying to usurp a commander's responsibility. You indeed should, either you or your designated representative, participate in the counseling of Marines with respect to his duties as a husband and a father or deal with his financial problems or whatever they may be. So we're not saying that we're taking any of that away from you.

But we are saying, because some Marines are reluctant to take it to their commanding officer or the first sergeant, we have to have a system and facilities, identifiable facilities available to the Marine or his family to get a whole array of support, some of which is plain old advice. And, as you perhaps know later on, a full-blown family service center would have initially just bright people that could counsel them about things like prenatal care for pregnant wives and do a whole lot of things.

Subsequently, we had professionals that were paid, like psychologists, to deal with the wife abuse/child abuse problems up to a point where if it didn't look like they were finding some satisfaction, it becomes a command issue, and the individual is dealt with differently.

But the whole business of family services center was in response to a need that was a fragmented or neglected altogether capability out there, problem out there. As a matter of fact, in this letter we say there will be; they will be designed to assist in, not interfere with, your exercising command. And Marines must know this and feel free to use the center.

And we're saying we're telling you we're going to do this, and you start getting ready. Again, this is that competitiveness in a sense. So all these units listed, they moved out and they started designating buildings that would house the Navy Relief [Society] [and] the [American] Red Cross. And finally we got around to having people—we'll come to that in a white letter too. We had legal experts that were in these family service centers. They were able to help a whole array of people.

That's one component of things we've done for the family. Another one, which isn't mentioned here in these white letters, we had child care centers. Some of them were not what they ought to have been. And so there was a lot of emphasis put on upgrading or building new child care centers.

Now there is a great debate presently as to this issue, this business of child care centers. That somehow this is encouragement on the part of, in this case the Marine Corps, for wives to work, as opposed to being housewives, which is a greater calling. Well, some wives have to work. We're talking about lower pay grades again primarily. And if they are going to work and not have good child care facilities, you've got a problem.

There are a lot of single parents, including males who have children, who definitely have to work. And so a child care center, really a day care center, being you put your child in there and it's run so that they take care of them from early morning until late afternoon.

Separate and distinct from that is really the sort of child care center, because those people would not take someone who wanted to stick their youngster in there for two hours while they keep a medical appointment or go to the commissary or do any number of other things. So I think if you go around the Marine Corps today, you would find that—well, I should say hospitals for example, you'll find hospitals have little rooms for the child care centers room, while the mother is going through some physical examination and can't find any other place to put her child, brings him and stick him in there.

You will find them in some PXs. You will find them in some commissaries. You will find them just standing alone somewhere on the base, other than the day care center. So that's another initiative.

The third initiative in this whole business really grew up from within the Marine Corps, and that is what do we do with families on unit deployment. And I wish I could recall her name, but a very bright young major's wife down in MAG-29 [Marine Aircraft Group 29] in [MCAS] New River [North Carolina] as I recall (I know it was New River) really gave a lot of thought to this and formalized this thing into a whole array of kinds of things that the stay-behind, more mature wives could do to help the newcomer wives who didn't know what was going on with this deployment business.

And she even had the equivalent of an SOP [standard operating procedure] as to how to

do it. So what Patty, my wife, and others did was to attempt to formalize this even more. And we sort of put it out. I'm surprised it wasn't a white letter. But somehow we got it out, and it flourished during Desert Storm.

I had a daughter who was a battalion commander's wife. And he wrote long letters daily (this is an example of what they did) and gave little vignettes, little accounts of various people in the command, not just officers. And my daughter would compose, along with some other wives, a newsletter. And they had a weekly newsletter with all the news as given by somebody other than the individual himself and his own letters home, awards, etc.

And these stay-behind commanding officers' wives, staff officers' wives, and noncommissioned officers' wives, who have been around the Marine Corps a long time, it was a most rewarding thing to see them take up the responsibility of taking care of the 18-year-old who had never been away from home. Maybe didn't know how to drive. Married to a good Marine, but a little bit of insecurity or the old macho school, which says, "I'm not going to tell you how much I make, and if you want money, I'll write you a check." Being able to, along with the command, to deal with that kind of problem, so this individual is not made to feel like she's in no-man's-land.

So those three things, the family services centers, the child care centers and the day care centers, and the deployed unit wives' support system all sort of interrelated. And I think the Marine Corps has done that as well or better than any other Service. And some of it started . . . and I take no credit for it, except seeing that it was a good idea and pushing on it. But a lot of people thought of things to do in this area. So that's what this is about. You go on the base, and now they are flourishing.

**Simmons:** [White Letter] 8-80 is standards of conduct, something you had also addressed in some of your green letters.

**Barrow:** This primarily has to do with not taking any gratuity of any kind and even things in-kind like meals and lodging, etc., from those who might be doing business with the Department of Defense or in any way compromise a U.S. Marine. They occasionally are dealing with the civilian world.

**Simmons:** [White Letter] 9-80 was sort of prophetic. It concerned events in the Persian Gulf and Southwest Asia.

**Barrow:** Well, it is sort of prophetic. And we are trying to alert people to think about that

critical area, using [Harold] “Hal” Brown’s address. And it is enclosed, so I don’t recall all of it yet he has to say on the subject. And it’s Southwest Asia.

And it’s interesting that we talked the value of the near-term maritime prepositioned ship, which was designed for that theater, and indeed to follow on permanent maritime prepositioning. But it’s interesting; I view the decade of the ’80s as an opportunity for our Corps to demonstrate its unique capabilities to the nation. So I am [inaudible] here.

**Simmons:** [White Letter] 10-80 has to do with the defenses that did not go too well in that area, and that is the attempted rescue operation.

**Barrow:** Well, we covered that in an earlier oral history. This particular white letter, [Navy Admiral Thomas B.] “Tom” Hayward, the CNO [chief of naval operations], did in fact make a super speech on the subject, which said although it was a failure, don’t criticize those who participated because they were volunteers and willing to sacrifice their lives, and some did, in the execution of a most difficult mission. And that’s what we were doing here, was kind of giving copies of the speech along.

**Simmons:** [White Letter] 11-80 concerns the direct deposit of net pay.

**Barrow:** Well I think this has reached a happy conclusion, but it took some doing, because there being people who liked to get in hand their paycheck. They want to see that they are getting what they think they should be getting. And they want to cash it and do it the way they want to. Many of them don’t even have bank accounts. That’s one reason why this was hard to get off the ground. They live payday to payday by cash, by cashing the check.

But the direct deposits are the check-to-bank business. As we noted in this letter, only about 7 percent of the Marine Corps, I would say it’s close to 100 percent today, both in terms of persuading people to do it and growing acceptance of it by other Marines and more young Marines getting used to a checkbook and having a banking account.

You’re looking sort of skeptical at me. You don’t think it’s that high?

**Simmons:** It’s probably that high. Why I’m looking skeptical, I’m really trying to look reflective, because this, as much as anything, represents how much the world has changed since you and I first came into the Marine Corps.

**Barrow:** Instead of the pay table?

**Simmons:** The pay table, the blanket, the .45[-caliber pistol], the exact amount of money. You, the company commander, were paying the Marines. It was a very personal thing.

**Barrow:** Not only paid him, but it gave you an additional opportunity to look at him and say something to him. Something maybe encouraging or something that maybe reminded him of some obligation or responsibility. “Don’t take this money . . . now I know you have a new car—maybe not new, but an old one. Don’t forget to make those payments on that vehicle.” Just a little comment. So we lost a personal touch opportunity when we went check to bank, no question about it.

**Simmons:** [White Letter] 12-80 is simply a white letter review, which stated changes in effect. [White Letter] 13-80 [is] Marine Corps equal opportunity consultants.

**Barrow:** This came into being about what I want to say 1969 or ’70. And they were both prominent black civilians and some not black, some white civilians, all of whom were picked as being sensitive and insightful kind of individuals, who could go on a base or in a command and with the introduction of course and listen and talk and observe and report as to what the equal opportunity atmosphere was or what kind of things were going on in that area.

Most especially—this doesn’t say so and neither do many of the other things on this subject—most especially it relates to race relations. It became increasingly less needed. But it was not the kind of thing you wanted to say, “We don’t need you anymore, so we’re going to close this program down.” To do so would surely be seen by some as a disinterest in the subject. So we kept it alive, and that’s what this is doing.

You can still see these fellows. And they always came back and reported to me what they saw and heard, and during this period now—and we’re talking 10 years after they started, after they were put into being—they always had good things to say. Rarely did they see something that they thought required my attention.

**Simmons:** The next letter, 14-80, concerns composite scores.

**Barrow:** Not much to talk to about that, except charging people to be more attentive to complying with the regulations on composite scores as it relates to the promotions of young Marines.

**Simmons:** [White Letter] 15-80 is MOS and professional nonresident instruction.

**Barrow:** We had two correspondence course institutions—both of them have been around a long time—the [Marine Corps] Extension School at [MCB] Quantico [Virginia] and the Marine Corps Institute in Washington [DC]. And this shows that we are combining them without sacrificing any of the uniqueness of the two. [Tape interruption]

**Simmons:** We changed the tape. We were talking about the combination of the Extension School and the Marine Corps Institute.

**Barrow:** Well the consolidation of the two achieved some economy, both in management and also in subject matter. One tended to be a substitute for the resident special schools at Quantico. That's the extension course on a whole array of things: strategy, tactics, leadership, you name it, staff NCO, MOS specialties, and so forth.

The Marine Corps Institute tended to deal more with the specific MOS training. You could learn to be an air-conditioning . . . at one point I remember you could learn to be an air-conditioning mechanic if you took the course and did it faithfully and well.

It was simply an economy. And either one, I don't think, lost anything by doing it, having to do this; unless you know something I don't know.

**Simmons:** No, I don't. [White Letter] 16-80 [is] motor vehicles, injuries, and fatalities.

**Barrow:** Well I can't say much about that except it just points out we had a problem. Getting a lot of 18 to 25-year-olds behind the wheel of a motorcycle or an automobile, and you have the makings of the potential for serious problems in traffic accidents, and we had them. And I hate to see this.

I begin the letter by saying two Marines a week were being killed in motor vehicle accidents. And you can't say you can't drive your car or your motorcycle, but you can have repeated classes on the dangers of bad driving or driving under adverse weather conditions or while they've taken too much to drink, etc., etc. That's what this was all about.

**Simmons:** Next, 17-80 is a white letter version of something you addressed also in the green letter—performance evaluations.

**Barrow:** Yes, this was one of those things that never goes away. But this one has a little different twist in that we are saying that the Board for Correction of Naval Records, when someone has made an appeal to them about a fitness report, would look at it and say this should be taken from his record, based on what we have learned after looking at it and what not.

And therefore, that makes that part of his record incomplete. It does affect the promotion one way or the other. Most of those things would not be necessary if you had good reviewing officer action. That has been a problem in some instances, in some eras, where reviewing officers actually get simply a signature saying he had seen the report and sent it on.

In fact, the reviewing officers—I'm talking to someone who knows more about it than I



do—but the reviewing officer has the authority, if not the responsibility. He's not told to do it, but we say he can do it, to make his own comments [and] his own observations about the subject of this fitness report.

And in any case, he is obliged to read very carefully what this reporting senior has to say. And if he detects anything in there that might be one of these things subject to the Board for Correction of Naval Records action, he sends it back to be done over again, so that it tightens it up. That's what this is about.

**Simmons:** Next, we have 18-80 [on] leadership and responsibilities pertaining to women Marines.

**Barrow:** Well, I guess I'm pretty pleased with this one, because it was largely of my own initiative. It kind of grew because as I recall, it really started—I say my initiative, somebody, maybe the inspector general said that if a male Marine commander or sergeant or somebody in charge of both men and women would see a woman Marine in what he thought was inappropriate hair, instead of being familiar with what it was that she should have in the way of a hairstyle or feeling awkward about speaking to a woman about her hair would go get some woman staff NCO or officer to speak to PFC Susan Smith about her hair.

And that was the genesis of it. In other words, we have to be able to discharge our responsibilities cross gender. Don't look for somebody else of the gender of the subject to whom you want to talk to, to do the work for you.

That in fact only ended up being one paragraph of this. I remember this. This is one of the white letters I remember well. It was an opportunity then to expand on the whole relationship of men and women and remind everyone that women are just as much Marine as you are, in the fundamental sense of being a Marine. It has nothing to do with what their MOSs are and what they can and can't do maybe on the battlefield or something. But as an individual, [they are] fundamentally just as much Marine as a male counterpart.

Men, we talk a good bit in here, which I find interesting as I reread this, this morning, about the relationship as we put it. The male-female relationship must receive special command attention. In particular, there is no place in our Marine Corps for what has become known as sexual harassment.

This was 1980; 14 years later we are still talking about sexual harassment; except we are talking more about it. This is maybe one of the first times it was ever mentioned in any

correspondence in the Marine Corps. Now we are talking about it routinely, and still don't have a good handle on it.

**Simmons:** Next we have 1-81 concerning personnel and military pay administration, further movement on this centralization of pay administration and personnel administration.

**Barrow:** It's an effort to try to do something about the chronic problem of people being underpaid, not paid on time, etc. All the things about travel pay and household movement pay. It's a complicated issue and subject to being sloppily done sometimes, and this is a recognition that it isn't perfect and let's try to make it better.

We had an initiative working. I don't know if it's mentioned in here or not, but to tighten up personnel administration and pay administration, so that they are really kind of tied in both of them. And even the location. You know the dispersing office was over on the other side of town, and the people who write your orders and do all the rest are on this side of town figuratively speaking, but they are really two for that matter. And bringing them together was the objective. I think it talks to that in this one.

**Simmons:** Yes, indeed. The next one is a very important one I think from a doctrinal point of view; 2-81 addresses amphibious operations and maritime/near-term prepositioned ships.

**Barrow:** Yep, it talks about how maritime prepositioned ships might be used. When this whole subject emerged, I and others gave a lot of serious thought to the utility of it. And what we are saying here was thought of right from the outset and used in talking to people around Washington and in selling the Marines as the ones who should do the program. When it was finally selected by a vote of the JCS [Joint Chiefs of Staff], four were in favor of the Marines and one in favor of the Army, the Army chief of staff.

We failed to realize that out in the field a lot of the Marines didn't have the same information as the utility. They just knew about it, and many thought perhaps this was either in competition or ultimately would be destructive of things amphibious.

And this was to allay that concern and to flesh out the words that I used with great frequency, about how it would be that the near term couldn't come into a port, but it could be used at the beach, but in time the MPS [maritime prepositioning ships] would be in port, across the beach. If it's a benign environment secured by local forces, the airfield and beach. Just put them in there. If it was not that and you needed some sort of forceful entry as a precursor, do that. And this was to be the follow-on force to reinforce, to flesh it out, and [to] make it bigger and keep on going.

And the fact that we might have to—I don't know if we mention it here or not—but compositing amphibious forces with MPS forces, so that they all merge together as one and not regarded as two separate entities; except that they were in the beginning. So that's about educational in nature, more than anything else.

**Simmons:** The next white letter is 3-81 [on] unaccompanied personnel housing.

**Barrow:** We're talking about the business about motel-style facilities as a way of life. And the fact that it creates problems for you who wish to have better control of your people. We're not going to build any other kind, and there are more of them coming, and let's get ready for how we're going to do it. And what kind of facilities you want them to be, because they can be improved. And they were, subsequently, in terms of how they were set up and all that.

This really relates to the earlier thing we talked about BEQs [bachelor enlisted quarters] and BOQs [bachelor officer quarters] not being up to snuff in their appearance. What it says here in that white letter, it says there has been a marked decrease in the degree of occupant abuse. So we got some results out of that earlier letter.

**Simmons:** I might interject a different question at this point. Several times in these last two days, as we went through the green letters and the white letters, you referred to the role of the sergeant major and to the inspector general. They are really extensions of the eyes and ears of the Commandant. You might explore that a little bit. You did mention [Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps] Leland [D.] Crawford by name. You might mention some of the inspector generals or deputy inspector generals that you found of service.

**Barrow:** The relationship with the inspector general was a more formal one, in which he would see me before he launched on a major inspection, and the reason for that is I might have some one or two or more specific things that I wanted him to look into.

And he always came back and made an oral report of his findings in a very general sense, things that he noted that were just being done extremely well. And that might be the overall morale and security of the command or whatever or some new, innovative thing that they were doing or something that was being neglected or not being done correctly. And that might become the genesis of a green or white letter, like weapons not being clean.

Then there was always the written report, which the staff would pore over, and selectively, I would get things to take action on in that connection, if it needed my action, as

opposed to a staff officer calling or writing some command and telling him [audible]. So that's sort of a formal way of doing business.

I can't say enough about my sergeant major. I think each commander, be he a battalion commander or the Commandant, would use his sergeant major his way. And his way may be to use him very conservatively in some areas and very vigorously in others. Give him some authority to do things that would seem almost inappropriate in doing as much as he did. Or give him very little authority at all.

I also would observe that it depends upon the chemistry of the two. I've seen some sergeants major and COs [commanding officers] who looked like they didn't belong together, and you wondered why that situation continued to exist. I had, counting my time as Commandant, almost 11 and a half, almost 12 years of my 14 years as a general officer, I had command responsibility, which means a sergeant major goes with it.

And I had had an array of sergeants major, most of them good. Some of them good but not good with me, and [I] got rid of them and got someone who was good with me. Crawford was a selection choice, one of three. That's the way the selection of sergeants major in the Marine Corps used to be, and I guess still is. The board meets, looks over a number of candidates, and finally narrows it down to three for the Commandant to then personally interview to give it that personal choice business and pick one.

And I picked a jewel. A West Virginian, out of the coal fields, limited education, in many ways murdered the King's English, rough, gruff, but soft on the inside where it counted with people, young Marines. He hated to see a young Marine wronged in any way, shape, or form.

He had a devoted, devoted following of senior staff NCOs and sergeants major. They thought he walked on water, the smooth, polished ones forgiving of his gruffness and his poor English and all of that. And he could go someplace and talk to the troops, again in sort of rough terms, maybe a little humor, and poor English sometimes, and they ate it up. You could see it.

And so I leaned on him for a lot of these little things, specific incidents. And he had his ear to the ground and his own tentacles out there working and absolute free access to see me. All he had to do was just walk in the door. He didn't interrupt me, but he could just walk in. Routinely, at least once a week, and it might be just a simple thing like talking about a trip.

And if we went on a trip, he would go his way and I would go mine. And we probably wouldn't meet until we were back on the airplane, and then we would compare notes so to speak.

Very often they would fit. It was a good command. Everybody was doing his duty and interested in what he's doing, happy. Or maybe a little bit of the other.

And this was just a remarkable, interesting personality. He was supposed to be on the job . . . historically the Commandant kept their sergeant major two years, and he stayed another one. And I asked him if . . . his wife had a very nice job in [a] Wells Fargo bank out in California. And they gave her some leave, like a year or something. She came back and stayed here, but then she had to go back to serve her job.

And in many ways I was unfair to him that I asked him if he would stay, and he was willing to. As a matter of fact he was enthusiastic. He did. But that was some sacrifice. He would see her on a West Coast trip and she would fly back here from time to time, and he'd fly back there sometimes.

But you talk to any staff NCO of that era about Crawford, and they always . . . [their] eyes would light up, and they'll tell you some good thing he did. So I think I employed my sergeant major just like—I'm groping for a word, I'll use it—perfectly. At least for me, perfectly.

**Simmons:** In those years did they have the annual sergeants major and master gunnery sergeants conferences?

**Barrow:** Yes.

**Simmons:** Did you find the findings of those conferences useful?

**Barrow:** Yes, I sure did.

**Simmons:** Your references to the inspector general have been less personal. Can you recall any specific inspector general you found particularly useful?

**Barrow:** I think they all were good. I was trying to think of in what order they appeared, and I can't. I must give out some diminishment of memory, 10 years, 7 years. I think if they weren't good, you wouldn't probably have one, because it's important.

You know, I was thinking the other day when someone brought the subject up about legislative liaison, the people I saw more than any other staff were public affairs, legislative liaison, [and] sergeant major, routinely [and] often. Very informal and they didn't have to go through the whole system of I'm going in. They sort of came if I sent for them, and then told whoever, the chief of staff, Assistant Commandant, the gist of what they were there for.

**Simmons:** Well, they constituted more or less your personal staff, special staff.

**Barrow:** The reason why the subject came up, there was one period there where they had public affairs and legislative liaison combined. And while there is a lot of overlap of interest, I didn't see how that would work at all.

**Simmons:** It's too much for one person.

**Barrow:** Yes. Here we go again. I turned to the next white letter, and see I'm still obsessed with the idea of uniformity in color guards. And I'm saying I find it necessary to address the subject again. And I hate to say it, but this initiative in time became fruitless, because after I left, it lapsed back into mismanaged color guards. It still drives me up the wall.

**Simmons:** [White Letter] 5-81 was another review of the white letters, stating which ones were still in effect. And then 6-81, which is another one that is important from a policy or doctrinal point of view, and that's the Total Force Policy.

**Barrow:** Well, this was sort of confession time, these white letters and green letters, because often there is a hidden reason for them, or semihidden, so you have to read between the lines. And whereas this sets forth what the various components of the Marine Corps, active and reserve are, and what the book says they should be sort of doing.

The key to it in this particular instance was to set forth my own policy. Notwithstanding you see a lot of reserve, particularly thought, that if they had another major conflict that they would go to war as a division-wing team. We talked about the 4th [Marine] Division-Wing team and all this business, and they thought well that's how we'll go to war.

And I'm telling here in effect, disabuse yourself of that idea. We are going to use your units as fillers for units that we do not have in the active force. And we threw all the rest of that in there, all of which is true, but that's the main thrust of that.

**Simmons:** [White Letter] 7-81 [is] command and control of USMC tactical air in sustained operations ashore. A continuing problem.

**Barrow:** This is probably the most important white letter of all, command and control of Marine Corps tac air [tactical aviation] and sustaining operations ashore. To set the stage, since there has been a Marine aviation and [U.S.] Air Force aviation post-World War II, there has been a determination on the part of the Air Force to gain operational control of the Marine air assets irrespective of how they may end up being where they are, whether some of them came alone or whether they were part of some team or whatever.

And the Air Force has been successful in Korea and in Vietnam. Maybe not totally

successful, but successful. And so this issue came up in a tank, not by me, but it came in [a] tank, a decision of the JCS. And this in months of not talking about it, but months of it being an issue; most of the time it being put off, because nobody wanted to handle it.

The chairman didn't want to have to deal with it. He knew the emotions about it. I'm talking about [Air Force General David C.] "Dave" Jones, who was chairman and authority. And this was one of his last acts as a matter of fact. This is all sort of came about just before Dave Jones left.

My counterpart in the Air Force was [General] Lew Allen [Jr.]. And I think he wasn't personally terribly interested. He was not the traditional Air Force general in a sense. He was a technician. He had done a lot of duty in areas other than flying airplanes. But he supported his people, who were of a mind to make this thing one more time [of] we'll get the Marine air.

So he took a hard line. And one of the things I attempted to do and did was have a one on one with him. And told him that I knew how he felt, and he pretty much knew how I felt, and I would like to avoid bloodshed. I would hate to see us get into a real acrimonious set of sessions on the subject in JCS, and then maybe you would have to drag the secretary of defense into it.

But probably my main purpose in talking to him was to let him know the deep-seated conviction that I held personally, and which was also representative of all Marines that this was a sacred asset, like flying artillery, as far as Marines was concerned. And he just could not let anything happen to the control of that asset by willy-nilly letting someone else do it. And I would fight with great determination [and] take it as far as I could take it if it had to be taken that far. And he listened, but didn't give one inch. But he at least knew that he was in for a fight. I didn't expect him to say, "Oh, well, I'll give up if you are going to take that kind of position."

So we had a lot of talk on this, and if you read the policy, it is not what everyone would like. They like to say we won't let you have any Marine air for anything. Well that's silly. If you have Marine sorties in excess of what you need, you are duty bound, not just you'll think about it, you are duty bound to offer it up to the joint commander who passes it to the air component commander for his use. Some units are desperate to have more sorties of the kind we are ready to give.

Offer long-range interdiction or air defense. The Marines are not going to say, "We're going to defend just that part of the air that is in front of our ground units." That's silly. That's not the way air attacks are all about. There is no definition on the ground of that sort.

So for purposes of fighter employment, [to be] available when the situation calls for the immediate use, not just routinely we want you up there for CAPs [combat air patrols] or something, but we need to deal with an air threat. This is a short policy, but the first sentence tells it all: "The Marine air-ground task force commander will retain operational control of his organic air assets." That's a victory.

I don't know if that's true today or not. They may have brought the thing back up and something has happened to it. But that was a major victory, not easily won. I won't go through all the details of it.

**Simmons:** I think that's a very useful exposition to give. The next letter, 8-81, we return once again to maintenance of individual weapons.

**Barrow:** Well, in this instance I have forgotten what I said it was. It was the rifle team. Just kind of boring in on the subject, and this time I think we found of all the people, the guys who ought to know better, and this is any group that does, it's the rifle team people, of taking care of their weapons.

**Simmons:** It's interesting to me how we keep returning to certain fundamentals or verities.

**Barrow:** Yes. Part of that is my personality. I don't like to see somebody not respond, and say, "Well if he's not going to do it, I'll let him go ahead and not do it." It annoys you. You say, "We'll just zing 'em again."

**Simmons:** [White Letter] 9-81 [is] operations security.

**Barrow:** I really don't know the genesis of this. It probably was . . .

**Simmons:** I would guess it was something that was suggested to you, rather than . . .

**Barrow:** Yes, a number of these are, of course. But it just lays out the command responsibilities for observing and preserving operational security things that he is responsible for. It's kind of a routine thing in a sense, just a reminder.

**Simmons:** [White Letter] 10-81 [is] Marine Corps Legal Assistance Program.

**Barrow:** Ah, I like this one. One could make a corollary between the availability of people to do legal assistance and the quality of the Marines we were bringing in. I remember sitting in a general officers symposium, you may have been there, around 1972 or '73, '74 maybe, in which someone spoke of the need for more lawyers in the Marine Corps. "We need to have an all-out more lawyer acquisition program."

And I stood up and said, "We don't need more lawyers; we need fewer criminals."



Because the cry for more lawyers was directly related to all the disciplinary problems we had. And so I do believe that if we improved the quality of Marines, there is no question that the disciplinary problems went down significantly. And by 1981, it was beginning to really show itself and in subsequent years even more so. So that we had lawyers and paralegals and whatnot available to do other things besides courts martial and all that sort of thing.

So the Legal Assistance Program is set up to help again, the young Marine with his myriad of problems in finance and divorces and whatever. And these became sort of components of the Family Assistance Program.

Now this again began a theory on my part. As we brought in high quality Marines, we were also introducing more perks like family service centers and trying to accommodate to housing. Pay was improved dramatically during the early '80s, for the Marines, you know, both for lower pay grades and in service. And therefore, financially, etc., marriage became more attractive to a young Marine.

I also believe there is one other thing. As we brought in higher quality Marines, we brought in a young man who was of the quality that could feel that he could accept the responsibility of marriage. Whereas some of the baddies we used to bring in, or the marginal ones we brought in, marriage was the last thing on their minds. They were hell-raisers who didn't want to sit down and be married and start a family.

But you get a young high school graduate in mental group I or II, high type, high class young fellow, and after he's 21- or 22-years-old and been in the Marine Corps a couple of years, he says I'm ready to do what all males that are responsible kind of citizens do. I'm going to have a wife, and I'm going to start a family.

And so we are inundated now. That is the by-product, I think, of the quality of Marines we're getting, along with better pay and some other things. So now the lawyers that we moved over to that function are busier than when they were dealing with disciplinary problems. In a sense it's different problems, but still busy. Just an observation.

**Simmons:** And of course, Marines do have available legal assistance that would cost them many hundreds of dollars.

**Barrow:** Oh, yes.

**Simmons:** [White Letter] 11-81 [is] correspondence to Marine Corps families concerning accomplishments of Marines.

**Barrow:** Well, again being attentive to the family by letters particularly to mothers and fathers, and proper correspondence to the so-called hometown newspapers, whatever that used to be. Bringing wives in when some ceremony is being conducted for their husbands. And if she is back home or he doesn't have a wife, then you write to the mother and father or wife back home, etc. That's what this was all about.

Again, family, family. The Marine Corps family is inseparable from the individual Marine's family. That's a truism. That's a statement I'd like to almost repeat. That the Marine Corps family is inseparable from the individual Marine's family. And a major thrust of mine throughout my time as Commandant was to be mindful of that, which was quite different from the old idea that first, Marines shouldn't even be married.

And some young PFC comes in to see the first sergeant: "What you want to see me about?" "Well, first sergeant, I want to go home for 10 days." This not being a good time for him to do it, that's why he is there, sort of making a special appeal. "What do you want to go home for?" "First sergeant, I want to get married." "The hell you say. Request denied. Go take a cold shower." Well, or something like that.

**Simmons:** [White Letter] 12-81 [is] enlisted retention.

**Barrow:** Oh, well, this is to tell everyone the good results of our efforts. But as always in doing these kinds of things, it introduces competitiveness. You know so well that any way that a unit's performance can be quantified means that it is competitive with other units, and every commander worth his salt looks at it as a challenge, I don't care if it was athletics or retention rates or whatever it might be.

So, in addition to just telling everybody, "well done," and this is the result, it's also not so subtly saying some of you did better than others. Those that didn't, I know you are going to see that you can try harder.

**Simmons:** [White Letter] 1-82 [is] management economies and efficiencies.

**Barrow:** Well, I don't know the genesis of this either, other than it probably came about at a time when somebody up the line in a positive sense had talked about this as something that they were going to be. You see, Reagan had been in office for about a year. But I don't remember this. I don't know what it's about, but I know that we were telling people to be sensitive. Probably that we were going to be getting more money; let's spend it wisely.

**Simmons:** [White Letter] 2-82 [is] leadership.

**Barrow:** I read that this morning, while waiting for you to come, and I remember that letter so well, because it is so well written from a wife. And her husband, on the face of it, seemed to be a good Marine, and she is certainly a good wife. But they had one hell of an array of problems that was not of their making, and which were not addressed and taken care of by somebody in authority, and may have been perpetrated by someone in authority. And she was just calling out for an explanation.

And again, I put Crawford on this, and he found out exactly where the problems were. It was in more than one command, as you can tell. He was good at that. He was the sort of a sergeant major network, and they dared not ever deceive him. So, if they were guilty anywhere along the line, they said, “We did it. We did it.”

So we found out that everything she said was essentially true. And the thing speaks for itself. Well, okay, how did you answer this letter, was what I was asking. “Is this the Marine Corps?” she said. And for the purposes of our interview this morning, oral tape, this was a letter that presented an enormous array of problems that need not have happened, like getting his pay mixed up and not being paid for a long period of time.

Being summarily moved from one command to another overseas with insufficient time to dispose of his trailer and really get himself cranked up to go. And one thing after another of that nature. It just looked like we were jerking him back and forth, being recommended for meritorious promotion and then having it languish for months before they ever got around to doing anything about it.

So I would think it had some effect on people that read it. It did to me. Did you read it?

**Simmons:** Yes, I did.

**Barrow:** It was a good letter, wasn't it?

**Simmons:** Yes, it was. [White Letter] 3-82 [is], again, accidental discharges of firearms.

**Barrow:** Well, here's where we say enough is enough. And I think we say . . . no, we have one more on this thing later. It says when you are going to—maybe not. I think there's another one in here that lays out in more detail how you are going to treat this problem of the .45-caliber pistol.

**Simmons:** [White Letter] 4-82 is Marine Corps policy for paying Marines under the Joint Uniform Military Pay System/Manpower Management System, (JUMPS/MMS). This again is an extension of the [inaudible].

**Barrow:** Yes.

**Simmons:** No comments on that?

**Barrow:** No comments.

**Simmons:** [White Letter] 5-82 is assignment of reenlistment codes.

**Barrow:** Well, to be more honest about it, more attentive to it, because it determines whether an individual is going to be reenlisted or not. Now, we don't have that problem. There are so many super Marines who want to be reenlisted and signed, there is "no room in the inn." It breaks your heart.

**Simmons:** [White Letter] 1-83 [is] personnel standards for unit deployment.

**Barrow:** Ah, I like that one. This is one I personally involved myself in, because on one of my visits to a deployed or having deployed or while they were deployed (I don't recall)

Mediterranean unit, this was a commitment they had been in. Since May 1948, we've had a battalion, and sometimes much more than a battalion. There was aviation that was along with it. A battalion landing team, at one time then a MEU . . . [Tape interruption]

. . . I'll sort of back up for just a minute. This business of a Mediterranean deployment. It's not peculiar to that, but this was an example of what we are talking about in this white letter.

I had made a Mediterranean deployment in which we took all the people we had in the battalion. I was a battalion extra, and I volunteered (I think this is in the rest of my oral history). I volunteered to be in charge of the shore patrol and all the matters related to discipline ashore. And because we were organized, I mean we really got ourselves organized and did it in a highly professional way. We had a deployment that resulted in only 12 shore patrol reports. It didn't mean we didn't find a lot of people that were about to be in trouble, but that was it. We were vigilant and whisked them back to the ship before they got in trouble.

So I knew that if you wanted to put in the effort, you can take anybody on a trip and watch them, you know, do it right. So when I learned that some of these units had almost zero shore patrol reports, I said, that's remarkable. And then the more I inquired, the more I learned that they were leaving all the liberty risks back home. Now that surely simplifies things, but that's not what it's all about. Maybe that just tees [?] the hell out of him to be left back home.

If he was a liberty risk to the extent that he shouldn't have gone, he shouldn't be in the Marine Corps. And that's what this is saying, that go as you are and if you've got people that can't be good liberty risks, then they can't be good Marines, and they shouldn't be in the Marine Corps. So a leadership problem is what it is. Where are we now?

**Simmons:** [White Letter] 2-83 [is] retirement ceremonies and delivery of separation documents.

**Barrow:** Well, I'm sure that this was something that was brought to my attention, maybe by a letter, maybe by the sergeant major. That some Marines were being discharged and just handed their discharge, instead of having a simple ceremony, either in the office or if he wanted it, a retirement ceremony. If it was his desire, a ceremony of some sort or even a parade, in which case it might be a collection, a set of people being discharged. [Interruption in recording for telephone call.]

. . . division of weapons. And this was 1983, just before I retired, and I was able to say it looks like you're doing pretty well.

**Simmons:** Well, that was letter 3-83, maintenance and cleanliness and individual and crew-served weapons. Things were looking a little bit better.

Having gone through all these letters, is there any summary statement you would like to make?

**Barrow:** Not really. No. Thank you.

**Simmons:** General, that sort of wraps up your major concerns while you were Commandant. I would like to conclude this session by taking a little look at your post-retirement years and wind up with some of your reflections as to your life and your career.

On 30 June 1983, you stepped down as Commandant. What happened, so to speak, on 1 July?

**Barrow:** Well, I departed for my home state, Louisiana, and we went down in the Commandant's airplane. I knew something was going to happen, but I didn't realize the size of it. We were greeted at the Baton Rouge [Louisiana] airport in a separate parking area and a big hangar full of people, including the governor and the mayor of Baton Rouge, a lot of dignitaries, and old friends, some of whom I hadn't seen for years. The band from the 4th Division, 4th Wing band actually.

So there was a big party of people there. And they gave us a warm welcome home. That might happen other places, but it's not unique. But it was a very warm experience.

Anyway, we drove back up to where [we] were going to live, and we spent the first few months staying with my sister-in-law. My brother died in February, and we were very close to his wife, and she was a widow with two children gone. She had a big house, and we needed a place to stay until our guesthouse on the place out in the country could be built. It was to be a

combination of place where we would live and, after we ceased to live in it, be a guesthouse and three-car garage, or two cars and a workshop.

And we were fortunate in finding a master craftsman in Woodville, Mississippi, which is 17 miles above where I lived, a man of the old school, lots of integrity and lots of talent. He could do it all. He didn't subcontract. He didn't have a contract. He never signed a contract in his life. I'm sure if you asked him or pinned him down, he would say something [like], "A contract? What's that going to make me do that I wouldn't do anyway?"

And Patty and I developed a warm, good feeling with Mr. Rogers McGraw [?], a master carpenter. His father was and his grandfather was. And so he built our guesthouse in about two and a half, three months time. And we moved in. And it had everything you needed, a nice kitchen with a breakfast area, big rooms upstairs, compartmented bath, [and] utility room.

And really, it was an interesting period of contentment and adjustment, because the surroundings are very peaceful. This was all on about 500 acres and out of earshot or eyesight of any neighbors. Lots of game, wildlife. We were both notorious bird watchers. And tranquility, peace and quiet, and we just loved it.

And then we had to wait, because he had another job to do in between the completion of our place, guesthouse, and starting on the big house. And so that didn't get started until May of '84. And that consumed a lot of our time, making decisions as [to] what kind of bathroom fixtures and what color paint, and the usual things.

This is a large old house, part of which was built in 1834, and it served as a plantation schoolhouse. And the big, grand mansion that was built in 1835, a year later, was because the then-builder, named Joseph Miller, says in his write-up, "I'm first building a two-story, two rooms down and two rooms up, center hall, four interior fireplaces." He describes the schoolhouse. He says, "My workers and I will live in this, and afterward it will become the plantation schoolhouse." So we know how it went and why it was built.

My grandparents were living in 1888, in the big grand mansion, having been married one year. And it caught fire and burned to the ground, though they saved a lot of things. And it was the typical two and a half story, full basement. And they lived in the little schoolhouse. And then as their family grew, they moved it. I don't know how they did that with the interior chimneys, but they did and back to the site of the old house and added onto it. It was about 1893.

So the current house is 1834, 1893, half and half. It had a porch all the way around it, and

we used much of the porch to incorporate to make room without going outside the house or cutting up the house too much inside for a sunroom (16-by-32), a kitchen, bathroom, studio, patio, etc.

And so that was fun to work on that. I'm talking about my personal life now. I guess you're talking about community life in a minute. The next result was a superb job on the part of Mr. McGraw, and as he said, I had a lot to work with. The old house and the new edition as well all had big poplar sills on it, hard pine floors of random width, cypress doors.

We had a lot to work with, but we did an extensive not so much restoration as modernization. And we ended up with far more house than we needed, but it was [a] situation in which you can't easily just tear half of it off or something. There it was. We ended up with five bedrooms in the house and six baths. In our master bedroom I have my bath and Patty has hers. And these rooms are 20-by-20 [feet], with high ceilings, so they are big rooms. So this whole house is a big house.

And it has an interesting gazebo, summerhouse we called it, about a 15-foot octangularly lattice and a lot of interesting millwork; architects ooh and ah over it. That was built in 1835 also, one of the survivors. So we didn't move into the big house until the late summer of '85. It took that long, which meant it was two years before we got in the big house.

And all the while, I spent a lot of time improving the outside. This is a unique setting, part nature and part man made. It is rolling hills. We have a lake in front and a lake right behind the house, and three others farther back, one of which you can see from the house. And on this hill is say an area of 15 to 20 acres that we call the house site.

There are over 120 live oak trees. The historic coastal South number one tree that you find in South Carolina and Alabama along the coast. They grow to an enormous size and great spread, gnarled trunk. And they are evergreen to a large extent in that their new leaves come on as the old leaves are going off in the spring. And then you always seem to have the Spanish moss hanging on them.

Well these were planted by my great-grandfather around 1845. And how big they were then, I don't know, but that means they are 150 years old now. And so they are just gorgeous. So I spent a lot of time . . . the place had been neglected, because I knew what I wanted to do with it, but you can't do that long distance. And so I used go home and say, "Hang in there old place. I'll be home someday."

And so I spent a lot of time cleaning up underneath; scruff I call it. Getting rid of old fencerows. I don't have any fences, so you have long views, up to three-quarters of a mile in some directions. And underneath all these oak trees and out to the lake and all that sort of thing.

So that was fun to do, and I got the necessary equipment to do it right: big mowers, big tractors. I did some of the mowing. I've done each year less than I used to. Aging I guess. But anyway, I mention all this because a lot of what we did and still do and a lot of our interest and family gatherings—they come there every year, just the children; we have to have the accommodations—has been delightful. It's been a very successful personal retirement as relates to the house we live in, where it is, the grounds, and all of that.

Enough of that. The community at large was most welcoming, not just that one event. But there is something to be said about going home where you are, let me put it this way, one of a kind and as opposed to going where there are lots of other folks. Like in Southern California, there are many retired Marines, including many retired Marine generals.

So, I have been treated and Patty has been treated with great courtesy and in some quarters, almost deference because of the jobs we've held and the places we've been, responsibilities. I had some interesting offers to sit on boards, which served my purpose precisely. Some Commandants, I guess, haven't been given any such opportunity. Others have been given such opportunities in a national sense. Lou Wilson is on the board of Merrill Lynch and [inaudible].

I sat on regional and local boards, the Gulf State Utilities. I'm just now going off of that. They extended me twice, and I was supposed to retire at 70. I'm now 72. I retire this month. A special retirement for me.

Premier Bank, which is a \$3 billion bank, located in Baton Rouge. It has grown since I went on the board. And I have been with United Companies Financial Corporation, which is a combination of [an] insurance and mortgage company, more of the latter than the former, which has had phenomenal growth. Last year it was on the NASDAQ [Stock Market], one of the top 10 growth companies in America. They are in 37 states, started in Baton Rouge, and just spread like an oil slick. Super management. I'm on that board.

All this has done, has done this; it's brought in some remuneration, of course, which is nice. But it has given me an opportunity to make a lot of new friends and renew old ones. To get better acquainted with the local problems and possibilities, etc. So it has helped me become even more accepted in the community, because I'm doing responsible things in the community.



Then I did the nonpaying things. When the Louisiana Nature Conservancy started, it was one of the few states that didn't have a state chapter. I was one of the charter members and very active in it. I raised some money for them. Enjoyed doing that. It was remarkable to see how it grew and how many thousands and thousands of acres of land in Louisiana we acquired, which were ecologically fragile and were going to be doomed if something wasn't done about it. We're talking about wetlands, we're talking about coastal barrier islands, and we're talking about marshlands. We're talking about swamps. We're talking about hardwood forest of some consequence that hadn't been cut maybe ever and that sort of thing.

And Nature Conservancy doesn't usually buy and hold these properties. They try to dispose of them in a way that care will be given by either state or federal authorities, like fish and wildlife [departments], or the [U.S.] Interior Department of Parks or what have you. So that was an interesting thing to do. I'm no longer serving.

I have served on and still serve on the Pennington Biomedical Research Center at the behest, request, whatever you want to call it, [of] old Dr. Pennington [?], who about 10 years ago was a very successful oilman.

**Simmons:** For the record, how do you spell his name?

**Barrow:** P-E-N-N-I-N-G-T-O-N, Pennington. He's in his 90s, still capable of thinking well, however. He had an experience in his youth where he thought his life was threatened, and he went on to sort of self arrived at diet and believed that has been the source of his recovery and good health since then. He's in his 90s.

So his idea was not unique, but the way he pursued it was kind of different, that we are what we eat. In other words, you need to be more knowledgeable about nutrition. It either causes disease or prevents it. So he gave \$156 million to the establishment of the Pennington Biomedical Research Center. He did it cleverly. A lot of it in time would become like some of the operating dollars would be matching or in some instances exclusively that which somebody else would have to come up with, like state funds. This is going to be, and is becoming, a world-class facility.

**Simmons:** In Baton Rouge?

**Barrow:** In Baton Rouge. He first built the facility, and it's affiliated with LSU [Louisiana State University]. It is an offshoot of LSU. It's under their ownership, so to speak. He still calls the

shots on a lot of things. It's just a super, magnificent facility. And there it sat for a couple of years almost empty while everybody was getting their act together. He said, "I've got the money and I'll spend it, but you've got to match some of it." So everybody got up on the step and knew they had an opportunity.

And they got a super director out of the University of Southern California, a scientist who brought his scientific projects with him. He's in this business. He happens to be a big diabetic expert. George Bray. George Bray has been magnificent.

And the thing is flourishing, with all kinds of contracts with people who want to do research in this area. He has attracted scientists from all over the world, and the promise of more to come. The labs, he says, there are none like it anywhere. They are just absolutely first class.

They are building a whole array of living quarters for scientists who want to come for a year or two or three years [for] research and don't have to worry about finding a house. They can live on . . . this is not on the LSU campus, but it's like a campus. They will live on campus. They will have all the things like theaters for holding big conventions or symposiums, with all of the proper facilities for accommodating them and feeding them and presenting papers. Well, it's just first class.

I've been a part of that. And as I say, there is no pay involved, and I wouldn't expect it. It's just great fun to be a part of that.

I've been involved in local things, like Friends of Oakley, which is an old plantation house that the state owns. And where James [J.] Audubon lived for a brief spell bird painting.

**Simmons:** What was the name of the place again?

**Barrow:** Oakley Plantation. It is called an Audubon Commemorative [Memorial State] Park. It housed 100 acres, and it has been restored faithfully to its original everything, including the outside kitchens and other buildings. And the original builder, in 1799, was great-great-great-grandparents of mine on the [inaudible] side. And in origin, of course, [?] was brought there to teach their daughter Eliza Pirrie. So I guess that's why I'm on the Friends of Oakley.

This is an advisory panel to advise the state about a whole bunch of other stuff, with furniture to buy, paintings to restore, a whole array of things that you can do on those kinds of things. Landscaping. And interesting people serve who serve on it, experts in that field of research in such matters, or landscape architects that specialize in nineteenth-century landscaping, all of that sort of thing.

So there is no end of that kind of thing. And we are active in the church. We are active in . . .

**Simmons:** Which church?

**Barrow:** Grace Episcopal Church, the second oldest Protestant state church in the state of Louisiana. It was dedicated by Leander Oak [?], the old fighting general. Its present structure is the second one on the site. It was built before the Civil War and took its hits from gunboats that shelled the town in the Civil War. You can see the shell hits on the side of it. It is a gothic, rose brick, and rose windows. It's a beautiful church and an old cemetery all around it and live oak trees with Spanish moss and a beautiful fence around it, wrought iron fence, high.

I served on the vestry and regular communicant there, Patty and I. About 1864, one of the gunboats had fired on the little town, sent up a white flag, and rode ashore and were met by the village fathers, who were pretty old and infirm, since all the younger ones were gone. And he [Ensign Hale] had died and he was a Mason. And he would have wanted a Masonic burial. Was there a Masonic lodge in town? And if so would you be kind enough to give him a Masonic burial?

**Simmons:** Time out.

**Barrow:** Time out. His name was Ensign Hale, H-A-L-E, from Schenectady, New York. And they buried him in Grace Church cemetery with Masonic honors. And as a courtesy, the gunboats sailed away and ceased shooting. Left in there was a simple headstone giving the bare bones of that. It was the 100th anniversary in 1964. The Masonic lodge from Schenectady, with a large number of them, came down and put up an appropriate, maybe it isn't appropriate, new and bigger, along with the old one, monument.

But it's a community that is different geographically, topographically from the rest of Louisiana, the way it's below the 31st parallel, which determines it's in south Louisiana. Most of south Louisiana is flat, much of it is swampy, much of it is subject to overflow. And towns like Lafayette and Lake Charles and New Iberia and Baton Rouge and New Orleans are typical of south Louisiana.

And this little community is in south Louisiana, but suddenly we have rolling hills. And we don't have bayou; we have fast running streams, the water running over rocks and sand, with clear water, clear, clear. And heavily forested. Some experts have said it's one of the fastest growing timber spots in America because of the rich soil, good rainfall, good temperatures. And in any case, timber is a big industry there.

I'm 55 miles south of Natchez, Mississippi, and about 40 miles north of Baton Rouge. And this was all in the old days, plantation country, and still reflects that, both in terms of these plantations that still exist and in a slower pace of life, which has changed somewhat over the years, but it is still much like it was. It's one of the earlier settlements in that part of the country. Is this of any interest?

**Simmons:** It is to me.

**Barrow:** As one knows, the lower Mississippi particularly, the lower Mississippi Valley changed hands several times during the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. And without going through all the various national ownerships of it, I will simply say that after the American Revolution in which Spain—people forget this—came in on the side of the colonists and were rewarded by taking away some of the British holdings in the lower Mississippi Valley.

So where I live was owned by Spain. And they were not so much colonizers as they were exploiters in most places like Central and South America. But here they wanted a presence; they wanted people. And they couldn't get their own to come, so they generously offered land to people who were already in the 13 colonies. And so a lot of people came to that part of Louisiana, east of the Mississippi River, below the 31st parallel in the 1790s and through the first decade of the nineteenth century.

Most of them seemed to come from North Carolina and Virginia. Of all the many migrations to Louisiana, and they came variously—I'm sort of digressing now—through such things as after the 1803 Santo Domingo uprising, the French, those that could escape, came to Louisiana, because there were French-speaking people there. Some came from France; some came from Nova Scotia, the so-called Cajuns.

People on the Eastern Seaboard many of them came down by water, around Florida and into the port of New Orleans. Some came down the Ohio River to the Mississippi and down by everything from raft to something better than a raft. But the people I'm talking about came, where I live, for the most part came overland, which in the 1790s meant they traveled through some pretty primitive country. They came over the Appalachian [Mountains], southern Blue Ridge Mountains. Most of them went to the frontier town of Nashville [Tennessee] and stayed, which I have never understood. My family stayed for almost a year. They had family, which had preceded them.

And then they next moved down there over the old Natchez Trace to Natchez. Which by the way, as an aside, is one of . . . they have something today called the Natchez Trace Highway, the Natchez Trace Commission. And it is just about complete. Interestingly, it is not complete on the two ends. It's all complete in the middle, and some of it around Jackson [Mississippi] is not complete. It's one of the prettiest roads in America.

No trucks allowed on it. Two lanes, 55 miles an hour, pristine. Just absolutely gorgeous, just winds and twists more or less following the old trail. Lots of markers will show you where the old Natchez Trace was. And there are a lot of markers to show you that there was enormous Indian activity in the lower Mississippi Valley. Many of them got moved, of course.

Anyway, they came down to Natchez on the Natchez Trace, and while the men of the parties—and these were often extended families, uncles and aunts and brothers and sisters and in-laws would come in a caravan—probably not as testing as the one that crossed the Great Plains and the deserts of the West, but testing in its own right. They didn't have bridges across these streams that they all crossed getting there you know, in the various rivers of what is now known as North Carolina and Tennessee and so forth.

And there were Indians. But the men negotiated for the lands and the Spanish really didn't negotiate at all. They got big tracts given to them, patents or land grants, however you want to call it. So they willingly put themselves under Spanish authority. My family came in 1799. They lived in a modest house while the land was being cleared. And the first house was completed somewhere between 1803 and 1806, they were starting one and finishing the other. We call that the Commandant's house, and it's still in the family. There is still lots of land with it. The fellow who owned it [was] named Ara Norwood [?].

And they built some interesting homes of the period 1800 to 1820, which was very appealing; some of them in the late 1790s like I said on my paternal side, the period of 1799 they built Oakley. They are my favorites. But their sons and daughters built the grand mansion, what one typically thinks of as the South, the big columns with Greek classical revival architecture.

They are interesting, but I don't think as interesting as the ones that were primarily reflective of West Indies architecture, with some Spanish influence: staircases going up the outside of the house, built on the ground floor, the ground floor opening into the dining room, or other similar rooms. They are very interesting and there are a number of those still standing there.

Anyway, what were some of the attractions? Was it just the free land? Probably, one of them. Were they Tories, made to feel uncomfortable after the [American] Revolution and wanted to move on? Or was this just part of the national attitude, motivation that seems to persist in early America, that there is always something else farther to the West. Let's move on.

But what they found made them enormously rich. They found, one, free land [and] two, great seasons for growing things, lots of rainfall. We average five inches a month the year round. We get anywhere from 60 to 75 inches a year and rarely have something called a drought. Rich soil. Eli Whitney had just perfected the cotton gin, which made growing cotton even more attractive, so they had a great money crop. They speak of the early South as being cotton was king, and it indeed was.

They had—this is a sensitive subject and you can't call it free, but you say it anyway—they had free labor. They all brought slaves with them, and they added to them. I had one ancestor that was the largest slaveholder in the state when the war started. He made the mistake of being, since it was done alphabetically, of having his name on the ordinance of secession quite visible. So he lost all of that, as well as his property.

But they did a remarkable job of clearing the land. That's one of the big question marks, how did they do it? But I have saved the most interesting feature for last. You could have had all those conditions: free land, free labor, great soil, great temperatures, great rainfall, great crops. You could have all of those in the middle of Alabama or Mississippi or somewhere else, and it might as well be on another planet. It had the Mississippi River.

I live on the Mississippi River, actually about six miles as the crow flies. And the steamboat had been invented, and Captain [Henry M.] Shreve, for whom Shreveport, Louisiana, is named, had improved it on the Mississippi River by taking the engine—which had to that point been below deck, below the waterline, chugging away in some sort of compartment—he put it up on the deck and did the paddle wheel, stern wheel business. Which meant that it gave a shallow draft. You were not endangering the engine if you ran aground someplace or backed up.

So that meant that you had a way of getting things to market. The cotton down to New Orleans and from there to the world market. And while in New Orleans, bring back books for your library, china for your dining room. And there was no way of expressing the lifestyle that was led, I would say was born, during 1820 and flourished from 1820 to 1860, about a 40-year period. Racehorses, racecourses. Owned their own steamboats, some of them. Finest of everything.

All educated up East. They didn't fail to do that. My great-great-grandfather went to Princeton [University] and graduated from Princeton. Some accounts start with how much of his [inaudible] with serious modes of transportation. It wasn't easy to do. One of his sisters was educated in Philadelphia [Pennsylvania]. My great-grandfather went to Trinity College.

Anyway, the most interesting thing historically that happened other than the Civil War is what is called the West Florida Rebellion. The land that the Spanish so generously gave them was part of that panhandle of Spain that was run all the way from the present state of Florida to the Mississippi River. We forget that Spanish Florida was not acquired until 1819.

Now after Spain reverted its holdings west of the river to Napoleon [Bonaparte], and he in turn sold it as the Louisiana Purchase. This becomes sort of tricky to understand, but it's a good trick question to ask even Louisianans. The Louisiana Purchase ran from the Gulf of Mexico to Canada and out to the Continental Divide, generally speaking. It didn't include Texas.

And included east of the Mississippi River, only the city of New Orleans, described in the sale as the Isle of Orleans, which meant more than just the city; it meant the area around it out for some distance. And the rest of that part of the "boot" that's Louisiana is like east of the river, south of the 31st parallel, which was the one that runs through the panhandle of Florida, was still owned by Spain. And they held a kind of tenuous hold on it.

But from 1803 until 1810, the citizens who had just benefitted from the Spanish generosity, land grants, were meeting, plotting, to become annexed to the new United States. If you looked to the west, there was U.S. territory. If you looked to the north, which is of course the 31st parallel, that's Mississippi territory. If you looked to New Orleans, and that was part of the Louisiana Purchase, U.S. territory, the capital of Louisiana.

To no avail, all their appeals, their letters to president, started off I guess was Madison. So they met to take more militant action. The first big meeting was on the property that I own. It was then called Egypt Plantation. It's all documented. And some of my ancestors were big players in that. They formed their own militia. They had a battle flag, which was a white star and blue background, antedating the one in Texas by 30 years.

They had a declaration of independence and a constitution. And then they marched on Baton Rouge, where the local Spanish authority was, over to the Spanish authority, and declared themselves the Republic of West Florida. And then the president of the United States recognized

that they had taken this bold action, and he sent governor W. C. C. Claiborne from New Orleans, governor of Louisiana, up the river to deal with the captain of the West Florida Republic.

He brought down the lone star [flag] and raised the Stars and Stripes. That's how we became citizens of the United States, which is buried in an obscure footnote in most U.S. histories. You have the colonies acquiring their independence and the Gadsden Purchase and this, that, and the other. But buried in there is the West Florida Rebellion, led 72 days, West Florida Rebellion, which seems to be an easy date to remember, December seventh, 1810. [Tape interruption]

To continue this rambling story and historical account of where I live in south Louisiana. To show you the extent of the wealth of these planters and their determination to accumulate even more by having greater access to the . . . easy access to the transportation system, in 1838 they chartered a railroad company to build a railroad from St. Francisville [Louisiana] to Woodville, Mississippi. They all had lots in common. People just [inaudible] and run.

The primary purpose was to make the people who lived . . . and this was a 25-mile long railroad. And if you get your cotton to the railroad a lot easier than over the primitive roads that they had, which were typical mud, dirt roads, almost impassable sometimes. And that was the oldest standard gauge railroad in the United States, and just folded about 12 years ago. It has been compared to the historical mine run of some sort, that somebody used.

**Simmons:** An excursion train.

**Barrow:** Yes, an excursion train. Things went along extremely well for all these folks until 1861, and they and so many others, got caught up in the big war. Have you ever thought of the war as northern aggression?

**Simmons:** No.

**Barrow:** It depends on where you are. I call it the Civil War. My great-grandfather was typical of his generation. He was a successful planter. [He] had brought the first Brahma cows to America. That is well documented in 1859. Well educated and well off financially. Raised his own company, made up of some relatives and a lot of friends, with a few yeoman farmers thrown in. And they called themselves the Rosale Guards, which is the name of the place where I live.

His wife and daughter sewed the battle flag, and it's in the Confederate museum in New Orleans now. And he offered it to the state of Louisiana. It became I Company, 11th Louisiana Infantry. And they marched off to points north and ended up in the battles of Belmont and Pea



Ridge and did about what [amounted to] nothing of any great distinction, but that was their early encounter with Mr. [Ulysses S.] Grant.

And by the time of [the Battle of] Shiloh, my great-grandfather was the regimental commander, 7th Infantry. And so he was in Shiloh, and his account is a microcosm of the whole account of the confusion of “here today, and back tomorrow, and down and back and forth” and not knowing where they were about the half of the time.

And other relatives participated. He was prisoner for a while. He also suffered bad health. He was released at one point and came home. And the area during the Civil War was kind of a no-man’s-land. No forces attempted to hold it. What would you hold it for? That was sort of typical. We forget that so many wars are won by getting on the other fellow’s lines of communication. And that was what a lot of the Civil War was all about, just turning and get[ting] on his lines of communication or whatever.

So you held key lines of communication or communication points in places like Atlanta [Georgia], Nashville, Chattanooga [Tennessee], out west, and Vicksburg [Mississippi]. And almost unheard of places, Port Hudson [Louisiana], which was under siege two days longer than Vicksburg. They say Vicksburg was the longest under siege. No, Port Hudson was under siege two days longer. They put up with the same kind of hardships, didn’t have a city or town there though, just farmland. Well that’s only about 15 miles from where I live.

So this was sort of a backwater for the war. And it wasn’t until after the war that this whole area was changed dramatically, as indeed one would expect it would with the freeing of the slaves, as far as the labor force. And most of them stayed on the plantations and became sharecroppers.

That’s how sharecroppers got to be sharecroppers. They weren’t hired to be sharecroppers. Most of them stayed in that capacity. In other words, instead of my being your slave, I’ll do the labor and you provide the land, the seeds, the mule teams, and all of the equipment, and we’ll go 50-50 when it’s all over or various arrangements like that to those who wanted to stay, and many did.

Some few acquired their own land. They had a lot of folks help them do that at that time. But the net result was that you had the disenfranchising of the right to vote, the blacks seized political power, and during one period we even had a black governor in Louisiana, the lieutenant governor and the governor.

These were ugly times. They were difficult times. Still there was a surprising amount of goodwill between the races. And when all that finally washed itself out and the Jim Crow law came into effect by reversal of the disenfranchising, some of them went the other way. As so often happens, one extreme, not led by some sort of middle ground, and goes to the other extreme.

So what happened to the South in reconstruction is bad to what happened to the blacks in Jim Crow, just simply that. It's sad; it's terrible but still a lot of goodwill. I grew up in a tightly segregated situation. They had their schools. They weren't equal, but they had schools. And they were all over the place. I grew up with blacks, black men who were mentors of mine in such field craft like trapping and hunting and poking around the woods.

These places all went into, the community went into a state of limbo, benign neglect. People didn't have the money to do the things that they had done before. The only thing they tried to do was educate their children and hold onto the land, even though their properties were deteriorating and getting smaller due to excessive taxation to take the land away from them. All of this created enormous hard feelings, but there was nothing you could do about it.

So that was where I grew up. I grew up in that situation. The tail end of a time in which a certain amount of suffering between both the black and white races as a consequence of the Civil War, but obviously more suffering on the part of the blacks than the whites. But my childhood was spent in the country, and a very happy one. A lot of blacks all around lived on the place.

I obviously never went hungry, but we did not have the things that were common to most cities and some of the rural areas. We didn't have electricity and we didn't have running water. We didn't have any mechanization in the farming. It was unheard of to have a tractor, although tractors existed in the Midwest.

**Simmons:** This was accentuated by the [Great] Depression.

**Barrow:** The Depression. As you begin to come out of it, you see the boll weevil is making his appearance and putting cotton out of business. That was almost as devastating as reconstruction. And some communities in the South switched quickly to something else and were very successful. I happen to have lived in an area where they still struggled with trying to grow cotton and poisoned the cotton to keep the boll weevils out of it.

They always did some diversified thing. Every place had some cattle, some hogs, something mostly for local consumption. And they raised other kinds of crops. But cotton was

still the crop and it was struggling. I can remember when it was three and four cents a pound. That's just unbelievable. It's hardly worth picking it.

So it was difficult times, but we were brought up right. What I mean by that, our values, our sense of morality, etc. Our church attendance, our reading. I read vociferously as a young lad to a kerosene lamp; often it was just time to go to bed when the lamp started sputtering. I knew I had about a minute before it went out.

**Simmons:** Was the family always Episcopalian?

**Barrow:** Yes. Well, they have been something else early on.

**Simmons:** Not Presbyterian.

**Barrow:** Yes, not in this area. I left that and went off to LSU, borrowed money, and [had] high hopes and lots of interest in the girls. The war, for me, was the best thing that happened. That's a regrettable thing to say, but it got me out of school where I wasn't doing so well and didn't like it. And the war was raging, and I thought I ought to be a part of it. So that's what happened.

And now, almost embarrassingly, I have an honorary degree from LSU. I have an honorary degree from Tulane [University]. I have an honorary degree from The Citadel.

**Simmons:** Let's talk about some of your public service since your retirement, your involvement with the government, your involvement with the Marine Corps institutions.

**Barrow:** Well, this is a good question, because I think some people retire from the military after 30 or 35 or 40 years and just turn it loose. Some people want to live near the flagpole, and some people want to be in between. And various Commandants have done it variously.

I think two who have done it particularly admirably have been General [Wallace M.] Greene [Jr.] and General [Leonard F.] Chapman [Jr.]. They said, "I had my time. I'm now in retirement. If you want to talk to me or if I can do something, call on me." They haven't nosed in, didn't nose in on the roles I have played later.

But when I retired, President Reagan appointed me to the special [President's] Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, which was run by Anne [L.] Armstrong, a woman politician with lots of money from Texas. She had on there people like Claire Booth Luce, [Navy Admiral Thomas H.] "Tom" Moorer, at one time [H.] Ross Perot, Henry [A.] Kissinger, Alan Greenspan, [and] Martin Anderson.

We were routinely briefed by [Director of Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) William J.] "Bill" Casey, and young Robert [M.] Gates would always accompany him. Down the hall was [Oliver L.] "Ollie" North.

That was an interesting assignment. We met once every two months. And you might say some of us who were more outspoken about what the role should be, in a sense, kind of got fired. There were a fair number of academicians on there, some of whom I haven't named. And there was a lot of dealing with issues in a kind of an academic way, a lot of talking, a lot of theorizing, a lot of what-ifs.

And I have never talked to Tom Moorer about this. I'm going to someday. Any attempt to try to get a grip on what else might be going on in Nicaragua beyond what we were told, which was pure intelligence, was kind of cut off. Now I worked with the CIA, as I have already indicated, in a paramilitary capacity, and I know that wherever there is some problem, particularly if it's a Communist regime that can be overthrown, they are there to assist those who want to do it. That's a given. And, of course, from earlier days in JCS, I knew these things were being done.

But I have often thought that if somebody had said I want Tom Moorer and Bob Barrow, and a few old hands like that, to dig into what's going on in Nicaragua, we might have uncovered some of it. Maybe. That's just an aside.

Anyway, I did that for a couple of years, and they became like it was routine, but I think really Martin Anderson, Bob Barrow, Tom Moorer, and a couple of others, I'd have to think who they were. Ross Perot quit, which was his way of answering something if he was not happy about it. We got to see the president two or three times, but most of it was filtered through Anne Armstrong.

Then I was . . .

**Simmons:** What I think I hear you saying is that this was an honorific position, and they really didn't want or expect substantive . . .

**Barrow:** Though they like to pretend it wasn't. They had a little staff that worked hard to make everything come together for the meetings. They had some people that helped prepare her agenda, and there was a lot of presiding in an official, this is important sort of way, but we were not given the meat of things, by no means.

Some would disagree with me. Some of these professors were real experts in things that relate to arms control and nuclear weaponry and stuff. There were a couple of those, I will tell you; they were very highly respected. Maybe in some of those areas, they made a contribution.

**Simmons:** As I recall, when the board was trimmed back, it got quite a bit of public attention and news attention.

**Barrow:** It's been coming and going through the years. Some presidents ignored them. Jimmy Carter threw it out altogether. I don't even know how it stands now. I don't think there is such an animal. [Retired Navy Admiral William J.] "Bill" Crowe [Jr.] was to have headed it at one point. Maybe he did.

And then that was right after I retired, and then about three or four years later, when the president appointed a [President's] Blue Ribbon Commission on Defense [Management] matters, the so-called Packard Commission, focusing in largely on procurement and the whole array of things related to things of war. Not so much people, although leadership was a subset of all this, management, whatever you want to call it. Organization. The organization, the procedure, everything else related to how you go from conception of an idea, to R&D [research and development], and on through the procurement cycle.

So I served on that thing with [R. James] "Jim" Woolsey [Jr.], [William J.] "Bill" Perry, [retired Navy Admiral Bobby R.] "Bob" Inman, Bob Long [?], [and] a few folks like that. But as with so many presidential commissions, not much happened to it. We met faithfully every other month for about a year. Nothing seemed to happen after we left vis-à-vis the appropriate recommendations. [Inaudible]

Meanwhile, I have spent 10 years on the board of the Center for Naval Analyses. And I accepted that primarily—I hate to admit this—I'm back to where I started talking about earlier about Commandants in retirement. I had a thirst for wanting to be kept informed and that was an excellent way to do it, because we've met four times a year. And sometimes one or two other times a year.

And I headed what we call the Marine Corps tactical committee, which is just a name. It meant that all the Marine business kind I was exposed to and able to make suggestions, because someone from Naval Analyses does some work on its own initiative. They see some area in either of the Services that they think might bear fruit if they could get their hands in there and do a little analytical work or whatever, study.

I think I made a contribution to the Center for Naval Analyses, because of my background and knowledge. They will tell you that. And I still serve on one of the committees, which means in this instance, I don't have to be a member of the board. I'm retired 10 years. It is

an interesting board. [James R.] “Jim” Schlesinger was on it once; [Alexander M.] “Al” Haig [Jr.] was on it [and] Jim Woolsey, Bob Inman, Bob Long, Bob Barrow.

And so I was kept abreast of a lot of things in the Marine Corps through the Center for Naval Analyses, and the Marines posted generals who would come over and meet with my tactical committee on some of the things that you were dealing with, that they were studying. Get briefed back and forth, and they would give talks to the whole Center for Naval Analyses Board.

Now, I must confess that I have been—I don’t want to be extremely unfair to myself—a meddler in things Marine Corps. If I was just going to say it nicer, I would say I was interested. But I’ve seen any number of things that I thought were wrong, and I said so. And I don’t know that I’m . . . all that embarrasses me a little bit.

I don’t know that it’s all that bad, because whoever is Commandant, whomever I’m talking to can listen or not listen and certainly not have to do anything that I might be suggesting needs [to be] done because of what I have said. An example, not through my former dependent, my son, who was in Desert Storm but through other sources, I learned that the foxhole strength on the eve of Desert Storm for the Marine Corps was not as advertised, in other words what it ought to be.

For the benefit of whomever listens to this or reads it, you have a table of organization strength, which might just be arbitrarily for a rifle company 190, 185, whatever it is. And then there is an evitable drawdown from that; some of which you just don’t have the people assigned. Some of it is that they have been given other things to do, reassigned, but still carried on your roll. So you may have an actual field strength of 180, an actual strength of 170. They haven’t given you the extra 10. But a real strength, which means now foxhole strength, of 120. Where is this other 50?

Well, I don’t know whether they knew. Because I was interested in the Marine Corps or whatever, I had a lot of people write to me during Desert Storm, young officers. And I treated them, I think, correctly. I didn’t solicit any of it. I didn’t give them a big sympathetic ear. But this was one of the subjects I got alerted to is that these rifle companies were going out there with way less than what their strength indicated.

And so when I brought it to the attention of Headquarters that maybe they had a problem that had some local explanation, and that needed correction—the usual palace guard sort of thing. Where are my extra people? Well, they thought they needed people up the rear at security,

so they took off a bunch of them. Instead of taking the rifle company as a whole, they took 10 people out of each rifle company to a provisional company in the rear, a provisional whatever. I'm kind of being hypothetical, but I know from experience I'm not too far off.

Plus, they still have "cats and dogs" that were left in [MCB] Camp Pendleton [California] with broken legs and about to [be] discharged, that for a myriad of reasons didn't make the trip. And you can go off on this detail and off on that detail.

And the then-Assistant Commandant (I chose to go to him) I said, "You know it would be interesting for you to find out what your real rifle company strength if they are going to do a lot of the fighting out there, what the hell it really is, because I'm getting some unofficial chatter that suggests to me that some of it is down in the unacceptable range." "That's not what our readiness shows, general." You know, "Take off."

I said, "Never mind what the readiness shows. We're not talking about what the strength is on the rolls. We're talking about what the strength is in the foxholes, which has given birth to this term, 'foxhole strength'." I said, "It's both a peacetime and wartime thing."

And so finally I persuaded him to call, maybe send a message, out to the two division commanders that were there. I don't know what he asked, and I don't know what they said, but I was told that there was nothing to my information. That everything was just fine, which may be another way of saying, "Shut up, we don't want this embarrassment to come out."

Now we are talking at a time when we are supposed to be warriors. Everybody has got everything he needs. The question is still unanswered. And the only way you get the answer is to get a roster of everybody out of the rifle company in Desert Storm and write to them. "Dear Major So-and-so," or whatever he might be now, a civilian. "What? When D-Day, H-Hour, [came], how many people did you have in your company?" That would be an interesting project for somebody.

And they might have been lucky, because they had the kind of limited opposition they had. You know when I landed in Korea, I had a rifle company plus. The Marine Corps was in a state of poverty as far as people were concerned, 72,000, but we did manage to get our act together. And that week before we sailed, people were coming in from posts and stations and the reserves coming in. And I had two first sergeants. I had two company gunnery sergeants.

And I had all the extra people; I could take casualties. I had 210 people. I think my T/O [table of organization] was something less than that anyway. And that's why we took casualties,

and you kept right on. You didn't say, "Well I need some replacements." When you take an outfit that's way down and they take a few casualties, they become ineffective.

Anyway, that's probably the most dramatic example of my meddling. But I did some of that. I'm doing less of it now. I meddled in the selection of the Commandant, only in that I was invited twice to participate in that decision. What did I have to say about it? What did I think? And I did not choose to decline. I did not choose to say, "I don't want to get involved." I decided to involve myself, once successfully—success being considered by me to be my choice.

In summary of all of this, I have had a happy retirement. I cannot turn the Marine Corps loose. I have twin daughters that have been married to Marine officers. They are both out now, retired. I have a son that's a Marine. I still go to Quantico to talk. I still just love it and think about it a lot. But I'm also happy in all the other things I do.

**Simmons:** That's probably a good note to end this session.

End of SESSION XIX



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION  
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW  
APPENDIX

Interviewee: General Robert H. Barrow  
Interviewer: Major David White  
Date: 2 July 1978

**White:** Mr. Frank [?] indicated that he would like to have this part of their oral history collection to go along with the Vietnam interview and also others that they might organize at a later time. But I would like just to concentrate on that [U.S.] Naval Group China this afternoon.

General Barrow, I have made a rough historical sketch as best I can determine from the official records. All these are declassified now. This is my tracking of you from the time you got there, until the end of the war in Unit II of Naval Group China. And this is a roster of the Marine Corps personnel who were in Unit II, as best I can determine.

The asterisk that I have beside the names are those officers or enlisted men who are still on the retired roster, so I got the addresses and might be able to track them down later on. So I'd like to give this to you. These are copies; I have others.

And there are also some pictures that came out of the naval files. You might or might not recognize them.

This is all from the official files that I could find. They are sketchy, which is one of the reasons I wanted to talk with you this afternoon. Let me put these pictures here.

Those pictures came from the first camp, which I believe was in Hoai Nhon Province at Ninh Hoa [Vietnam]. And I note I don't believe, as best I can determine when you arrived there, that the camp was still located there. I believe that area was later overrun by Japanese and was it moved either south or west, I'm not certain?

**Barrow:** Are you focusing in on Unit II?

**White:** Yes, sir, I am, for one very good reason. And Congolante [?] [retired Navy Vice Admiral Milton E.] Miles published posthumously in 1967; he indicated Unit II was perhaps the most active and one of the most successful of the naval units, primarily because it not only operated in terms of training Chinese personnel in guerrilla warfare, but it sent field units out to supervise

and also lead some of these guerrilla operations. So it was one of the more successful units, and that's why I'm zeroing in on Unit II.

Of course now-General [James M.] Masters organized Unit I, but it exclusively dealt with training. Unit II was different in that field units did go out and operate with the Chinese troops, which was very different from Unit I and in a way was a different kind of success story.

The first question I would like to ask is a lot of [U.S.] Army, Coast Guard, naval, and Marine Corps personnel were assigned to the SACO [Sino-American Cooperative Organization], to the Naval Group China. How was it that you were assigned there as a second lieutenant?

**Barrow:** Well, I was at [MCB] Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, assigned to the 55th Replacement Battalion, a replacement battalion. Now let me say here at the outset that you have caused me to have to go back in my memory 35 years and seek to recall details, events, names, [and] places that are not fresh in my memory for the simple reason that I have had no reason to reflect on those kinds of things.

And secondly, unlike most wars, where afterward you have had friends that you would contact, that keeps it fresh because you had someone to talk to about it. All I'm saying is that while there were Marines in SACO in China, we were few in number and scattered, and most of them were reserves who got out after the war. And so for all of these years, I have really had no one to engage in bull sessions, critiques, or what have you of how it was, when.

**White:** I know this is probably unfair.

**Barrow:** So I'm only saying this because to apologize in advance if you will. My reconstruction of things for you might be less than complete. But if you are willing to put up with me scratching my head and trying to recollect [or] if I have failing sometimes, then let's just go on with it.

**White:** Well, thank you. I know that some years have passed. The kinds of questions and this is the kind of material I think is valuable in the oral history program, and trying to get at nuances and feelings. And you can normally reconstruct the factual information from the secondary sources and the primary sources that are available.

**Barrow:** But anyway, I was in the 55th Replacement Battalion, down at Camp Lejeune. It was called tent city, currently Camp Geiger, where we were trained in a way very much akin to what was later infantry training as we know it today. It was to take Marines out of the troop training or from the barracks and give them the very high-tempo course of instruction in basic infantry skills.

[This was] preparatory for going overseas to be replacements, as the name implies, for units that were suffering casualties after these island campaigns. It was never intended that you would go over as a platoon and replace a platoon or anything like that, as individual replacements, but you were organized as platoons down at Camp Lejeune.

And interestingly enough, I had a BAR [Browning automatic rifle] platoon. That's the only place you would ever find a BAR platoon. It was there for consolidating and centralized training in BAR, to become more skilled in the BAR. So everybody in the platoon had a BAR, but obviously when they got overseas, they were going to be scattered. There were BARs in various squads and units.

So when I was down there engaged in that, in I believe it was early 1944, I was a regular officer, having earned my commission at Quantico. They had a program there, having earned my regular commission. And I only mention that because I was picked to be a volunteer for the China duty. And I think that my superiors, one of whom was [Lieutenant] Colonel [Robert D.] Taplett, to replace the battalion commander. I think there was some thought that this duty would be so unusual and attractive to the infantry that maybe a regular should be offered the opportunity to volunteer for it. I wasn't picked for any Chinese language skills or any prior knowledge of China. And I wasn't picked because my size was comparable with the average Chinese, because it ain't.

I reckon I was picked because somebody thought, "Well, he's a regular officer, and maybe he should have this kind of unusual experience." In any case, I was volunteered for China duty. But it was far more uncertain in a sense about being in a replacement outfit, as to where you were going to go and who you were going to replace; you name it.

And there was a great deal of mystery and appeal about China. And we had heard about China Marines and things in China. So it wasn't too difficult for me to say, "Yeah, I'll go to China," without any knowledge or understanding of what the duty was all about. So I volunteered to go to China. That's all I knew.

Now I left Camp Lejeune came to Washington [DC], where I waited six weeks for transportation. That was the big hang-up. After I got to Washington, I learned over at the Navy side of the house, not the Marine Corps, over at OpNav [Office of the Chief of Naval Operations] that there was an organization in China called SACO, Sino-American Cooperative Organization, formed in previous years as I recall, by an agreement signed by the then-secretary

of the Navy and some Chinese counterpart, with the blessing of [Chinese Generalissimo] Chiang Kai-shek and President [Franklin D.] Roosevelt, to be largely a Navy-dominated organization, hence Admiral Miles was in charge.

You might say why Navy, when you are talking about the interior of China? You perhaps already know this, but just to give you a little background, in case you don't. The Navy was interested in the weather that emanated from the China landmass. They reckoned that if they could get weather reports out of mainland China that they would have some better ability to forecast the weather in the Pacific.

**White:** For the Pacific operations.

**Barrow:** Yes. And the secondary requirement of the Navy, they had always been the dominant Service in China prewar. And that door had been closed on them. Obviously, no ships were operating out of Chinese ports. So this was a way, an attempt, of keeping their foot in the door; it wasn't quite closed. So that when the war ended, they would have had a Navy presence in the scheme of things in China [and] the opportunity that they could be reintroduced to the China scene.

And so the Chinese, in turn, were willing to cooperate with the weather station business, but they wanted something in return. And the something in return was here and there, throughout the country there were these guerrilla forces or other kinds of irregular forces. And they varied as to how well organized they were and how much motivation they had and so forth.

They said if you will help equip and arm and supply some of these irregular forces, we will do our part [to] put in your weather stations in places where it will be reasonably secure, and they otherwise wouldn't get them there if we didn't proceed to agree to put them there.

When they did that, the Navy said guerrilla warfare is better, looked to the Marine Corps to provide some of the leadership and be some of the American members of the team that would engage in the supplies, shipping, arming, etc., of the Chinese irregulars and guerrillas.

So the Marines got called in to do some of that. The Navy kept some of it for themselves. And they even brought in some Coast Guard and Army, usually in very specialized roles. For example, I remember an Army Signal Corps officer . . .

**White:** There were some Corps of Engineer types too.

**Barrow:** . . . brought in because someone had the idea that communications were so poor that we might have to depend on carrier pigeons, and he was a carrier pigeon expert. And indeed he

flew the “Hump” [the eastern end of the Himalayan Mountains] and went to China as a member of SACO with a whole couple of crates of carrier pigeons. How much he used them there, I don’t know. I would say as an aside, I’m sure he guarded them carefully, because they were among other things, a delicacy.

So there were these odd folks from other Services. Within the Navy Service, there were two or three types that lent themselves nicely to being included in the guerrilla kinds of things. One, corpsmen. You need corpsmen. They had corpsmen. And they had Seabees [naval mobile construction battalions (CBs)], because guerrillas used explosives to tear up things, and Seabees not only deal with things being destroyed, they rebuild it.

And that was a personal experience of mine. I had Seabees working for me, who were experts in demolition for example, in civilian life. They were brought in the Navy and from civilian life to Navy and became chief petty officers. So there was an odd mixture of folks.

And I learned all this here in Washington. I was going to go over there and work with the Chinese guerrillas. And I will never forget—maybe this is more than you are interested in—this man in Washington, the commander of the Navy, talking to me, a young lieutenant, eager to do just about anything. He looked across the desk at me and his eyes squinted a little bit, and he said, “Lieutenant, are you prepared to live in caves and diet on fish heads and rice?”

Well in retrospect that’s kind of ridiculous. He didn’t know any more about the environment than I did. But being naive and enthusiastic, I responded resoundingly “Yes, sir!” I really didn’t know what we were actually getting into beyond the fact that we were going to China and work[ing] for Chinese guerrillas. And I got no training in the six weeks I was in Washington, and I doubt that there was any kind of training that was available. Nobody gave me any little brief language preparation or environmental studies or anything.

And the reason why I was there for six weeks was transportation. If you stop and think about it, in early 1944, what the condition was in terms of where the war was at that point, getting into China was not a simple, easy task. They didn’t have air travel in those days like they have now. It was very sketchy. So you had to wait for those special arrangements.

**White:** What route did you take over?

**Barrow:** Islands. Transportation was set up, all of it very quietly because there was great security on troop movement. I went to Norfolk, Virginia, and boarded the [USS] *General A. E. Anderson* [AP 111], one of those large transports manned by the what you call the Military

Sealift Command now. You know what I'm talking about. They are like the Navy, the quasi-Navy. The Merchant Marines with a Navy commission.

So we embarked on the *A. E. Anderson*, and there were three Marine officers in the particular group I was in. Several went before and after I did and by various means. And we had a great many soldiers on that ship and officers who were going to the China-Burma-India theater.

And we left Norfolk, and it took us 45 days to get to Bombay, India. We went down through the Panama Canal, way south, and went through Cook Strait between North and South Islands, New Zealand, touched at Melbourne, Australia, for less than 24 hours. Nobody could get off the ship, and then [we] went south again through the Tasmanian [Tasman] Sea and around through the Indian Ocean, all the while at high speed, as high as we could go, and a zigzag course. So everybody was wearing lifejackets. There were Japanese submarines dragging the Pacific, and we traveled alone, unescorted, on a zigzag course, high speed, night light discipline. Everybody wore lifejackets, and crowded as hell, and we did that for 45 days.

We got to Bombay, India. Stayed only long enough to get transportation, about a day as I remember. And I remember that very well, because we caught an old British-style train, in which you enter your compartment from outside, not an aisle, and walk straight in and out. Wooden cars, long, narrow-gauge tracks. And it took us a week to go from Bombay to Calcutta [Kolkata, India].

And we stopped whenever another train came through. [Inaudible] There were only a handful of us on there. And we would get these wild animals off the tracks and all kinds of stuff. [Inaudible]

And from Calcutta we went up to . . . aw, it looks as though my memory doesn't serve me very well. We went up to an airfield, and I flew the Hump in an either [Curtiss] C-46 [Commando] or [Douglas] C-47 [Skytrain].

**White:** Into Kunming [China]?

**Barrow:** Into Kunming. And I flew with a Chinese copilot and an Australian pilot. And I guess we flew a very strange route, because we had to avoid Japanese fighter threats from the south, down toward Burma. So we flew the Hump, kind of a strange thing flying at maximum altitude, and the plane would be flying and you could look out and look up and still see mountains out there above you. And so you had to depend on good weather and a whole lot of things.

Anyway, we landed in Kunming, and stayed there a couple of days. And then were flown

into a place called Shidon [?]. And someone met us there in vehicles, and we went to one of these camps that they had that were then base camps for Naval Group II. And we stayed there for some length of time, I've forgotten, and then we started walking.

And we walked out of that camp, which was Camp Two; there were various columns [of the Chinese Commando Army].

**White:** You went with the . . .

**Barrow:** I went first with 4th Column.

**White:** And then with the 2d Column later.

**Barrow:** And I would have to . . . I don't know where this came from. It's just out of the unit war diaries.

**White:** This is from the war diaries. There was normally a monthly report in Unit II war diaries. And it comes from the personnel section of the war diaries. The entries, as you notice, are rather brief and sketchy.

**Barrow:** Yes, it is, and I'm trying to reconstruct in my own mind here now. I went first, not to the 4th Column. I went down to Nanning [China] temporarily to Naval Unit V, down there, near the Vietnamese border. The Indo-China border it was called then.

**White:** How close to the border was that? Was that a few miles?

**Barrow:** Well, Nanning is what, I'm guessing that Nanning is 30 or 40 [or] 50 miles to the border.

**White:** Was there another camp closer to Tatonkin Province[?] than the Nanning Camp?

**Barrow:** No.

**White:** The whole operation would have been out of the Nanning Camp.

**Barrow:** And then I went back north, and worked my way out to the 4th Column with [Theodore R.] "Ted" Cathey. We went over a couple of interesting operations there.

**White:** What sort of things did you do?

**Barrow:** Well an example would be a village that was under quasi-Japanese control, a town if you will, run by a Chinese puppet for the Japanese, who was himself a target for our forces to eliminate, either capture him or kill him. And to generally discredit the Japanese capability to maintain control of that area. The kind of things relative to cause forces to deploy, disrupt command arrangements, etc.

So I remember on this particular little operation we took perhaps 200 guerrillas and the

first couple days moved by day, and then we moved by night. The last night we were on the outskirts of this town, and we broke up into small groups of well planned [?]. You go to this building, you go to that building, and so forth. And then sprung a surprise attack on the commander in the village.

And it was successful. I'll never forget it. We did several of these things. That night it was cold as hell. There was snow on the ground. And we had been traveling these narrow, rice paddy levees, which are also footpaths sometimes no more than a foot, 18 inches wide. And to do that at night requires some skill. And I slipped and fell in the rice paddy, which in itself wouldn't be so bad, but I fell into one of these smaller, sealed off areas where they had put all of their night soil—an area of about the size of three bathtubs and about each [had] a full bathtub of night soil. And I fell completely into it. That has to be one of the most ghastly experiences I ever had.

Fortunately, we were not too far from the farmhouse that we were going to. And when we got there, I of course didn't have much company around me, because I smelled to high heaven, to say the least. But we got there, I took off all my clothes down to nothing, and they had to pull out a wooden tub in front of a charcoal grazer [and] put some hot water in it. I bathed. The farmer's wife [inaudible] went out and washed my clothes for me. Then they had to dry, and I put them on.

All of this at a time when we were getting ready to spring this operation. If something had happened, I would have been in a hell of a fix. I would have had to run into the night without clothes on or whatever I could get to put around me.

Anyway, that was the kind of thing we did. The Americans—you earlier said something about the Americans training. It's true that we trained, but to some extent we also were trained. That is, the Chinese needed skills, particularly those who hadn't served in any army, which was the case with most of these, the basic skills of how to handle weapons and basic tactics and how to employ them.

But then there were things like field crafts. How to get along in the country and how to move and things like that, that we had to learn. So it was a mutual learning experience. I learned an awful lot about, and still to this day have a high respect for, the capability of the Chinese, the civilian farmer if you will, which was about 88 percent of the population (the coolie if you will, the peasant if you will), to endure all kinds of adversities and to do so much under those adversities.



I'm speaking of, for example, the movement of supplies. That is why in Vietnam and even in Korea, I felt that I had a better understanding of what the Oriental capability was to move things at night, than anybody else, because I saw them do it. And they can mass thousands of people. And we think you have to move things by truck, train, boat, and rail. If you get thousands of coolies, each carrying 80 or 100 pounds, you can move enormous amounts of things, which is what was done in Vietnam. It was done in Korea.

**White:** Well I'm glad you brought up that Vietnam thing. I wanted to ask you in what other ways did you, when you were a commander in Vietnam, did you often look back to that SACO experience and remember things? The transportation and that sort of thing. Any other thing that you recall that you looked back on, reflected upon from your experience in China that might have served you well in Vietnam?

**Barrow:** That's the one that stands out. My perception, if I may say so, my very accurate perception of the individual capabilities, the capabilities of the individual Chinese, or you could almost say any Oriental, to do things. And what that capability is like when it is a collective one or when somebody has marshaled it all altogether. And the obedience with which they did things, I'll make an aside here.

When we, particularly when I was later on over there with Column 2, as you mentioned, we were on the move almost constantly. And in our train, if you will, somewhere in the vicinity of 80–120 coolie loads of ammunition, medical supplies, [and] some weapons for replacements. And it didn't bother us in the slightest if somebody came dashing in to say that the Japanese have mined where you are, and they're on the way, and they are just 15 miles down the road.

Our people could assemble whatever number were required, 100 let us say coolies, to carry this package with bamboo woven baskets about 18 inches wide, 18 inches—well they were almost cube shaped—18 inches wide to the top and about two feet deep or a little more. They varied, but that's kind of a typical one.

And you put one of these on each end of a yo-yo post, and it was a basket affair, that the top of the basket fit down completely over the bottom of a basket. You've seen those kinds of things, haven't you? The top and the bottom were the same size; one just fit over the other. Do you follow me?

**White:** There was a picture in the records of General Di Lee [?] demonstrating to the SACO personnel how do you use a setup like that.

**Barrow:** Yeah. All right, you could put . . . it depends on what you put in it, but you could put as much as 50 pounds in one of those baskets. And they carried two of them. So you would have a coolie carrying 100 pounds. They wouldn't have anything else. In an emergency, foot soldiers or guerrillas carried things. But these are impressed if you will, pressed into service civilians. Most of them accepted it willingly as their contribution to the war, and some I suppose were disgruntled, but I never saw so much of that.

They could take that load in a train, so you could be one of our guerrillas in the lead, and one bringing up the rear, and that would be about all. The rest of us would kind of move independently. And they would move 25 or 30 miles with only an occasional momentary stop to drink a little tea or a little water. And they would move at a rate of about 3 miles an hour, a little faster than we like to walk when we are doing a typical Marine walk, which is 2.5 [?], Marine march.

That little trotting gait that they have, which is a yo-yo pole bouncing up, and if [inaudible], but the physics proposition you might study. I don't understand it, but apparently the yo-yo pole being flexible and the way they used it [and] the way they walked with it, the weight was not constant or it shifted. They were swaying the pole up and down, so that the weight could go kind of up, and it would be imposed on your shoulder at one point, and it came down, and it kind of imposed on it at another. So you never had that constant weight like you have with one of our packs on your back or some other kind of arrangement.

**White:** Much easier to handle.

**Barrow:** It's much easier to handle. Not for you or for me, unfamiliar with it, but someone who grew up [with it]. They start them at age two or three carrying yo-yo poles with an appropriate kind of weight on it. That's just as natural to them as you putting on shoes in the morning.

So a coolie train could move say 100 coolies, each carrying 100 pounds, comes out to, what is that? Ten thousand pounds, isn't it?

**White:** A tremendous amount?

**Barrow:** Huh, isn't that what it is?

**White:** A tremendous amount of weight to carry.

**Barrow:** Or five tons. Is that what it is? That's 100 times 100?

**White:** A thousand pounds; that's half a ton.

**Barrow:** No, 100 times 100.

**White:** Ten thousand. [Interruption in the recording for a telephone call.]

General Barrow, we have run a little bit over time, and I would like to perhaps see you again soon. But let me ask you to make a few final comments for now.

**Barrow:** Well let's just continue with that one point before we were interrupted. One of the most impressive things . . . we were doing our arithmetic somewhat poorly; 100 times 100 is 10,000. So 100 coolies, carrying 100 pounds each can carry the equivalent of five tons.

**White:** History majors always have trouble with math.

**Barrow:** Yes. Well I'm a history major too as a matter of fact. And 100 coolies is about as easy to get as you going out and buying a bag of potato chips in China. You just don't realize how enormous the population is, and it's a working population. They are not white-collar folks. In those days, I mean everybody was practically a coolie. There were a few warlords and a few rich folks and like that.

But you get a workforce on short notice of almost any type. You asked me how this related to my service and experience in Korea and Vietnam. I knew that if they wanted to marshal 100,000 or 50,000 and send them in waves, organized as they can, that they can move as much supplies as we can move, quicker, because we have to first in an undeveloped country build the roads and go through all the business of trucks. And the trucks breaking down or getting ambushed. Not so with them. They have enormous capabilities to backpack things in the Orient to save time.

So it never surprised me to see the Chinese show up in North Vietnam under the adversities of weather and long distances that they traveled with a war-making capability; all have been introduced on the ground unmotorized. And it didn't surprise me in Vietnam, that despite our efforts to choke off logistics or close or cut it off every time it stuck itself in country, and all the people and the things they did before they married up the troops with the gear.

People would say, how did they get all that stuff in there? It didn't surprise me. I knew how they got it there. It's well within their capabilities.

That's probably a good note to end on, because that's one of those lessons learned that I'll carry with me the rest of my life. Not only that, but those same coolies would go 25 or 30 miles and get there in less than 10 hours and deliver their load, turn right around, and walk back home. Only once in a while did I ever see any of them spend the night and go back the next day.

I'll tell you my friend, I have a high regard for those folks. And I would be struggling, with nothing but my weapon, and the few things that were hung on me that didn't weigh much at all, to keep up, and I was a youngster. I shouldn't say struggling. I did rather well. And I might add I got to be pretty comfortable walking through mountains and in all kinds of unusual situations.

And when you're in China, you don't measure distances by linear distance. You measure it by the difficulty in negotiating that distance. Therefore if you take a given two points, A and B, if it's on flat ground, in the springtime, and the weather is good, it's a much shorter distance than A and B carrying through the mountains, where it is more difficult to walk. Or if you were carrying in the summertime, where the heat makes your travel a little more difficult, you follow me?

**White:** Yes.

**Barrow:** They measure things that would measure . . . it would be confusing, at least in the parts of China I was in. That's not a bad way to look at it. You don't say it's 10 miles from A to B. If it's a hot day, it may be the equivalent of 12 miles.

**White:** The time is much more important.

**Barrow:** The time is much more important and the difficulty in negotiating. Anyway, those rascals were remarkable. And these are the kinds of things I would particularly like to draw on, because they are really more in my memory than the dates of when we did various things. I could talk to at great length about how we ate and how we slept at night, the kind of intelligence we had, [and] the kind of hospitality we had from the natives there.

We went into places where they had never seen an Occidental [Westerner] before, if they had, maybe a missionary. And it was a remarkable experience for a young officer. It gave me, a . . . particularly when I was with Column 2, I was in charge. And the dates you have here, this shows that I was out there five or six months before the war let up. I had gotten around to telling people it was about eight months. [Inaudible] But in any case, we were six, seven, eight. I was out there without any contacts. It says here, lost radio contact. Hell, I started out without radio contact, because I didn't have a radio with me. And I relieved Bob Bird [?] there in early April of '45. I really sort [of] thought it was earlier than that. He took the radio with him, which wasn't working very well, and I had nothing.

I had a radio operator, and he was very useful as an armorer, keeping the weapons up. He

was the kind of fellow who was mechanically minded. A fellow from Joppa [?], Missouri, named Joe Hesser [?]. He's still alive. He still keeps in touch with me.

But I was in charge of that five-man, American team working with the Chinese. We probably did as much in as interesting a place as anywhere else in China, operating on the [inaudible]. After the 14th Air Force and the submarines began to make the shipping of things to the East China Sea pretty difficult. They resupplied their fleet down in Malaysia and China and all of those places. And people think that was done largely by ship [inaudible].

People don't realize that they went on the offensive in 1944 in China to extend control to be part of from Hangzhou [China] to Canton [China], which a railroad runs through, and part of it has a road there and water traffic capabilities. And they wanted that corridor to resupply their folks down in Southeast Asia without being dependent on water supplies, which we subsequently interdicted.

So it was against that LOC [line of communication] that we were conducting most of our operations. And I'm getting ahead of myself, because we don't have that much time. We'll have to come back. The point is as a young officer being out there conducting independent kind of operations, without any direction. I had no radio, so I didn't get any data [or] weekly or monthly instructions as to what I was to do next. It was largely my initiative plus what kind of cooperation I could get from my Chinese counterparts, which in itself was a learning experience how one does that.

And so in a sense, it contributed rather substantially to my development as a Marine officer. No other person I can think of even out there, there weren't many. You had that opportunity to be that responsible in terms of the mission to be performed, in a large area to be covered and the wherewithal to do it.

Well we'll talk about that more, next time.

**White:** Well thank you very much for your time this afternoon. I look forward to talking with you again, perhaps in August. Thank you so much for talking about Naval Group China today.

**Barrow:** Thank you.

End of interview



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