

# ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT

**Major General Lawson H.M. Sanderson**

**U. S. Marine Corps (Retired)**



**Major Lloyd E. Tatem USMC**

**Interviewer**

**HISTORY AND MUSEUMS DIVISION**

**Headquarters, U. S. Marine Corps**

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FOREWORD

This typescript, the transcribed memoir of Major General Lawson H. M. Sanderson, USMC (Retired) results from a series of tape-recorded interviews conducted with him at his home in Coronado, California during 14 and 18 July 1969 for the Marine Corps Oral History Program. As one facet of the Marine Corps historical collection effort, this program obtains, by means of tape-recorded interviews, primary source material to augment documentary evidence.

Oral History is essentially spoken history, the oral recall of eyewitness impressions and observations recorded accurately on tape in the course of an interview conducted by an historian or an individual employing historical methodology and, possibly, the techniques of a journalist. The final product is a verbatim transcript containing historically valuable personal narratives relating to noteworthy professional experiences and observations from active duty, reserve, and retired distinguished Marines.

General Sanderson has read the transcript and made only minor corrections and emendations. The reader is asked to bear in mind, therefore, that he is reading a transcript of the spoken rather than the written word. General Sanderson has placed a restriction of OPEN on the use of both his interview tapes and transcripts. This means that a potential user may read the transcript or audit the recording upon presentation of appropriate credentials.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. H. Simmons", is positioned above the typed name.

E. H. SIMMONS

Brigadier General, U. S. Marine Corps (Retired)  
Director of Marine Corps History and Museums

Signed:  
30 January 1976

MAJOR GENERAL LAWSON H. M. SANDERSON, USMC (RETIRED)

Major General Lawson H. M. Sanderson, (retired), served as Deputy Commander of Air, Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic and Second Marine Aircraft Wing, prior to his retirement on December 1, 1951.

During World War II, General Sanderson served as Operations Officer of the First Marine Aircraft Wing from October to December, 1942 on Guadalcanal, and was Commanding General of the Fourth Marine Aircraft Wing in the Marshalls-Gilberts Area from May, 1945 to March, 1946.

For his outstanding services as Operations Officer of the First Marine Aircraft Wing on Guadalcanal, he was awarded the Legion of Merit. His citation reads in part, "...Charged with the coordination, supervision and tactical employment of all Army, Navy and Marine Corps aircraft based at Guadalcanal, Colonel Sanderson performed these important duties efficiently, courageously and with complete disregard for his own personal safety.

"His inspiring devotion to the accomplishment of a vital task in the face of repeated enemy bombing and naval gunfire was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

General Sanderson was born on July 22, 1895, in Shelton, Washington. After attending the University of Montana at Missoula, he enlisted in the Marine Corps on September 19, 1917. Upon winning his wings as a Naval Aviator, he was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps on January 20, 1919.

He was transferred overseas in March, 1919, where he joined Squadron "E" attached to the First Provisional Brigade Marines at Port-au-Prince, Haiti. He returned to the United States in February, 1920, for duty and instruction at the Officers' Training School, Quantico, Virginia.

He was again ordered overseas in April, 1922, rejoining the First Brigade Marines in Haiti. After completing a one year tour with the Brigade, he was ordered to the Navy Department in Washington for duty with the Bureau of Aeronautics. In October of the same year he was assigned to the Company Officers' Course, Marine Corps Schools, Quantico, Virginia, as a student.

He went to foreign shore duty with the Second Brigade Marines in Nicaragua in December, 1928, as Squadron Commander of Observation Squadron 7M, returning to Quantico two years later in 1930. At Quantico he was attached to Aircraft Squadron, East Coast Expeditionary Force, and attended the

Company Officers' Course at the Marine Corps Schools.

He was assigned as a student at the Air Corps Tactical School, Maxwell Field, Montgomery, Alabama, in August, 1934, and upon graduation in June of the following year returned to Quantico for duty at the Air Base. He attended the Senior Course, Marine Corps Schools, and upon completion of his studies went to the West Coast for duty with Aviation at the Marine Corps Base, San Diego, California. In January, 1937, he was named Squadron Commander of Fighter Squadron 4M.

He returned to the East Coast in July, 1938, where he was stationed at Quantico, Virginia, as Squadron Commander, Aircraft One of the First Marine Brigade. In June, 1939, he was named Operations Officer of the First Marine Air Group and in July, 1941, became Wing Operations Officer of the First Marine Air Wing.

Following this Country's entry into World War II, he departed with the Air Wing for the West Coast and in September, 1942, sailed for Guadalcanal. As Operations Officer of the First Marine Air Wing on Guadalcanal from October through December, 1942, he was awarded the Legion of Merit for his outstanding services.

He was appointed Commanding Officer of Marine Air Group 11, based on New Hebrides, in January, 1943, where he remained until March when he returned to the States to become Group Commander of Marine Base Defense Aircraft Group 42 at the Marine Corps Air Station, Santa Barbara, California. He was appointed Commanding Officer of Marine Fleet Air, West Coast, in September, 1944, and upon promotion to Brigadier General, became Commanding General in January, 1945.

General Sanderson returned to the Pacific in May, 1945, when he was ordered to the Fourth Marine Aircraft Wing as Commanding General and as Commander, Shore Based Air Force in the Marshalls-Gilberts Area. In March of the following year he was attached to Aircraft Fleet Marine Force, at Guam, and three months later joined the First Marine Aircraft Wing at Tientsin, China, as Commanding General. He became Deputy Commander of the same wing in October, 1947, when that unit's headquarters returned to the United States.

General Sanderson reported to Cherry Point July 10, 1949 and served as Commanding General, Aircraft, Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic and Second Marine Aircraft Wing, until the arrival of Major General Louis E. Woods on August 27, 1949, at which time he became Deputy Commander.

In addition to the Legion of Merit, his decorations and medals include the Distinguished Flying Cross, Dominican Republic 1921; Presidential Unit Citation, Solomon Islands 1942; Victory Medal; Haitian Campaign Medal, 1919-20; Expeditionary Medal, Haiti 1922-23; Second Nicaraguan Campaign Medal, 1928-30; American Defense Service Medal; American Campaign Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with three Bronze Stars; World War II Victory Medal; and the Nicaraguan Medal of Merit with Silver Star, 1928-30.

Interview Session I with Major General L.H.M. Sanderson, USMC (Retired), conducted by Major L. E. Tatem, USMC, for the Marine Corps Oral History Program on 14 July 1969 at General Sanderson's home in Coronado, California.

Q: Well, General, the first question I'd like to ask you about is how did you first become interested in becoming a Marine? Where did you first hear about the Marines?

Sanderson: I lived in a little town in western Washington State, which was on the coast on Puget Sound, and it was very close to Bremerton, and we used to go over there to play with the people in Bremerton High School in basketball, baseball, and all the athletics they had. And we saw a lot of the Marines. And they were the only people over there that we ever gave a second thought. And I don't mean by "over there" that means only in Bremerton. There were two forts out there on the coast, and the Army, which has a lot of big stations there; but there wasn't any of them that we didn't kind of look down our nose at a little bit. I mean as civilians. So I thought: "Good gosh, there's a war coming on here. If they want some good people to represent our part of the county or the state..." I talked to as many men/coming into the Marine Corps as I could harbor.

Q: When you first came into the Marine Corps, you graduated, I believe, from the University of Montana.

Sanderson: Right.

Q: You enlisted in the Marine Corps right out of the University of Montana.

Sanderson: I was finishing up in 1917 my last year in college and went down there with three other boys and took a physical examination when they insisted on it. At that time, why the war had been going on only about two months. We went down and enlisted; we all passed and marched off together.

Q: Whereabouts did you first go after you had enlisted?

Sanderson: I first enlisted . . .

Q: I mean where did you go for your first training?

Sanderson: Well, we went on down through Portland, and we didn't stop there. We reported in. We had to report in every place. Then they sent us from Portland to San Francisco. Then ~~xxx~~ we stopped at Mare Island, where we had to take another physical. We always had to take another physical -- I don't know why. And from there ( By that time there was 15 of us, and I was in charge) we went on down to Mare Island. I thought, "Jesus Christ, Mare Island -- that must be out in the Philippines someplace." I'd never heard of it before. That may sound funny, but I was an ignorant mountain man. We reported in to the colonel or commandant of the Marines at Mare Island.

They sent us on down for another physical. They were always figuring there was something wrong with us. That's all there was to it

Q: How did you get interested in aviation?

Sanderson: We'd been in Mare Island a short time, and naturally that was a recruit depot there. And, hell, I did everything they could think for us to do. And they asked for recommendations. Of course, they give you your choice of schools, you know, that you can go to. And, hell, the Marine Corps is full of schools and damned <sup>few</sup> scholars. And then they got to aviation. Well, hell, I thought I can ride farther than I can walk. So I volunteered for aviation, although I had pocket orders to go back to Quantico to the Marine officers' training camp. I said, "Well, if I go into aviation, you can just skip that place in Quantico. You won't have to go." They didn't say that just that one time, but that kept popping up all the time. I said, "All right, I want to be an aviator." And lo and behold, I was picked to be one of them. I'd only seen about two airplanes in my life, but I'd rather ride than walk. And that's all there was to it. I enlisted for it, or I volunteered, although that was against all the judgment that I was supposed to use -- never volunteer. But when the final list came out from Washington to Mare Island, my name was on it.



Q: Whereabouts did you go for your aviation instruction?

Sanderson: Well, first we went to MIT ground school. It was the best damn education I ever had. They had a good school, and it was the ground training working up to where a man is qualified to fly. That was at MIT. We used/ <sup>a lot</sup> of the buildings -- this was in June 1917 -- that the Harvard people were using/ <sup>all during</sup> other than the summer months.

Q: You took your ground training there, but where did you take the flight instruction?

Sanderson: The Marine Corps had two places. We'd either go to the Navy down in Pensacola -- they're still down there hanging around, barnacles all over them -- or we had one of the finest flying fields that I've ever seen, including Texas, at Miami. It was all Marines, except one little branch that we had for the Naval air station people to come over and get out there. That was at Miami, Florida. They gave us their best instructors and naturally all the advantages that they had had in the Navy. After all, they were running the school.

Q: What kind of aircraft did you use when you were in training?

Sanderson: We used the conventional American trainers. They were Curtis -- OX engine, <sup>they had</sup> /90 horsepower. They finally jumped up to 110, and we all quivered back there and what-not. We had ground

school there, too, you see, on the field to learn something about ~~aircraft~~ aircraft engines. You'd be surprised -- if you'd never heard about an airplane or aircraft engines... They used to ~~roar~~ roar out of there, you know, and they'd tell you what that is and what-not. You had to hang around it and learn something about it.

Q: Were these land airplanes or amphibians?

Sanderson: No, these were land airplanes.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Then we were assigned as Marine cadets, aviation cadets, to a certain field -- Curtis Field out there. They had Marine instructors. In other words, they had the maintenance and everything to run a Marine Corps station. That's all there is to that. We just stayed there until we qualified according to their standards. Then we were sent back to Cambridge/ <sup>as students.</sup> Then we had to go through the ground school. Of course, the various subjects were what they're still giving the cadets, which is radio and navigation -- not only air navigation (something I never heard of before; that was 1917; I guess they didn't have any before that) but sea navigation.

Q: You got your wings and you were commissioned. Then you were sent right away down to the 1st Provisional Brigade in Haiti.

Sanderson: We did this stuff up at the ground school, you see, first -- the stuff I've been talking about: the navigation and the radio and all that stuff. Then when we got through there (this was all up at Cambridge), we were sent down to Miami, Florida. And that was strictly flight instruction, gunnery and bombing. That was all stuff to do with airplanes. Well, that was all there was to that. We went through there. Hell, that was just like having a lark.

Q: Do you remember some of the fellow students who went through flight school with you?

Sanderson: Our commandant at that time down there was named Archibald. You've probably heard of him. He wasn't much good as an aviator, but he was a good coordinator of students and what-not. Of course, there were a lot of other ones besides Archibald, but he was a top Marine there in charge of the Marines and the Navy people in certain branches of that school. He was a damn good one.

Q: How about when you got down to Haiti?

Sanderson: That was after we'd gotten through our flight training, and that was all in Florida. Then we went straight on through -- that was in early 1919, before you were born I'll bet. Anyway, we went on down there. We were sent down there -- ordered.

It was the 9th of January, 1919. That was a pretty long time ago. And we went straight on in. I think it was 1917 when the Marines first went in there. We were the second outfit that ever went in there to Haiti. When we got there it was hotter than hell. It was really warm down there.

Q: What sort of duties did you have when you were in Haiti? You were flying, of course.

Sanderson: We were flying. We went there to support our ground troops. We had a good outfit. Then we had American Marines and Naval personnel in there in the thousands. And we were there -- the ~~Marine~~ aviation outfit -- to support the things they were doing/over here in these other little wars. And we did it.

Q: Well, while you were down there, aviation was real young at this time.

Sanderson: About a year and a half old.

Q: It was real young, so you were really down there during the developmental stages on a lot of things that were carried forth from there.

Sanderson: Yes, everything. I was the first one that was ever recorded as being the father of dive bombing. Well, hell, I learned that while thinking/it over in bed at night out in Quantico or

in Miami -- one of those schools there. I guess in Haiti I was damn sure I was right then, because you might be bombing at a target down here. The maps were very inaccurate -- I mean as far as altitude. The valleys weren't where you'd think they would be.

Q: Well, the Army's philosophy at that particular time, I mean, in France I think had done a little bombing, but it had all been horizontal bombing.

Sanderson: Yeah, they had it, but so did the Marines have it over there in France.

Q: But you figured you could keep your eye on the target and lob them in there a lot better, eh?

Sanderson: Well, naturally, yeah, you'd do it, because at least you could get a sighting-in shot. And even though that was 3000 feet on your map, it might not be that down there.

Q: Well, let me ask you something now. Now, this was something new.

Sanderson: I like to hear it. (Laughs)

Q: This was something new. How much of a job did you have selling this to your fellow officers?

Christ almighty,

Sanderson: Didn't have any trouble. /They'd go out there and you'd point your airplane on a target and come down where you could see it well and learn from there. Of course, we had the bombing ranges all over, all over the Marine Corps, and down in Haiti and Santo Domingo.

dive

Q: Well, when you developed this/bombing technique, did the Army come along later on and get information from you?

Sanderson: Yeah. They just added it to their air schools. We didn't have any air school -- I mean outside of the school we had down there, primary flying.

Q: What sort of airplanes were you flying down in Haiti?

DeHavilands.

Sanderson:/We had the old DH 4BA. I don't have a picture of them down here. I can get one, but I don't know where it is. I should have dug them out.

Q: ~~Those~~ Those must have been very interesting and hectic times down there for you.

Sanderson: It was tough. All we were there for was the same as the Marine aviators are out here in the boondocks in the Pacific. We were out there to help the guys on the ground there. And we just wanted to show him, goddam it, we could do it, and we did. And we would support them with food, air drops. I started that in a little place called Mirebalais. But it was something that

When they want something, when anybody should have known, /all they got is their feet and a jackass to ride on, if they can get the jackass. There wasn't anything funny about that. That was just hard work. I suppose for my first It was hot -- malaria. / tour down there for just about 20 months, bjt it was bad -- and I was never sick a day in my life before that. I got malaria, and I stayed there with it, and finally they said, "You better go on back home." / That was too long to have kept me there. That was two years later.

Then I went on up -- that was in 1922. I went through my first Marine school at Quantico.

Q: They finally caught you up and sent you on back to the officers' training school.

Sanderson: Yes. I didn't--I wasn't much/going to the school, for but they gave me a rest over one winter anyhow. I think I got rid of the bug, and my next tour down there was '22 or '3. That's 40 years ago. That's all there was to that. The second tour I didn't have one sick day, and I didn't do anything for it. Of course, you know you're/always full of quinine or malaria. I didn't have one attack of malaria at all the second time down there. I had enough of that before.

Q: Was there much of a difference between the first time down and the second time down?

Sanderson: In equipment, no. The United States didn't have any better airplanes. You had the old / DeHavilands. I say "old," because

the first they had in the First World War. We had them all that time. And, of course, the training aircraft. We used those a lot of the time down in Haiti and Santo Domingo. Those were the first two places. See, those are all <sup>on</sup> one island. That's all there is to that.

Q: You say this was the first officers' training school they had at Quantico.

Sanderson: That's right.

Q: And, of course, I assume this course was ~~more~~ more terrain appreciation and map reading...

Exactly. You've got it right there.  
Sanderson: And Marine gunnery. You had the whole thing. Map reading is very important.

Q: Then you got into something here. You got up to ~~Head-~~ Headquarters Marine Corps. In looking through your jacket and studying back on this in preparation for coming here, I noticed that you went to a heck of a lot of air races.

Sanderson: I did.

Q: The first one you went to was the International Air Races at St. Louis.

Sanderson: Yes, and I won it.



Q: You got the Pulitzer trophy there.

Sanderson: That's right. Didn't you know that?

Q: Sure, I knew it. I've got it written down here.

Sanderson: I came out of the battlefield at Haiti and came back to a playground.

Q: Well, at this time was there anybody else in these races besides service people?

Sanderson: Yes, there was always some screwball. I wouldn't say that, no, but the people who hang around -- like the Curtiss people, the aircraft corporation, and the Wrights. They always had people around to show off their wares. Well, the Navy was very good to us, because we had a lot of good pilots. I was the only squadron commander they had. That brings up some stuff I'd forgotten about.

Q: Well, how did you happen to get selected for the air races?

Sanderson: Being the best one around. That's all there was to it.

Q: All right, I wouldn't argue with that.

Sanderson: I wouldn't argue with you, because I didn't argue with old Tommy Turner or any of that gang -- or/ <sup>Admiral</sup> Moffett, They were the ones that picked me. I don't know whether they used good judgment. I don't know why. We just didn't have anybody worth a damn, and I can tell you the reason. The main reason is they picked these little guys to become captains and what-not. And they thought, "Hell, aviators get 50% more pay than we do. So why shouldn't we go into aviation?" And they went down there and learned how to take off and land and what-not. And there they were -- aviators.

Q: Fair weather aviators.

Sanderson: That's what they turned out to be, <sup>or dead ones.</sup> I tried not to have any enemies at all in there. I just could fly -- that was all. I had the advantage of being overseas in the First World War -- that was overseas as far as I got. I'd been up against all this stuff and being through these campaigns down in the West Indies and what-not on top of that: the Virgin Islands and Santo Domingo. And you know things.

Q: I guess it was that you had the most experience and were the best one around.

Sanderson: That's right. To me that was just my duty. Hell, I didn't think I could do anything better than anyone else. Well, yes, I could do.  
/But most of them couldn't do anything, and they didn't get

into it. There were people who came into aviation after they'd been promoted and been transferred over to aviation duty only. So, hell, they hadn't learned to fly before they'd give them an airplane. Hell, most of them met themselves going back out or going out to Arlington. A lot of them killed themselves. Of course, they do it now once in a while. But that was the trouble. I tried to live ahead of that last thump. . In other words, make a good landing. .

Q: That sounds like it was real interesting.

Sanderson: Anyway, you had the same thing going on in your military history, but maybe they're not exactly the same. Maybe <sup>was</sup> not all aviation/like mine/<sup>was</sup>. See, I got in awful early. They asked for volunteers, and I volunteered. It just happened it was something that I could do.

<sup>all free</sup> when The problem was I said I/<sup>could</sup> do this or that. And I was a kid at home, If I told them I could do it or would do it, I'd better do it. You probably had an old daddy, too, that had an inkling he'd better check up on you a little bit.

Q: That's true. Well, after you left the officers' you went to the air races.

Sanderson: I went to them about seven years in a row.

Q: You managed to go several times, I know. But think/<sup>about</sup> the first

squadron you joined back in the States. You came back from  
and  
Haiti; you went to Quantico and the air races, back into Quantico.

Sanderson: From then I went and served with the Army, the 1st Pursuit  
Group up in  
Selfridge Field. That was '22.

Q: Yeah, you got some instruction<sup>there</sup>/, it says on your jacket,  
in pursuit airplanes ~~xxx~~ in Selfridge Field.

Sanderson: They had the 1st Pursuit Group, pursuit fighters.  
Colonel  
Turner was our chief of aviation at that time in the Marine  
old  
Corps Our commandant was Lejeune. Then Admiral Moffett was  
the Navy man in charge of the Marine aviation, too. So we  
came directly under, as far as the Marine Corps was concerned,  
John A.,  
General Lejeune, down in Louisiana. You know, it's funny how it  
comes back and clicks into your mind.  
I haven't looked at a damn thing.

Q: A lot of stuff does come back to you.

Sanderson: It<sup>doesn't</sup> all come back. It's there. After all, you  
spend so many years doing something -- hell, it doesn't go  
away and stay.

Q: No, you just need to recollect a little bit.

Sanderson: You probably can remember when you was five years old  
doing certain things that you enjoyed very much and could do  
very well. Well, that's the way I am with all this stuff.

Q: You went to a series of Army schools. You went to Selfridge, and then you went to Langley.

Sanderson: I went to Selfridge first. Then I was out at Langley.

Q: Let me ask you a specific question here. It had been several years since you'd been in Haiti and first gotten this idea about the dive bombing bit. Then you find yourself in an Army school.

Sanderson: Yes, Turner insisted on getting me going to school. "You can't get anyplace unless you go to school. I never went. I just got up here by default." That's exactly what he told me. He was the colonel running the department of aviation in the Marine Corps at that time.

Q: He was quite a man, wasn't he?

Sanderson: Oh, yes. He was always talking to me... Now, this is the truth, to watch those damn propellers. See what I mean? At that time they had nothing<sup>but</sup>/propellers.

Q: And he walked into one.

Sanderson: He walked square into one, and that was down in Haiti.

Was in Gonaives, and this happened in Gonaives.  
                    socked

He got/ right in the forehead.

Q: That was real ironic, wasn't it?

Sanderson: I think it is. I didn't know it at the time, but I always felt close to him, and if he wanted any <sup>advice</sup> on actual tactics and what-not of hill flying in the Marine Corps, he'd always take me in and ask me.

Q: Well, when you went to these Army aviation schools...

Sanderson: Montgomery, Alabama. That's one we forgot, wasn't it? That's the one. Or did you mention that?

Q: No, we hadn't gotten there yet. That's a long way off.

Sanderson: But we've been to Selfridge.

Q: Been to Selfridge and been to Langley.

Sanderson: Oh, Langley. I spent half my time there.

Q: The point I was trying to make is that when you were there, aviation was so small at the time anyway, your <sup>reputation</sup> ~~reputation~~ probably had preceded you there. Were the aviators there willing to listen to what you had to say even though you were a student there -- listen to what you had to say, your experiences?

Sanderson: I'd be asked to say something. Hell, all my friends were aviators. ~~That's~~ That's right. I mean we were together there, and they'd want some advice on aeronautics or what-not in

the tropics, tropical flying. / <sup>They</sup> only had one station, and that was down in Panama, and they'd go there by boat and come back by boat. But they knew that the Marines were in Haiti, Santo Domingo, St. Thomas, St. John's and the Azores. But most of our aviators were just like you said a while ago. They were over there, but that's all. They didn't try to learn anything or do anything or advance themselves in the job to be done later.

Q: When you finished at Langley you got involved in the national air races at Philadelphia.

Sanderson: They got me up there quick. Yeah, I liked that. That's right. But the first national air races in the history of air racing in the United States was <sup>held</sup> at Roosevelt Field.

Q: Out on Long Island.

Sanderson: That's right, right across the railroad tracks from Mitchefll Field. Yep, and I was there. They sent me there. In fact, I made three trips up there to get airplanes ready for the other <sup>pilots</sup> / that were supposed to come.

Q: Roosevelt Field right now is a big shopping center.

Sanderson: I wouldn't be surprised. Where do they fly out there now?

Q: There's no flying from Roosevelt Field.

Sanderson: Roosevelt, that's right. Mitchell Field is across the tracks.

Q: Mitchell field is across the street from it.

Sanderson: They always had plenty of flying.

Q: I don't think they do any flying out of there anymore. I think it's an administrative headquarters now.

Sanderson: How about Paterson? You know, Paterson, New Jersey.

Q: That I don't know about.

Sanderson: They wouldn't drag anymore of it closer than that.

Q: The neighbors complained up there around Mitchell Field, so they had to stop in and out of there.

Sanderson: Well, they complain. Anyplace we go we make a little noise.

Q: Along with the national air races you participated in the Schneider Cup Races. Was there a big difference between the national air races and the ~~Schneider~~ Schneider Cup Races?



Sanderson: Not a thing. They were both big races -- international. Only the Schneider Cup Races were associated with seaplanes. They all had to be seaplanes. We had most of them in the United States, about half of them. And then there were one or two in England. And then they were in France. But the Schneider -- they didn't amount to much. You hang a pontoon on something and you drag it along there. Nobody was too proud to be a winner of the Schneider Cup, although they're all dragging the same weight around. Yeah, I was in those.

Q: Where did the races go, from country to country?

Sanderson: That's right. We <sup>won</sup> ~~xxx~~/the first ones. And the next ones -- I think the goddamned Frogs won it. I forget -- the Caproni or something like that. That was in France. I happened to be bound up in school there at Quantico, and I couldn't go; but I volunteered. It was fun, you know.

Q: But some of the squadrons you were in: you were in VF-8 and VF-1, VF-2, VF-3.

Sanderson: All fighter squadrons.

Q: All fighter squadrons. You mentioned something earlier, that one of the reasons you were picked for the first air race was the fact that you were one of the few real fliers in aviation at that time.

Sanderson: That's right. I never said it before to anybody, but I was -- in the Marine Corps. The Army had one or two -- maybe three -- pretty good people. I always went to the fighter schools. Tommy Turner always sent me to them, because they were supposed to be the elite flying. Not only they had the fastest planes, but they were the most maneuverable. That's true.

Q: Within the squadrons, though, when did you see a noticeable change in the attitude or in the personnel to get away from this thing that some of the senior officers were just transferred into aviation just to get on the money wagon?

Sanderson: Oh, after they'd killed enough of them. It was I'm just guessing that.  
in the late '20s./ It wasn't the early '20s. In the late '20s they started hovering around there, you see, and then they began to knock them off; and they didn't know why they all got killed and nobody else did. They were in there to do a job that the Marine Corps or the Navy had hired them to do.

Q: You got up on your home grounds in the national air races at Spokane.

Sanderson: Yeah. Well, we had fun up there.

Q: Did they play you up as a hometown boy?

Sanderson: I don't know.

Q: I bet you know and just won't tell.

Sanderson: I'll tell you: the only thing that I was happy about was that I could do for somebody in my own state. We went up there -- that was 1927. We went back again in '28, because the Marines did all right. We got up there, and we had all ~~these people~~ this competition, you get out with and and fly. We were competing/against the Air Force people and the Naval aviation and the civilians, if they had any, and they had plenty of them. But the thing was that the Marine Corps --in '27 -- I wasn't drinking a damn thing in those days -- shouldn't be drinking anything now / except Coca Cola. But one morning I came down there and someone told me: "Hell, the Navy guys recommend that...." They were having a conference down there.

You know, they'd been shooting the bull around there. They were the authorities on aviation on the civil side and what-not. So I got tired and went on up to the hotel and went to bed. The next morning someone told me: "You know, you're supposed to compete in aerial acrobatics against Jimmy Doolittle, the champion of the Army." And he was good. We were the best of/in the world -- not in ~~the world~~ the world, but very good friends. I didn't say I would do it or anything else. I didn't know anything about it until this guy started telling me about it. The Navy commander was Tom Jeter -- he lives down here someplace. So they offhand, without asking me a damn thing about it, asked

me if I wanted to fight Doolittle in air combat for the championship of the services. Of course, he wasn't going to fight anybody. But old Sanderson would do it. So he told me that "you're going to do it." I said, "What time?" He said, "About 2:30." So that's what I did. But I gave him a damn good beating at that. It was easy. He never got over it. He was a damn good person. He was one of these guys that, you know, you just like to slither around, slippery. I wish I could give you some better illustrations, but that's about the best I can do.

Q: Well, those are the interesting ones. And those are the kind of things that don't show up written down anywhere.

They don't write them up because Sanderson:/nobody sitting in Washington in a big fat chair wants to write about anybody else.

Q: That's right.

Sanderson: That's true. I think most of them would, if you asked them. / I guess they would.

Q: So you left your Stateside duties. Instead of Haiti /and went down to ~~Nicaragua~~ Nicaragua in December of '28.

Sanderson: In 1928. That's where we went I was in Haiti the last time in 1923. I was there about two years, in '25--the second time there.

Then I went in '28 or '7. They ordered me to Nicaragua, and I reported in at Corinto. Have you ever been there?

Q: I've never been to Nic<sup>a</sup>ragua, no, sir.

Sanderson: Well, don't/<sup>go</sup>unless you have to. Oh, it's not too bad after you've been there once before. But it's no good. Most of those countries are no good for a white man.

Q: The climate is...

Sanderson: That's what I mean. It's bad because they've got so ~~xxx~~ damn much malaria and typhoid. Typhoid is a pretty heavy thing to get along with. Now, we were in Nicaragua.

Nicaragua.

Q:/There your duties were pretty much the same as they were over in Haiti, weren't they? Supporting the ground elements?

Sanderson: That's right.

Q: Did you have any better equipment to do the job with at this time?

Sanderson: Towards the last we did. Up on Long Island City,  
were manufacturing a Vought airplane. His name was Vought, Chance Vought. They were a little two-seated observation plane is what they were. They had plenty of armament on there: /They had machine guns and bomb racks

and all that stuff. And we were in better shape to do the job in Nicaragua. When we first went in there we went in with de Havillands. That's all they had. Then by the time I was going down there, we took some Vought trainers down. That's what they were, trainers. We'd just begun to get up to where they had maneuverability and a place you could see from to shoot for gunnery and divebomb from.

Q: Who were some of the other folks who were down in Nicaragua with you about this time?

Sanderson: Well, there were people like Frank Schilt. Tex Rogers was there, but he wasn't in Haiti. Oh, Nicaragua. Schilt was in Nicaragua, but Haiti came before that. Tex Rogers was in Santo Domingo. I don't know if you know him or not. They were a long way apart.

Q: I was just wondering who happened to be down there with you.

Sanderson: Boyden. Did you ever know a fellow by the name of Boyden? If you know any/ <sup>thing</sup> about him, you probably hear him <sup>lives</sup> coming or going. Hex~~was~~/down there close to Rogers, General the Rogers down there in /valley below Washington. Well, that;s all I can tell you about that.

Q: You got this new equipment that made the job a little easier.

Sanderson: Well, it made it easier especially in maintenance and stuff like that. We had the water cooled, water squirting over everything from everyplace. Then you got the air-cooled

engine. That water proposition was eliminated. You had no radiator trouble -- all that stuff we went through.

Q: You were down in Nicaragua about two years -- about a year and a half, two years. I think you came out of there in May of 1930 and went back up to Quantico.

Sanderson: I went to Quantico from Nicaragua.

Q: You went back to Quantico and I think you joined Fighter Squadron 5-M.

Sanderson: I probably went to school first.

Q: At Quantico I think it was Brown Field, what kind of facilities ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~/did you have there?

Sanderson: Well, you wouldn't consider it an airplane<sup>flying</sup>/field now. I mean it was a landing area and for taking off. We squadron people built our own damn hangars and put in our heating equipment. Quantico gets pretty cool in the winter. It's cold. And, of course, these airplanes -- only about half of them were water cooled and the rest of them were air cooled. It doesn't make any difference -- you have to get them started. You have to get them warm before you can take off. So we developed that part of it. We had the crews out there on time to get them warmed up by putting these little

tepees over the engines with the oil stoves down here. You start that thing going down there -- well, first that engine will be getting warm and you take it out and give it a crank and it will go. We had to get all that in there. They didn't have anything. And I doubt if they've got much more now. I don't know what they have at Quantico. Isn't it mostly a school?

Q: Brown Field -- what it is mostly is to support the students who are aviators, get their flight time in, get their proficiency. That's what it is. They have some helicopters down there that they use with the School's troops and things like this. It's almost an auxiliary field rather than an operational field.

Sanderson: They have enough operations there for their school people, put them in there in helicopters, take them somewhere and pick them up.

Q: That's right.

Sanderson: That's all they have to do when they get over in these other places. That's a hell of a lot to do when you're there on your own.

Q: Did you find the Cleveland air races any different than the other air races?



Sanderson: No, they were all the same all the way through. The Army had Curtiss tied up, and the Navy had the Wright engines. Well, Curtiss always built a better airplane for races. The Navy would get some old thing that was chugging along there, but they had the Wright engine, and it's always been a good engine. But they both had good engines. Curtiss had what was called a D-12. It was the smoothest sounding thing -- it's water cooled -- that you ever heard in your life or since except for the Rolls Royce that they brought over from England a couple ~~fx~~ of times. A fellow told me one time that they stole the goddamned Rolls Royce from the Limies in order to make the D-12. I said, "Well, by God, they sound/<sup>alike</sup> ." And they had the power. In other words, <sup>everything</sup> one had/that the other had. Nothing to stop them from doing it.

Q: I suspect that in this inter-service competition,/<sup>things like this were</sup> probably good and undoubtedly improved the aircraft products.

Sanderson: It sure did. /<sup>That's the only thing</sup> they had to get these people up in the Admiralty and in the Army topside and the Marine Corps to better their buying from the commercial people, because they were the people that built the aircraft. And they insisted on having the best aircraft you could get for each service/<sup>who</sup> they represented. See what I mean? If I could /<sup>teach</sup> the Marine Corps with a few good airplanes in it. Of course, we couldn't have the number that the Navy would give us money for. Of course, they

also had a separate allowance for airplanes, so we had a part -- what they'd give us. But somehow or other our allowance -- this fellow Turner -- he was a big shot for that time. If he'd want something done he'd send me to do it.

I'll tell you one thing, and then I'll split if you'll allow me to. One thing that I feel very happy about that I've done for the Marine Corps is to be the first Marine aviator to fly over water from the United States to Panama. That was in 19--, with /the first flight ever made was/ Turner. He was ahead of us, because he was the one who said, "Yes, let's get it started just right." Right after the First War, they came out there. The Army did it, <sup>they</sup> /went someplace. I think they flew over to Spain or Portugal or back -- that was probably it. And the Navy had these big flying boats -- the F-4's. It doesn't make any difference. But the thing is they had done that.

Bunny Read was the Navy guy who was flying these NC-4's to go to Europe and return. They had flown someplace up around Newfoundland or someplace. I knew all those guys, too. One ~~ex~~ day I went by there, the Navy Department where the Marine Corps had its headquarters, and I asked him -- I said I'd like permission to fly from Washington, D.C. to the Virgin <sup>any other place you want to send my down there,</sup> Islands and return and/if we did that, the Marine Corps would have done something and would be the first to fly over water in a land plane . . .

Side 2, Tape 1

Q: ... to make this flight.

Sanderson: And the same guy was there. He was awfully young -- not for now, but he was a young lieutenant colonel. They made him commandant of the Marine Corps aviation. He was one of the Commandant of the Marine Corps staff there. I said I'd like to make the flight. That's where I sounded off and went someplace else. Yeah, I went to Nicaragua. I had that in the back of my mind.

Before that I'd flown down to Haiti in 1919 and  
and return.  
returned -- Haiti, Santo Domingo and St. Thomas/ I asked the  
thought it would be a good idea he'd have  
air commandant if he'd back me up here. I / if/someone  
--I was never direct with him; he was a tough old  
from the Marine Corps/ --fly down from Washington, D.C., bastard  
because that was the starting point for everything in those  
days. He said, "No, I haven't given any thought." I said,  
"But the Army has gone to Iceland" or some goddamned place  
They did;  
to check on an iceberg or something. /And the Navy had flown  
the NC-1, 2, 3, 4; that's what they had flown  
over to the Azores. That's what they had done.

And what had we done -- the Marine Corps? We were sitting there peeking out from behind the bushes in Virginia...

It sounds funny, but it's true. I said, "Why can't the Marine  
Corps do something? We've got all the Marines, expeditionary  
Butler 5th Marines and his 6th  
people." Smedley / had just started his /for his task Marines  
force for special landings -- to go in emergencies, always be  
ready to do this one job, go in and occupy some island and hold  
it as a base for operations for the Navy and the Marine Corps.

I said, "Why can't we fly down where we have no competition?"

wants to live  
Nobody/ there but us.

And the people in Washington,

Admiral Moffett's gang,  
/told us to go down and live down there, because they're supposed  
to make it safe for the landing troops. I said, "Why can't  
we fly down there?" I'd already flown down there before alone.  
than the first flight.  
That was earlier/I'd flown down there alone, with a mechanic in  
the back seat. I told the people that we'd been down there and  
were going down there to--as far east as--St. Thomas and the  
Virgin Islands there, St. Croix and all the islands./ Then That's when Turner was in Washing-  
ton.  
we'd be on a par with the Army, who had made flights since the  
First World War and the Navy who went over to the Azores in  
great big  
a/plane with pontoons.

He said, "By God, Sanderson, I didn't think you had that  
much sense."

I looked at him. He never spoke to me that way very  
often. He said, "You can\*\*k."

I said, "Why can't I do it?" That's where I made my  
mistake. I didn't choose my words. I had no idea he'd want to.

He said, "You can, but I'm going too."

So he wrote orders for another pilot from the Bureau  
up there, a Marine, Bradley, a hell of a fine fellow, and  
lieutenant Major  
Thomas Turner, too, of course, /colonel, and/Sanderson. He wasn't a  
lieutenant colonel very long after we got back from that flight. He  
So we flew on down. I had all the maps and studied them all } was a  
I had flown } colonel.  
the way through. ~~Waxflew~~/down as far as San Juan, Puerto  
Rico before that alone, so that was all right. But that  
was different. I said, "Why can't we do that and then we'll  
be the first to do that.xx and in a land plane and all the  
flight is over water." He said, "Ha, I wouldn't have said  
I'd do it if I'd  
thought of that." But I'm just quoting old T.C., Turner.

mean it; he had  
 But he didn't / more guts than that. But that was  
 in the  
 it. He wrote it up in the annals, / office in the Bureau  
 seems  
 of Aeronautics. Everything/happened to me in  
 Nune, even my first pregnancy. That's the way it went.  
 out of the  
 We got going. As you go east/ United States and get going  
 South... Of course you were going southwest at first and  
 then you go from Key West, that area, over towards Cuba.

We were the first Marines to fly in on Cuba. We had  
 at that time all those islands occupied by Marines. They'd  
 had all this trouble down there with the Indians down there.  
 And we made it better for everyone concerned as far as the  
 Marine Corps was concerned -- their airplanes came on down  
 to see them and could come again if they needed them. That's  
 places  
 like in all those / and all those towns down from Miami.  
 That's the last place you leave. You wouldn't get too close  
 to Key West, because that's pretty well down--well, Key  
 West, it's over to the west.

Q: Not too much point in going there if you're heading down...

Sanderson: That's right. We were headed for Havana. And it was  
 good. Then, of course, I'd had this flight before, and we  
 went on right through to Guantanamo and Port au Prince past  
 Gonaives and all those places. Now we're all through  
 with that.

Q: All through/that.  
 with

Sanderson: Unless you've got something<sup>else</sup>/to stump me.

Q: No, I haven't got anything to stump you. But one question: We always pride ourselves on the fact that we're the amphibious force and do this expeditionary stuff. But our mission back at this time was the advance base business.

Sanderson: That's what we were doing by airplane.

Q: And we kind of evolved out of that into the amphibious landing.

Sanderson: That's when the first task force came in.

Q: Right. How did aviation get into this?

Sanderson: We supported it. We were the supporting force. We were the air force for the 5th Marines. Then they had another outfit out here. They had a group of airplanes here -- them along and the Marines did -- that would follow/support from the air. There were a few people there in Quantico that went up to Washington, where it was close enough to get to (they didn't holler all the way up). It was just getting the outfits and putting them in supporting distance. I spent two years working up and down the east coast of the United States. I was at Parris Island. We used to have a place there. The thing was to get so we could go on through to Jacksonville and establish good relations with the Navy at Jacksonville. They've got a big air base there. Hell, most of our people never heard of them before. It took me a year

to do it. After I'd been to Haiti for a tour or something like that, why I asked to go on a flight down there. This old guy jumped up with sparks sticking out of his eyes. He was going, too. I said, "Well, fine. I want you to go. But somebody should go and do something for the Marine Corps. We go everyplace and In the first place, Department will something happens./the Navy/say, 'Send in the Marines.' And we say, 'Yes, here we are. Where have you been?' "In Quantico.'" We wouldn't say that. It didn't work that way. It worked like it's working now. It's simple to figure out. But it was this one thing that I told you --

among all these goddamned birds that were senior to take aviation flying if they could pass the flight test. Not only in flying and the ground stuff. Hell! Naval aviators -- they made all these decisions, and they weren't any good. They finally started killing themselves off so damned fast that they couldn't make any more decisions, and then the rest of them got out and went home.

Q: How about your tour at the Air Force tactical school at Maxwell Field, Alabama?

Sanderson: That was the best school...

Q: This was August of '34 you went there.

Sanderson: Yes. It was the best school I'd ever been to -- air school. They really worked on it -- their air tactical school. There

wasn't all that marching up and down the road and hollering  
and screaming./ I was just thinking about their air tactics. Here they had tactics  
There was a little place there where they had their  
out at that place at Quantico./ But they had everything in the maneuvers.  
world at the Air Force tactical school. They even had a lot  
of the Marine Corps tactics. They brought that in for the  
Marines. They did! It was probably the best school that the  
Air Corps had where you just had solid air.

school  
Q: The / down there...

When you left Maxwell Field Air Tactical School,  
and went  
you came back up to Quantico/to the senior school at Quantico.

Sanderson: Right. You must have that written down.

Q: I've got it all written down, General.

even  
Sanderson: Well, hell, why did you/have to come ask me about  
it then?

-- when you went back to the senior  
Q: I was wondering now -- at the senior school/at Quantico... school

company was  
Sanderson: Well, the/officers' school/first.

Q: Yes, sir, you went through that. And this time after  
your tour at Maxwell Field, you went to the senior school  
at Quantico. And in the curriculum there -- of course, they  
were talking about advance base problems and this, that and the



other that General Butler had been working on -- how much of a place in the school/curriculum did they give/aviation?  
Today they give a heck of a big slug to aviation in the senior school.

Sanderson: I would say that they give proportionately the same. All you can take care of. And if you can't take care of it, well then, it's the officers that are running the Marine Corps aviation that haven't asked for it. If they want it, they'll give it/ And the closer/a war breathing down your neck, to get it.

Q: Well, this is a little bit before the war fever caught up with everybody, in '35 and '36.

But  
Sanderson: I know. /I'm talking about now-- No, in those days we were trying to find a job. There were damn few of us to try to get on the right lead. That's the reason that we flew to Haiti a couple of times and Santo Domingo, just to keep up, even with the Army-aviators.

Q: When you left the senior school you ~~were~~ got your first tour on the west coast. You came out here to the San Diego area.

Sanderson: Yes.

Q: You'd joined VO 8-M. Up to this time just about all your

duties had been up and down the east coast.

Sanderson: That/ was fine. That's where everything was going  
--he was my boss--he told me:  
on. We hadn't moved Washington yet. Turner told me/ "Goddamn it,  
right  
stay/around Washington as long as you can." He said, "As long  
as we're in Washington here, we can run the Marine Corps --  
the people that are living/ here--are operating out of here." And I made the point  
be nice to  
that we should/ Navy admirals and captains and all those people,  
and especially the Marine Corps colonels. That's true. I just  
liked  
/certain ones up there, and they just happened to be sitting  
up in the right place all the time.

Q: It helps.

it didn't do any harm.  
Sanderson: Well,/ I would have been in jail a long time ago if  
it hadn't been for that.

Q: You had one more crack at the national air races up here  
at Los Angeles.

Sanderson: No, I wasn't over there. Oh, yes. No, I don't  
think I was over there.

you  
Q: Well, they list/ in your record book as having participated  
in the air races up there.

Sanderson: I might have been up there.

Q: Well, the part that I'd like to cover with you: you were with a couple of squadrons out here. You were with VO 8-M, I understand, and also VF-4M. You were the C.O. of that. And during this time you participated in some carrier operations on the Saratoga and the Ranger. And this was in the early days of carrier operations, wasn't it?

Sanderson: That's right.

Q: And this must have been quite an experience for you all.

Sanderson: Yes, but I think it expresses your feelings of uncertainty and what-not.

Q: No, I've been there.

Sanderson: I enjoyed it because I kept away from the damn carriers. I don't know. I didn't see any idea of meeting/<sup>me</sup> flying around on the goddamned carriers and then fall in the water when you wanted to land. That's true. But I really enjoyed my carrier dut/<sup>ies</sup> after I'd properly prepared myself for the physical and tactical job aboard there. I kept away from them so damned long, and then rather than/<sup>go to the</sup> tropics on foreign duty, I'd just go for a few months up and down the road here. That's true.

Q: Did you find at that time that a lot of the pilots had a problem, a kind of a mental block, about making this switch from landing on the ground to going out here and setting down on these aircraft carriers?

Most of them made it.

Sanderson:/Most of them were youngsters. They didn't have any

mentality anyhow. It didn't make any difference. You know what I mean. Of course they had the mentality. But of either to the thing was that they had no background /be scared

of them. If you have a background in something where you've

been very close to a family or somebody who were all being of it

killed from carrier landing, you'd hear a lot more/than you

Or some other job that you're required to do sometime or other would ordinarily. /You just don't want to go out there. I kept

away from it just as long as I could. Not that I wanted to

in But, as I recall, stay in Quantico or/Haiti or some place. /I didn't want to

come out in this damned country even though my home was up the beach here

1400 miles. That's true.

though,  
Q: This whole business about the carriers ended up/giving the Navy a new shot of life.

was there as far as you can  
Sanderson: It/just giving them an extra bounce out/get the airplanes out and back. That's a thousand miles each way. That's a hell of a lot. That's as far as they used to be able to go, both ways.

Q: It took three days.

Sanderson: That's right. But I think now aviation is here to stay. We used to have trouble explaining why the hell we wore wings. I knew damned well I had no business wearing wings. I enjoyed this very much. How far did we go on our second trip from Haiti or the first one? I went alone the first time. I didn't take anyone. I just flew on down there.

all As long as the second one was finished, that  
Sanderson: That's right. / all right. I didn't give any  
thought at all. Everything was so heavily pictured in my  
that, hell,  
mind/ I'll never forget it. I don't have to think about it.  
You, you know, you've been there, that's all --  
It was just like the first few nights and days on Guadalcanal.  
Well, that was bad enough. But much of that stuff is not bad.  
Probably be mentally disturbed to sleep at night  
though.  
as I could ever imagine, / So this isn't bad at all as far  
probably  
as the interiors were concerned. But I could have been converted  
five years earlier if I just didn't want to leave Quantico.

Q: Well, you didn't stay out on the west coast very long.  
You stayed out here a little bit and then went right back to  
Quantico.

Well,  
Sanderson: / They asked me where I wanted to go. I'd been out  
here simply to board ship. That's right. Then they asked me  
where I'd like to go, and I said, "Hell, in the United States  
or where ?" It didn't make any difference to them.  
I said, "Hell, I'd like to go back to the east coast."

Q: You went back to Quantico and took over a bombing squadron.  
This was a little bit different than the fighters you had .

Sanderson: Yes, it was a little bit different, but that was all  
they had. I could do it all. in the Marine  
Corps.

My heart and soul was in it.

Q: Well, you know, if you don't like to do something, you're not going to do a good job at it.

Sanderson: In the Marine Corps if you don't like to take orders from some of <sup>the</sup> damn fools. I don't mean a lot of them. In fact, there are very few of them. But why do I pick on the poor old Marines? <sup>They</sup> Take orders from anyone. Wherever you're going wherever you are  , you're going to be taking orders from somebody or you wouldn't be there.

Q: That's right. You got back to Quantico and took over the bombing squadron, and you participated in some fleet exercises. They were just the usual run of the mill thing, weren't they?

Sanderson: That's right. I've forgot <sup>ten</sup> /exactly/ <sup>now,</sup> just when that was. What was the year? '40?

'40--

Q: This was '38 and '40, because you then became affiliated and deployed /down at Guantanamo in October of '40.

Sanderson: Those were all just maneuvers.

Yes, that's right. You were down there.

Q: Now, you're at Quantico, and you're only 40, 50 miles

down the road from Washington. And, of course, this is the period that the war broke out in Europe. And this is the time, I think, that General Mitchell was the director of Marine Corps aviation about this same time. He was the director of Marine Corps aviation from about '39 to '42.

43.

Sanderson: I've forgotten. He was a hell of a good friend of  
anyway. though,  
mine./ He was probably mad at me/every other time, but he's  
really a capable person.

Q: But during this period/ this pre-World War/II activity, did you  
all get caught up in that much?

Sanderson: Pre-World War II.

Q: Yes. The period just before World War II, you know.

Well, hell, we  
Sanderson:/naturally were sitting up there armed  
to the teeth and training for everything that we could anticipate  
doing. Hell, yes. That's what we were there for. We were always  
ready.

Q: I was just wondering/you know, if the training had--had the pace picked up,  
at all or anything like that.

Sanderson: You know how it is in the Marine Corps. You've  
been through as much of it as any of us. It comes and goes and  
everything is quiet, and then the first thing you know you start  
reading headlines about something. After you begin to read them,  
there's a line from your  
/orders. You probably take the Marine Corps Gazette or some other  
little  
/paper there. You know everything, but you don't know which one  
to believe.

Q: General, when the 1st Marine Air Wing moved out to San Diego  
from Quantico, how did you all go? Did you go by boat or did

you go by train, or just how did you move your men and equipment out there?

Sanderson: We flew all the men out. We flew the men and the airplanes and all the stuff we could pack. We had a group of R-5-C's. I believe. They were the first larger ones we had. In fact, they flew practically everything out to San Diego before we got through with them.

Q: Now, once you got to San Diego, about how long did you stay?  
 Sanderson: Oh, yes. Q: Well, You started training out here, didn't you?/ I guess you were here when the war broke out, right?/ You came out in July of '41, and the war broke out in December of '41, so you must have...

Yes, We used  
 Sanderson:/We were right here. /For officers and what-not that big hangar down there. We called it the balloon hangar, way out here on North Island. Then from that the Navy outfit left to go on carriers, and the Marine squadrons went along with them. There we were. We trained right there on North Island, and, of course, we had the facilities of Camp Carney and of course all the facilities we wanted/out here-- to use at the island. And there was another field over here, right across the bay at the Naval air station field/ had everything that we there. The faculty could use. So they had sort of plans for us, I guess.

Q: Well, now, when the wing got the word to go overseas,



how did you make your deployment out of here to go overseas?

Sanderson: The same way, except we did have a cargo ship or two  
and of course all the cargo on board;  
or a transport, but we flew everything we could. I had a group that  
was over there the  
/going/ , and we were/first to that little island down  
It doesn't make any difference, I don't think Then  
there./ We were on our way to Guam -- we knew that./ We finally  
ended up and  
/flew into Guam with practically everything.

When you left Guam  
Q:/Did you go from Guam down to New Zealand or Australia  
and then come back up to Guadalcanal?

--I forget what date it was--but we walked right in  
Sanderson: No, we stayed right there until/to... Q: Guadalcanal.  
Sanderson: Yes, on  
and to the little islands just this side of it, The Marines finally  
landed in--what's the name of the first place they landed before we  
get to Guadalcanal?Okinawa. But we were well up there then.

Q: Well, when you were out there, you participated in Operation  
Cactus. That was the code name for ~~Guadal~~ Guadalcanal.  
Sanderson: That was the first one, yes.  
Q: When you got the word you were going there, how much time did  
you have between the time that you got the word and when you  
really went in there?

Sanderson: I'd say maybe six months. Of course we had to work  
our way up in the islands before we got to Guadalcanal.  
Okinawa was the...

towards the  
Q: Okinawa was one of the/tailend of it. Guadalcanal was  
the first island we went into out there.

Sanderson: Yes. Part of the 5th Regiment went into a little island across the straits there from Guadalcanal. [Tulagi]

Marine through  
Q: You stayed with the 1st Air Wing from July of '41/ March of 1943, and part of this time you were the C.O. of Marine Air Group 11. Was that a fighter group?

Sanderson: Yes, 11 was a fighter group, yeah.

Q: Do you remember any incidents that happened during the Guadalcanal operation that might be worthy of recording?

Sanderson: Well, as I remember it, was that the Japs came down and we had to go up and knock them off. We did a lot of night flying there. They'd start coming down, you know, and then bombing all the way down through that string of Islands. We had destroyers up there, too, you know -- up between Guadalcanal and Okinawa. We had the planes in between Okinawa and Guadalcanal, and the destroyers were out there, and I think Jim Roosevelt was one of them -- one of the commanders of the ground Marines.

Q: Yes, sir, he was. Sanderson: They'd report to the airplanes, and the destroyers were coming you know.

down all the time, / They were getting down pretty well into New Georgia and all through in there. Of course, they let us know that they were out there with a destroyer outfit. There were The Marines with a landing force there. We would intercept them-- the Japsair before they could get down to New Georgia most of the time with the airplanes. And then

of course, the Navy destroyers and the Japs were coming down with their destroyers. They would meet them out there, but we would try to get them before. We went on out there before it got dark to intercept anything that they were sending down to try to get on their station and have it out with them then--

You can't intercept people much with-- before dark./ We didn't have any equipment for intercepting--on our airplanes for intercepting.

That The hell, we couldn't understand them anyway.

Q: When you left the 1st Marine Air Wing, you took over as C.O. of Marine ~~xxx~~ Base Defense Air Group 42. This was in May of '43. This was still stationed in Guadalcanal, wasn't it?

Sanderson: I really can't say. No. I really wasn't there<sup>very</sup>/long, I mean,--actually why--<sup>into</sup> / Guadalcanal,/ We started going beyond that /- Okinawa. I think we went right after that or we went into New Georgia. Remember that big fellow that we had...

Harry Liversedge? He was in there with a battalion of the Marines in New Georgia. He came up one day and / <sup>showed me</sup> his shins were all beaten up/ and what not. to They went in/New Georgia at night. Of course,hell, he's all right anyhow, but they were big ones.

It was on Guadalcanal that he got messed up a little bit. Harry.

Gee,  
Q:/I don't remember, General. Well, after you left the Base Defense Air Group, you were C.O. of Marine Fleet Air West Coast at El Toro.

Yes, I was there. And then  
Sanderson;/I came back here. My headquarters was here.

I came down from El Toro to have my wing office up here in the administration building.

Q: And this was a training and replacement command, wasn't it?

Sanderson: At that time, yes.

Q: You were charged with training people and getting them <sup>on</sup> out there.

Sanderson: Yes, and we had all these other groups that were training in this area, training the year round, you know. We had one <sup>we had</sup> at Kearney Mesa and <sup>--that's the</sup> one at San Diego/ North Island, and they <sup>over</sup> had the Marine Air Group at El Centro. You'd be surprised how many people didn't want to go to El Centro. It was a little warm.

Q: It's pretty hot out there. Well, after this <sup>then</sup> job/you ended up as commanding general of the 4th Wing. You got this job in May of '45, and the war ended in August of '45. So you got caught up in the business of getting people out of the Marine Corps, didn't you?

Sanderson: Not so much. I did at first, yes, when they <sup>were</sup> first starting to get them out and back to the States.

Q: Well, what did the Wing do after the war was over?

Sanderson: We went to China.

Q: You went out to China in June of '46.

No,  
Sanderson: /I went to Guam, I guess.

~~SAND~~ Q: I think you went to Guam first, just for four or five months, and then you/went out with the 1st Marine Air Wing into China.

Sanderson: That's right, and I had the wing Air out there.

Q: Now, during the period that you were in China, you hadn't served in China before World War II, so this was fertile ground for you out there, wasn't it?

Sanderson: It wure was.

Q: They say it was real nice out there.

Sanderson: Oh, you couldn't compare it with the ~~xxxx~~ islands up there. You had everything that you wanted, including a lot of Chinese that worked practically for free. We had to pay them, but not much.

Q: What did the Wing do while it was out in China?

Sanderson: Well, we trained mostly. We had groups at Tsingtao down in the southern part there. That was/about as far as

We had one other Marine Corps station farther, you know. we got./ Tsingtao was our most southerly group. We had a lot of airplanes there, mostly transports and fighters. Where we had transports, we had fighters with them. We didn't know what the Japs/<sup>would do or</sup>could do, and we had to have somebody to protect them -- the transports. The Marine Corps itself was out there pretty heavy -- I mean in numbers, in China. They found out that riding was easier than walking, and all we had to do was to deploy/<sup>our</sup>transport airplanes and have them close into where the ground Marines were and squadron fighters with every group of transport aircraft. All we had to do was to prove that it was easier to ride than walk.

Q: General Wood said that fresh meat was hard to come by out there.

Sanderson: No, it wasn't hard to come by. Of course, I don't know how fresh it was. We had a lot of meat, but you could smell it before you got there. But I don't think anybody died from meat poisoning. I don't know that;/<sup>I can't say.</sup> You'd have to talk to a doctor that was out there.

Q: You stayed out there three years, three years! Did you have Mrs. Sanderson out with you when you were out there?  
Sanderson: No.  
Q: She was still back in the states, huh.

Sanderson: She was still back in Quantico.

Q: That was a long time out there.

Sanderson: That's right. Not that I wanted to stay out there. I had a lot of it during the war, moving around and every place that I had to go after the war and took over the Chinese thing. But there was nothing you could do about it. Goddamn it, somebody had to be out there. And little Sandy's all right. <sup>We'd just leave him</sup> He <sup>there</sup> hadn't hollered yet. But I was <sup>getting really</sup> close to it. As the fellow says, I got my dander up. They were having a hell of a time on a little island right south of the coast of Puerto Rico.

Q: Vieques?

Sanderson: No.

Q: The Virgin Islands?

The Virgin Islands. They were

Sanderson: Yes. / ~~I was~~ having a hell of a lot of trouble in between themselves -- the natives and the Americans that were --it was an aviator, one of them that in business down there. And our officers/ was running the airplanes, and these other people were getting more than they could do, and they were all about my age. Do you know a fellow Brice-- by the name of/Oscar Brice?

Q: No, sir.

--not Charleston, South Carolina--but he comes from Sanderson: He comes from/Columbia, South Carolina. He got <sup>the</sup> <sup>capitol</sup> permission to fly out from the islands up to Washington and talk it over/ <sup>with...</sup> I think Louis Woods was there, too, in Washington

at that time. He figured: oh, hell, he couldn't straighten them out down there.

And that was one place I didn't want to go. I'd had so damn  
numerous  
~~much~~ much of it that well, hell, there'd been /officers  
Maybe  
started down there in peacetime and ended up there. /That's the  
they  
reason that we were having trouble getting along--/ knew him  
too well.

Q: But when you left China you came back and took over Fleet  
Marine Forces Atlantic. And this was in July of '49. And you  
stayed  
/there about a year and a half and then retired. You had FMFLAMP  
and the 2nd Marine Air Wing.

Sanderson: Yes. That's right.

Well,

Q:/We got into the war with Korea about this time.

Sanderson: We were stuck there in Quantico because we'd<sup>gotten</sup>/back  
there with most of our stuff, except what we had in Korea, and  
we had to get it out again. And I was in Quantico when/<sup>they</sup> started  
fighting with the Koreans. They'd <sup>run</sup> / across the border, <sup>you know,</sup> and what-  
not.

Q: Well, General, as you look back on your career in the Marine  
Corps, you spent a number of years in the Marine Corps -- and  
do you think if you had to do it all over again you'd still  
come out and do the same thing?



would. Although they'd be minor...  
Sanderson: I think I/. I'd do the same thing as far as the  
Marine Corps was concerned. There were probably/situations  
in tactical  
I might change a little bit, but not much. You/get to these  
places, and you had to fight to get there and fight to stay.  
And then  
/ it's just a matter of...and we never lose anything. So we  
did all right.

Q: Well, have you got any words of wisdom for the people coming  
along behind you in the Marine Corps?

Sanderson: I'd tell them to do just what you did when you were  
out there.

Q: Well, General, I think that's just about it.

Sanderson: I'd like to say a word or two. I don't know if you're  
covering up  
/the athletics in the Marine Corps.

Q: No, not unless you want to bring it up.

Well, I'd like to bring it up because  
Sanderson: /I heard nobody mention it; we had some awfully  
mostly ever  
good athletes,/in football -- one of the best friends/I had: Harry  
Liversedge and Frank Goettge and those people. Well, I can go into  
it and pretty  
/get through it/ fast.

Q: Go ahead, sir.

Sanderson: I don't know exactly what year this was, but we had a little time before the war. I was in Quantico getting this thing ready to go someplace else. That's how I got on this first flight to the West Indies -- land planes over water.

That was the first one <sup>I</sup> made. In the meantime I'd organized a football team out at Brown field. And we went down and we played everybody on the coast that year. It was just before the war started. We went on up and played all the Marine detachments and what-not, like in Philadelphia -- they had a lot of them up in Phillie -- and all through the east coast.

Had some out here. And my first flight down through the West Indies <sup>were</sup> /I met a lot of old football players I didn't know/in the Marine Corps. They weren't old -- they were on the land--and I played <sup>across a</sup> all the way through. Did you ever run/fellow not MacHenry; but MacHenry, -- his name was Henry/ - I called him "Duk e." I was recruiting the first time for the Marine Air Wing at Quantico --then they got stronger still than it was. So, the first trip up to Philadelphia, and they had a hell of a good football team there, <sup>made the</sup> and we/ point. I'll beg your pardon on that one, because at that time Smedley Butler was the commandant of the Marines in Quantico. <sup>I think</sup> /He took over just ahead of Berkeley and those people. <sup>Geiger</sup> And ~~James~~/~~12~~ was my commanding officer out there at Brown Field, and every time I went they played on a trip like that. ...Q: Butler? Sanderson: Geiger made me go ask permission from/Smedley, and I'd go up there. I knew him. The reason I went up there is because Geiger was ~~such a~~ scared to death of him; and for some reason-General<sup>m</sup> Butler took a liking to me. And I was always

for air-- I guess I  
going up looking/ finally, gave myself away--he knew what I went  
on these trips for-- operators  
/to recruit for material and personnel football/ and  
hell out of  
then come down and beat the / him with them.

On my first trip to the West Indies -- that was in the  
early '20s -- I found a hot house of/ down there, too. Did  
you ever know a man by the name of Emmett Skinner?

Q: I've heard about him.

Sanderson: He was an All-American, and he came from the  
University of Kansas. He was stationed at--what's the name of  
that first little...in Cuba, where we've always had Marines?

Q: Guantanamo. Sanderson: Guantanamo. Now  
it was a pretty senior major, and he had a hell of a good  
know. I told him...  
football team, that's what he did, you/in those days I figured  
right back into a  
you've got enough, you're always jumping / football  
uniform or something. He told me that he was an All-American,  
and he had the papers to show it. I said, "You show them to  
me." That was before I told him I was a recruiter. But in the  
meantime, I'd gone through all these places like Philadelphia  
and where we had Marines that had little teams, you know. Of  
course we'd our  
/already picked them apart for/Marine aviation football team. And  
nobody could beat us.

I'd like the place at Guam.  
Skinnæ said, "I'd like to go up there./ I've been down  
here two years." He was always ready to jump at you or  
something. I said, "You wouldn't have any fight as far as I'm  
concerned about going up there." I'd heard of him. That's the  
reason I stopped off at Guantanamo.

I've forgotten now just who they all were. But that was

one of the reasons that I went back the second time; <sup>you know,</sup> to get these <sup>fellows</sup> to play football for the aviators, I made a mistake by telling General Smedley that that's what I was doing. Then he started sending me everywhere. I'd already-- <sup>places to</sup> you know you started to go/ find out where they are and he knew it, and the first job he did was to transfer me from Geiger's outfit. That's the first time I ever saw Geiger shout. He didn't like General Butler taking away. If he took me away, then he'd try picking on <sup>I mean</sup> the rest of them, the rest of the people on the team that was playing at Brown Field. The first thing, Smedley had us all down at Quantico. That's where the Quantico Marines started. ~~xxxxxxx~~ We were beating everybody at all the Naval stations and the Marine Corps stations. So they knew about us. Then the next year it was a little stronger. But all the time when we had a chance, why we'd be out looking for material. At that time we had a lot of good players.

We had a fellow by the name of Walter Rogers.

Q: Yes, General Rogers said he played football with you.

Sanderson: He wasn't a large man. He ~~xxx~~ came in and said he wanted to play tackle. I said, "Aren't you a <sup>little</sup> light?" He said, "I've never been too light for anybody yet." He was a fine little devil <sup>truth;</sup> . And he told the / he was all right.

Q: I talked to General Rogers last week.

You did? You know,  
Sanderson:/He's living up here at...

Q: In Carlsbad.

Sanderson: That's right. Isn't it Carlsbad where Cushman lives?

Q: No, Cushman lives up in Corona del Mar, which is just up beyond El Toro . So that's how the football really got started there at Quantico, huh? Started down at Brown Field, and Smedley Butler saw <sup>a good</sup> ~~xxxx~~/thing and swooped it up.

Sanderson: Sure, he did. He said, "Hell, <sup>if</sup> you can beat all these people, what do we have <sup>to worry about?</sup> We had 5000 men down there, and of course, /in those days 5000 was a lot of people. He'd ask me, "What's the good news today?" I spent about half my time as an office boy for him. Of course, I finally got wise enough to handle all these boys. You probably never knew Cercek, did you?

Q: No.

Sanderson: Well, he was an enlisted man, but, by God, he was a good football player. I ~~think~~ half of them or two thirds were. But at one time we had mostly officers, and I finally worked with this team out here.

Begin Tape 2, Side 1

Q: We were talking before on the other tape, General. You were talking about the football team there at Quantico.

Sanderson: Recruiting.

Q: You were out recruiting football players, that's what you were doing.

Sanderson: Yes, that's right, I admit it; but they were all in the Marine Corps, and nobody seemed to know anything about it.

Q: Well, General, you had a pretty close association with General Butler.

Sanderson: Yes.

Q: Smedley Butler.

Sanderson: I liked him, too, damn it. Excuse my language, but that's where I learned profanity, I think.

Q: Why, you know, he was a very energetic person. He managed to make a few enemies in the Marine Corps, didn't he?

Sanderson: He didn't try not to. I don't think he did. He didn't do it purposely but if he saw the situation a certain way, he couldn't see any other way to be right. These other people, regardless of what rank they had, they either

had to quit or get out. Of course, he was a senior to them all, you know.

Q: Even way back in World War I, he got shunted out of a combat command and he ended up running the port of embarkation there in Brest, wasn't it?

Sanderson: I think he went on his own over there. What I mean by that, he got a good command and nobody seemed to want it.

Q: Well, they tell me he was a real hard working fellow.

Sanderson: Oh, good heavens, yes. The hell of it was that the people who were doing the work for him, they had to do it too. And that's a good way to have it. In other words, if an outfit isn't too good, I don't believe if the commanding officer tries to do all the work and then all the knowledge gets out through him, not through the proper departments.

Q: When did you finally stop playing football, General?

Sanderson: Oh, gosh; I don't know. What year? I played fifteen years with the Marine Corps, so you subtract from the time I started with them.

Q: Well, I guess once World War II started why, not too many people participated in athletics like that--in varsity athletics.

Sanderson: <sup>No.</sup> /We always had the organizations around.

Q: Yes.

Sanderson: We didn't know when Butler might come back. I wouldn't say that. There was too much going on, you know. We were fighting for our lives at first, you know. You had to go places that no one else had ever been, I mean the Second World War. You couldn't put all your time into football when you ought to be learning your lessons for promotion; and everybody that/<sup>practically</sup> wanted a promotion would put out a little bit and he'd get it because he could do the job that was coming up. I thought I knew more than anybody in the world about aviation than anybody could come up, so I didn't worry about it.

Q: Now in World War II, did you ever have any problems with the Air Force about who was going to control the airplanes? This problem always seems to crop up all the time, you know, about who's actually going to have the control about the aircraft.

Sanderson: Geiger was our...I never had...someone brought between...

Q: Yes, there was always somebody in between you.

Sanderson: That was a good thing to have.

Q: Well, in looking back, did General Geiger ever indicate that he had any problems?



Sanderson: Well, I lived with him all the time, and he had... he liked me; I'd been with him a long time, off and on, from the West Indies and all those places we'd been, and he always asked to take me with him. Like, one instance, /he came down to my tent one time; we were down in...what's that first island south of Guadalcanal? And he--when we got to Guadalcanal--and finally I was the last one that was in Guadalcanal. I mean the last commander, and Louis Woods even moved out. Geiger, they told him to get out, and get down there, and take that little vacation over in Australia.

I said, "The thing for you to do is to go on over there." Because Geiger was sitting down. This thing is all heaped up here and they figured that--for some reason they all recommended me to stay there with the wing in Guadalcanal. That took in a hell of a lot of various places there, like Okinawa. We hadn't been to Japan yet. It didn't take us long to get there.

Louie Woods was one of the best aviation officers that I know of. He had his little faults, but who doesn't. / He told somebody that as long as old Sandy's up there, he said, I want to go back. Louie worked hard up in Guadalcanal. And the first thing I knew they had somebody coming in on a transport airplane, very important person. / I went down to the...you've been there, haven't you? You remember that little knoll the operation was on?

Q: Yes.

Sanderson: Well, I was waiting for this important person. Well, Louis hadn't been gone over a week down to...oh, hell.

Q: Was it Efate?

Sanderson: Efate.

Q: That's the place. Who was the very important person that came in that you were down there to meet? Was it General Woods again?

Sanderson: Louie Woods.

Q: He was coming back?

Sanderson: I thought it was somebody important coming back here. He said, "No, I'm coming back because Geiger told me to get back." I didn't like to stay down there at Efate any better than he does. He has to stay because the Navy command down there. I don't know who it was, McCain, or somebody like that. Anyway, we had the fleet out there, then. Anytime they put on a damn sailor's hat, you know, hell they outrank a Marine. I wouldn't say that, but...

Q: Did you ever get involved in the business about getting Marine fighter outfits back on carriers?

Sanderson: No, I escaped that. I had them on there all the time before. Some of them, I let them go.

Q: Yes. They more or less got kicked off when they started building up. I think it was General Farrell was telling me something; and he was back at Pearl Harbor and Kaneohe there,

and he kept hounding them to--to even give him an escort carrier or something. He wanted to get the Marine airplanes back on the carriers to support the ground elements.

Sanderson: Well, that's right. He never had any trouble getting the job of supporting the Marine Corps land forces because the people on the carriers said hell, that's a Marine's job to go ashore. We stay on here. You see a good shower every night. All kinds of good care except living, and that's always a little tough. I mean, we're in the tropics, and you get a formal--sometimes you're right down in the sights all the time. The Japs were good fighters. They weren't good enough, but good Marines, though.

Q: General, on behalf of the Historical Branch at Headquarters Marine Corps, I'd like to thank you for these interview sessions and we appreciate the time you've spent with us. Thanks again, General.

Sanderson: Flat on my big chair. Damn it, you don't even have a life belt!

Q: That's all right. Well, thanks again, General.

Sanderson: Then we come down here and, through your efforts, reviving some awful pleasant thoughts and learning a lot.

Q: Well, I think if anybody's done the learning on these sessions, it's been me, General.

Sanderson: There's somebody that sent you down to these places. I didn't come out of the Headquarters in Washington; I don't know how much brains they've got up there any more. (They didn't have much when I was there.) But you've done a good job for them, I know on this job. In other words, you've got out everything that I ever knew concerning aviation.

Q: Thanks a lot, General, for those kind words; I appreciate that.

Sanderson: I was really very fortunate to have you doing this job on me.

I think it was not from the Guadalcanal move but through Cuba is where I get into this recruiting job. The first one was through Butler, and he was a recruiter a long time before I was. Emmett Skinner, he's dead now. But if you stay with those things you're liable to learn a lot or do a lot.

Q: Well, thanks again, General.

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