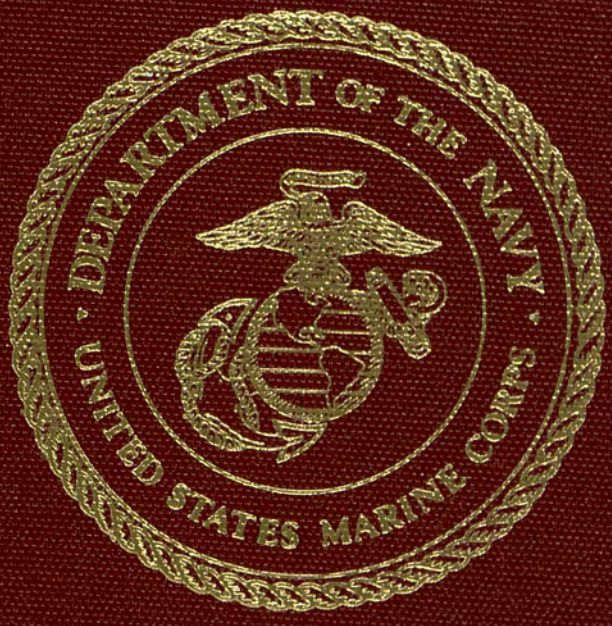

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

see that. The Thai chief of staff was infuriated, he said you have to keep going. They calmed him down, said, "No." So, we got out. It was a good day, not too much mud and that sort of thing. We went over there and, of course, this Marine saluted, you know, a million bucks, and he escorted the King and Queen in and she looked at this thing and here were all these twenty bunks lined up with their mosquito nets in place and everything was perfectly lined up, the floor glistened like, it was perfect, which it was supposed to be. And she came back out and she said, "How many tents do you have in this camp?" I said, "Oh, I think there are probably as many as 200." She said, "I believe you told me you were going to show me a typical tent." Of course, I walked right into it, and I said, "Oh, yes." And she said, "Well then, am I to believe that all 200 look exactly like this one?" And I said, "Oh, no." And I laughed and she laughed and I said, "As you know, we've been working on that one for two weeks." And she said, "I thought so." A delightful lady. They wouldn't let us give them a meal, well, we didn't have anything to eat--we had plenty to eat--but we didn't have anything to put on a proper luncheon for a King and Queen, so they were with us only about two hours. But, great moral booster for the troops. We had all the troops there in a position to see the King and Queen, although only a very few actually met them, but we positioned our troops and deployed in such fashion that everybody got to see them.

Anderson: How was the morale of the troops during this?

Simpson: Oh, it was great.

Anderson: They liked this mission?

Simpson: Oh, sure. They liked to be doing something and they thought it was important and it was important. And they worked hard, we eventually began to get a little better food in there, we never really got around to true A-rations, but we occassionally would get some beef, poultry, and that sort of thing. We couldn't use anything locally. One of the interesting things, Terry, was that when we got off the airplanes with our guns drawn on this great warfare expedition, the first thing that created us were Coca Cola vendors.

Anderson: No kidding?

Simpson: And we learned right away, after we landed and went through the formalities of meeting the governor and the rest of this sort of thing, then as soon as the troops took a blow, they started buying these cokes because they were ice cold. They were in buckets or vats that had ice in it and then these were bottled cokes, not canned. And the troops started buying this stuff, they were bartering for them, we had no Thai money. So, they were our first casualties of diarrhea. And we found out to our horror that we couldn't do that because all the ice was contaminated. Now, it didn't bother the locals because they'd been drinking it for a hundred generations, it didn't bother them, but it tore us all apart. And so while they had

ice drinks, the coke was bottled in Bangkok, so it was okay, but the little bit of water around the cap where they took it off where it had been in the ice water, that was enough to do it. So, what we finally had to do, see we had our own water making machines, water distillation, so our water was safe. We could take the Thai water from the rivers and creeks and evenutally from the rain capture basins that we built and we could run it through our systems and we had safe water. So, arrangements were finally made so the troops would have some ice to have ice drinks. We began to get cokes and that sort of thing, but we had a few ice machines, but they didn't work very well. But here's what we did. We made a deal with the local ice plant and we leased so many of their big containers. We brought those out to our camp, cleansed them, and put our water into them, took them in and froze them in the ice plants and brought it out. And that was the way the troops had ice for their cold drinks.

But, we worked hard, there was no liberty. The town was of no consequence or eventually the prostitutes from Bangkok began to arrive. We had very little, very little VD, far less than we had in Okinawa, which was our home base, far less than we had there.

Anderson: Why do you think?

Simpson: Well, I don't think there was really that much traffic, you see. We didn't allow the troops to go in at night,

they went in the daytime. I didn't find out until late in the game that the prostitutes were there; there were none there when we got there, and I didn't find out until late in the game that they were there.

Anderson: Did the troops ever get liberty down to Bangkok?

Simpson: No, we didn't have any way to get them there and back.

Anderson: Too far down. Now, you said that Air America was at Udorn and what was their role, they were flying helicopters?

Simpson: They were into clandestine operations in Laos. Matter of fact, their being there was a godsend to us because some of the Air America pilots were former Marine pilots, if you recall, during that period of time, they would allow a guy, he was actually formally discharged from the Marine Corps, but there was an unwritten contract that he could come back in at the end of this Air America time if he wanted to. So, some of those pilots that were flying....

Anderson: Something like the Flying Tigers then?

Simpson: Yes, same sort of thing, except, spookier. They were involved in sabotage and all--well, I never did find out all they were doing, but they were all across the border.

Anderson: Did you ever discuss--ever have an opportunity to discuss it with them?

Simpson: I had the opportunity, but I knew they were bound by secrecy so they didn't offer and I didn't ask. I did--the commander, whoever he was, that commanded this Air America unit there had the only portable air conditioning system in northeast Thailand and he invited me up there--he also had running water--he invited me up there for a shower when I first got there a couple of times. But it was handy because they had the same helicopters as we did and had a much better supply line because they had a straight shot supply line to Sikorsky and ours had to go through Navy channels, so we got a lot of helicopter parts from them.

Anderson: How many helicopters did they have?

Simpson: They had 30, more than we did.

Anderson: And how many Air America pilots, or how many troops, how big was their contingent?

Simpson: Not big, not big. I don't think they had more than 100 people altogether, including pilots. They had about six or seven small aircraft that could operate from very short strips and rough strips and that sort of thing--those slope-winged airplanes, you know, that could fly at very low speeds. They were taking agents in and out of Laos, they did a lot of operations at night. They were never any bother to us, we didn't bother them.

Anderson: Were the helos painted black?

Simpson: Yes, totally black with no markings whatsoever.

Anderson: How did they get along with the Marines?

Simpson: Fine, fine. They stayed very much to themselves, they were a mulitnational group, mostly Americans, but not all--some soldiers of fortune in that group. The guy that was the commander of the thing, whatever he was called, had been a Navy captain.

Anderson: No kidding.

Simpson: And he told me that he was making--that if he stayed out there 36 months, he didn't have to pay any income tax and he was making, I think, $7,000 a month.

Anderson: $7,000 a month?

Simpson: A month, a month.

Anderson: Tax-free?

Simpson: Yes.

Anderson: My goodness, what an incentive.

Simpson: That's what he told me he was getting, and the pilots were getting comparable payment. Of course, I had people--well, we weren't flying the same mission. We could not--the Ambassador would not let me go to Vientiane for example. He would let me fly up to the south bank of the Mekong. I could

go overland. But, he didn't want me to go overland, really. I could fly up there or I could go the ferry, Nong Khai Ferry to the ferry site, but I couldn't cross the Mekong. He didn't want me ever to be out of the country into Laos. So, my reconnaissance of Vientiane was from a helicopter 300 feet in the air over the Mekong, but on the Thai side.

We sent patrols all the way up there sort of an exercise all the time, and we fanned out all over the country. And one of the first things we did after we sort of got on our feet and got out tents built, is we started a sort of people-to-people program and medical support. And that turned out to be very rewarding.

Anderson: Working with the Thai people?

Simpson: Yes, with the Thais.

Anderson: Vaccinations or what?

Simpson: Oh, yes. There were a lot of Thais that were adults that had never been seen by doctors. And we had an awful lot of medicine because we had taken a lot. We'd taken wartime supplies down there and our doctors found out that the demand for medical support for the Thais was very great and they weren't taxed, you see. We had a bunch of healthy Americans and they were treating diarrhea, which I could treat or a corpsman could treat, a few cuts and abrasions and that sort of thing. Nobody's getting shot. And they went and established

contact with the missionaries...Oh, my most terrific source of information of all was a Roman Catholic who'd been there 60 years, a priest.

Anderson: No kidding.

Simpson: 60 years, an Italian. But, he told us of this great need for medical help and promised to go with us and so we sent these doctors in helicopters with a squad of Marines into these outlying villages where there'd never been a doctor, Thai doctor or any other kind of doctor. And they'd set up a clinic, a whole clinic--never there overnight, just during the day.

Anderson: What did the people think of that?

Simpson: They thought it was great, they thought it was just great.

Anderson: Did any Thai soldiers go along or was it just Americans?

Simpson: No, no.

Anderson: Did you have to get special permission from the governors of these areas?

Simpson: Oh, sure. We got them to invite us. In other words, we made ourselves available and said, "If you would like to have us come. And what they would do, they'd send a guy in from that village and then he would accompany us over there and

identify the village and we'd make a couple of circles over there and drop a smoke grenade to get the wind and that sort of stuff so we could land and just set up a clinic for that day.

Anderson: And did you go out on some of these?

Simpson: Yes, I wasn't supposed to but I did. I went twice. It was fascinating. The interesting by-product of this thing--see, we didn't ask anybody, we just did it.

Anderson: You didn't ask the command back on Okinawa or you didn't ask the Ambassador.

Simpson: No, no, I didn't ask the Ambassador, I told the Ambassador.

Anderson: Oh, you told him you were doing this?

Simpson: Yes, I told him I was doing this.

Anderson: What was his opinion?

Simpson: He thought it was great, he thought it was great. And I said, "I'm not asking you, I'm just wanted you to know that I'm doing it." And I said, "I want to protect you, you can claim that you never gave me permission, but I want to tell you because if it's going to get you in trouble, I'll stop it." He said, "I'm all for it." So we went ahead. But somehow, the word got back as to what we were doing.

Anderson: It got back to Okinawa?

Simpson: It got all the way back to the States. I guess maybe through some correspondents that came through, news correspondents or something. But, in any event, one day I just happened to be down at the airstrip and our regular courier plane--we had a courier plane that flew supplies, food, and things up, came in every day. We had a logistic trip everyday to Bangkok and there were always things that the command had to buy. I don't mean shopping, but things that we couldn't get locally that we needed, and there wasn't time to get it out of Okinawa. But anyway, that plane would bring up passengers and one day I happened to be down there and a guy got off the plane, I looked up at the plane when they stopped and they opened the door--it was a C54--and they opened the door and saw this guy sort of stagger back. Here he was in the Navy, commander's uniform, he had a tie on with the long sleeves and he had his coat over his arm and boy, when that heat and that humidity hit him--see it was about 110-115 degrees, it was about 90 percent relative humidity.

Anderson: Wow!

Simpson: It was hotter there than I was in Vietnam. This was after the typhoon was over--the monsoon was over. We didn't have a typhoon, monsoon. Hot, dry, and see, in that part of the country it was so dry, they only got one rice crop a year. Whereas, in most of Thailand they get two.

Anderson: But how do they have such high humidity?

Simpson: Well, I don't know, but it was there. I guess a lot of it came from the Mekong which was just 30 kilometers away. But the humidity was--we were literally wringing wet all the time with sweat. We got acclimated, it wasn't pleasant, but I mean, we weren't complaining about it really, but you could see this guy stagger. The plane was on the ground normally about an hour and a half. That was the turn around. And he made some inquiries of the people that met the airplane and they brought him over to me and he said he needed to talk to me, that he was on a special mission. Okay, so we went over to my tent and the man sat down. I could tell he was dying, so I said, "How would you like a glass of cold water?" And he said, "He'd love it," so the aide got him a glass of water. We had ice by that time, by the method that I had previously explained to you. We got him the water and it revived him a little bit and he said he was a commander in the Navy Medical Corps, not a doctor, that he had to do--he was from San Francisco--and that he had to do with Navy medical supplies. Fine. And he said, "It is our understanding in the San Francisco Navy Medical Depot that you're giving away US Navy medical supplies to the Thais." And I said, "That's correct." And he said, "By whose authority are you doing that?" And I said, "Mine." He said, "You have no higher authority?" "No." "Why not?" I said, "Well, I'm the commander on the spot and I'm the area commander and it was something that needed to be done and I thought it was good for the Thai people and I thought it was good for the American

cause here." He said, "You didn't ask anyone?" I said, "No." He said, "Did you ask the Ambassador?" I said, "No." He said, "Did you inform the Ambassador?" I said, "I don't know what business it is of yours." He said, "I've been sent out here to find out what you're doing." I said, "Well, I just told you." He said, "You know, this is strictly against the law?" I said, "I don't know anything of the sort. What law are you talking about?" And then he sort of hemmed and hawed and he said, "But you know, you just don't do things like this." And I said, "Well, I'm doing it." And he said, "Yes, but you're doing it without proper authority." And I said, "Well, what is proper authority? I have no immediate superior in the area. I was sent down here to run this outfit and I saw fit to do this. I have no particular precedent for it, I've never run into this problem before. Yes, we're doing it." And he said, "Are you going to stop?" And I said, "No, no, not unless we run out of medical supplies." The doctors and I had gotten together and we'd figured out how much of this stuff we could give away. And he said, "Well, I'll certainly have to make a report on this." And I said, "Why don't you do that." And he said, "Would it be alright if I go back to Bangkok now?" And I said, "Welcome, get on the airplane." That was the last I ever heard of it. Not to this day have I ever heard anything about it.

Anderson: No kidding.

Simpson: Yes, it was kind of funny. When I finally withdrew

and went back to Okinawa....

End Side 2, Tape 6

Begin Tape 7, Side 1

Simpson: ...the Commandant came out to Okinawa, not to see me, but he came out. Of course, we had a long session about the Thai situation. He started laughing and he said, "Ormond, I understand you were giving away medical supplies out there." And I said, "Yes, let me tell you about this." And I told him about it. He said, "I think it's a grand idea. Did you know you got put on report?" And I said, "Yes, I figured I did." I told him about his guy coming out there. He said, "Everybody up and down the chain of command will laugh that guy out of his mind. He came back to Pearl Harbor and tried to breed hate and discontent around there and everybody just laughed him off," and said, "We never heard anymore about it." But everybody agreed, it made common sense, and we had it. We weren't giving away expensive things.

Anderson: No, you were giving shots of penicillin and things like that.

Simpson: Treating sores, and I mean, it was just plenty is what it was, not like we were doing radium therapy or something like that.

Anderson: Yes. Now, you said you went out in the field twice

and witnessed this. How did the Thai people respond to this and what kind of problems did you come up against out in the field? I mean what kind of medical problems did these people have?

Simpson: They had sores, they had--the dentist was one of the busiest of all.

Anderson: I would think so.

Simpson: Many of the people had never seen a dentist and were terribly infected. All he could do was extractions. He couldn't do any fillings, he didn't have time to do that. But, oh, it was a very touching thing. You see, they knew what we were coming for and why. The messages had gone back and forth, so they knew why we were there. And you had a feeling that you wanted to do a great deal more, in other words, you wished that you could set up a small hospital and administer these people. We didn't have those kind of resources, but we got a great deal of satisfaction out of what we were able to do, which only scratched the surface. I think in all of northeast Thailand and all of an area about--oh, hell, our area was at least the size of the state of Alabama--I think there four doctors, Thai doctors. So, medical care for those people--see, that's the poor portion of Thailand up there. As you get back down into the delta regions and, of course, the northwest is the golden triangle. Now that's where all the opium and that sort of thing comes from. They're rather affluent up there, so I'm told. I

never got up there. And of course, Bangkok is a big industrial area and that sort of thing and a great seaport. Entirely different, but in our area the people were extremely poor. The only real merchants of any consequence were the Chinese. The Thais believed in putting their worldly goods, such as they were, into gold. So there were shops run by overseas Chinese who had been there forever, and I suppose are still there.

Very little for the troops to buy. Those souvenir merchants in Bangkok heard about us and they chartered aircraft and came up and we let them put up shops. Except Johnny Gems, whom I had known on a previous visit to Bangkok...

Anderson: Who is this, Johnny?

Simpson: "Johnny's Gems" they called it. He's an American, but has been out there for 40 years and he had shop of souvenirs, gems, sapphires, and that sort of thing. See, there are all kinds of grades of sapphires, you know, there are real good sapphires and then there are what passes as industrial things. The troops would buy them.

Anderson: Now, you were there for about four months.

Simpson: About four months, right.

Anderson: Why were you pulled out?

Simpson: Because Harriman signed what was called the Geneva Accords, and included in that was our complete withdrawal.

There is an interesting story about how we got the word on that.

I had about concluded--our camp was built, our conditions were sanitary, we had started our training, our physical conditioning training, we had borrowed a Thai army rifle range and began to brush up on our marksmanship. But I decided we didn't really have any idea how long we were going to be there. It was an indefinite kind of thing, open-ended. I had assembled all the commanders at my tent...Oh, they built me a rather fancy affair then. It was not a tent, it was really a shack, tin roof and that sort of thing, it had an office and sort of conference room and there was a target cloth partition and behind it I had a couple of bunks, my clothes and personal gear back in that part. And that's where I had this staff conference and I was in the midst of telling these people, "Okay, now we're going to go into phase two, now we're going to get down to some serious training, combined training, night helicopter landings, and that kind of thing--troop movements of helicopters-helicopter movement of infantry troops at night, the kind of thing we had been wanting to get to but couldn't because of these higher priority things. And I said, "Now, the business of building the camp and getting settled is done, we don't know how long we're going to be here but I want to see in the next 36 hours training schedules covering the next three months." And I'm in the midst of doing this when we see this liaison aircraft land, and in a minute a guy comes

screaming up in a jeep and he brought me a message from the task force commander, who was an Army commander, two star, and he was down in--forgotten the name--he was down south from me about 200 miles and this was one of his messengers and he had sent me a message and as I was telling these guys, "Now we're going to start training..." and I opened this dispatch and it said, "Get out. Move 1,000 Marines out in 24 hours, the remainder to follow as expeditiously as possible, everything goes." That was essentially the message. But, they added a little filip on there that the first things you take out are your attack aircraft. Well, I protested the hell out of that. I said, "You know, that's the last thing I want to get out of here. If we're going to pull our tail in, going to get the administrative troops out first and save the infantry and the helicopters and the attack aircraft til the tail end. And besides, when you evacuate A-4s you only get 18 people out." "No, they've got to go." So, I said, "Okay." We can do this, provided you give us a transport aircraft." They said, "Okay, we'll do that." So, the transport aircraft began to arriving the next day, we flew the A-4s out at dawn, they went to Clark Air Force Base, and then we began to load the infantry, because that's the only way we could get the numbers, the big numbers. And within the hours of daylight, we moved 1,000 out.

We were supposed to go back to our home base.

Anderson: Back to Okinawa.

Simpson: Back to Okinawa, but the point was, to get the hell out Thailand, and they didn't care in the meantime where we went as long as we got out of Thailand. And we had to send hourly dispatches about how many had gone. And of course, we had to get our equipment out too. And we sent the battalion landing team, essentially, back down to Bangkok, put them aboard ships. In the meantime they had brought the ships in. The equipment had to go over the narrow gauge railroads, which it did; and the aircraft, of course, could fly out; but we had to get the transports in to get the aircraft equipment out of there.

One of the interesting things was, we had a crane, and we had C-130s which could go out with about--if it was cool enough and they left early enough, they could go out with about 20,000 pounds. But we had some oversize stuff that had to go out in the C-124s, Air Force 124s. We were using both Marine and Air Force 130s, but the Air Force only had the 124s and had to take some of the big equipment. We were almost down to the bitter end when they came around and told me, they said, "Well, we got one piece that we can't get out, and it's the boom of a crane and it weighs 24,200." And I said, "How the hell did you get it in here?" They said, "We flew it in," and I said, "Well, you're going to fly it out!" Well, we went down there and we had the 124--we could get it in alright, you know, it had clam-shell doors, but the pilot said he didn't know whether he could get off the ground with it. Well, I said, "Are you willing to try?" And he said, "Sure, I'll try." So, we light-

ened the aircraft as much as we could in terms that we didn't put anything else on. It didn't take up all the room, but we just put this boom in there. It was not something that could have been disassembled. You could have cut it with torches into lesser pieces but you would have destroyed it.

Anderson: Ruined it.

Simpson: But we brought it in there and I was determined to get it out. Of course, they reminded me that we took off to begin with that thing where we had 12,000 feet and we only had 7,000 there, which did make quite a difference. But that day, that guy made five runs with that loaded aircraft, and he never got it to the point where it would fly, he always stopped, you see. But he was game, and when he came back the last time, I said, "Well, did you give up?" And he said, "No, I'm going to do it one more time." He said, "I'll do it 5 o'clock in the morning, at first light when it was cool." So, we got the aircraft and we--see, we didn't have any overruns, prepared overruns. The strip was like so and this was cleared back here of trees, but it was mud. We didn't have hard surface overruns or anything like that. This was the overrun. And we took this bird down here and we put the wheels here and the tails stuck back over this mud. In other words, that was the most we could give. So, we all went down there the next...by this time, there are only a couple hundred of us left there. I was determined to be the last guy out of Thailand. So, this

guy got in, they got the crew aboard and everything, and he ran up all the engines, the plane had four engines, he ran them all up to full power with all the brakes on, then he left the brakes off and he started rolling. And he rolled and when he passed this point and still had on full power, we knew he was going to try it. And we got right here, he pulled up his gear and he was airborne. But he didn't gain any altitude, he only had 15 feet which was just enough to clear the hamlet. The last time we saw the aircraft, my aviator friend was standing along side me and he said the pilot was afraid to change heading. The last time we saw him, he went out of sight, he gained about 75 feet, I guess. But he had to keep that same heading, he couldn't afford to change headings until he got up. But, of course, the longer he flew, the better he was, because he was burning down on fuel. So, he finally got away.

Anderson: He was picking up on speed, too.

Simpson: Picking up on speed and, of course, as he burnt fuel down, he got lighter and lighter and he made it over to Clark, of course, when he got to Clark he had 12,000 feet, and he got back to Okinawa.

That was a lot of fun. And we came out through Bangkok, went down and made a final call on the Ambassador and went back home.

It was a fascinating experience, as a division commander said, it was a "brigadier's war." It wasn't a war, but I mean,

he had to stay back in Okinawa.

Anderson: Sure, yes. Now, what did you think of the Geneva Accord?

Simpson: We weren't at all familiar with it, the only affect it had on us was to get out of Thailand. We weren't sorry to go.

Anderson: Probably eager to get back to some good conditions.

Simpson: Well, we were, we were. We wanted to get back to some good food and sort of normal living. We were prepared to stay indefinitely, but I think we would probably have had some problems, Terry, with morale. We didn't, you see, because everybody was so busy at first. But there would have been a boredom set in with there being...See, we had no movies, we did have some beer, but we handled that pretty carefully. We learned in World War II the fallacy of rationing beer. If you say everyman gets two cans, everyman in the place will go out and get two cans. But, if you just say, "There's beer available," those that don't want to drink beer won't do it, they'll drink coke. And so, it's better--we never gave it out, we wouldn't give away a case at a time, but we gave away one can at a time. But a guy could come back and get one or two more individually, you see. We didn't have any trouble with that. We did that only in the daytime, didn't do it at night. And that's the kind of routine that once the excitement had worn

off, once the camp was built, the troops could see that it wasn't going to get any better. I think if we had stayed another four months, we would have had problems, but we didn't have any.

A typhoon came through as we were coming out and we had troops scattered all over the western Pacific. It took us about three weeks to get everybody back to Okinawa. But, we finally got them all back.

Anderson: It didn't sound like, even though you were out in Okinawa for some months, it didn't sound like you really had much to do there at all. Almost all of it was a layover, I mean, the battalion operation.

Simpson: Well, I was away. We also had troops training up in Mt Fuji, and I was up there every month for three days with them. And during that time, we had, it's not true now, but we had excellent training areas in Okinawa including the northern training area. So, I spent most of my time observing and advising on training on Okinawa. And on Okinawa, of course, we lived a life that was in terms of human creature comforts was comparable to the United States. The troops were all housed in permanent type barracks. We had good training areas, we had a lot of ammunition, we fired a lot. Nobody had their families so we could do a lot night exercises. The training camp on the slopes of Mt Fuji was very primitive, but we trained--we had an interesting training sequence there.

At Fuji we trained from Monday morning until Friday noon, including four nights. Now, I don't mean that everybody went 24 hours a day, but there were no real--in other words, if you might start an exercise at 8 o'clock on Monday morning and run it until 8 o'clock Tuesday morning. We did a lot of night exercises, we did a lot of artillery shooting; we could shoot everything we had including 8 inch up there--we had a good artillery range. We did have some problems with the Japanese who didn't think we ought to be there, but the Japanese government was behind us all the way. And then at Friday noon, we would secure everything and then give the troops liberty until Monday morning. And there were splendid trains that ran through there. Japanese trains are great, you know. Probably second only to the French or German--put in by the Germans. They could go to Tokyo, which they all did one time, but then what the troops did, which I thought was interesting, and of course, they devised this themselves; they would get on the train and they'd go north. They would get crawl off the train at just some small Japanese village and they'd spend Saturday night there--not speaking a damned word of English. It was cheap, they had a lot of fun, Japanese were warm and friendly to them. As I say, they all went to Tokyo one time. I made sure that when I went that I got out Friday morning because if I stayed there over the weekend that meant a lot of other people had to stay too. So, I did that for the sake of making sure that they didn't have to stay there and also I enjoyed it

because I went in and out of there by helicopter, but I flew down to Okinawa, I mean to Tokyo, and I spent Friday, Saturday, and Sunday night in the San Hotel in Tokyo, which was then a military command home, run by U.S. military, and then fly back to Okinawa on Monday. So, I moved around a great deal.

I would guess that in the 12 months that I was assigned to Okinawa, my combined time on the island was less than 50 percent. We also had a training area down in the Philippines, and I visited down there frequently. It was a good initial tour for a brigadier, real good.

Anderson: I was also wondering about another aspect of Okinawa, about a decade after you were there. Of course, Okinawa was returned to the Japanese and I was wondering about, did you have any problems with either the Japanese on Okinawa? You mentioned a minute ago that you had some problems with the Japanese that felt that Okinawa should be returned. Did you have any incidents of this, how did the Okinawans feel toward the Americans, and finally, what was your opinion of returning this military installation back to the Japanese?

Simpson: Well, first I have to give you only--I must first tell you of my experience there, under American control.

Anderson: Sure.

Simpson: We had no problems with either the Okinawans or the Japanese. We were in complete command.

Anderson: Okay.

Simpson: Both the Okinawans and the Japanese, understandably, exploited the presence of the Americans and the almighty dollar. Outside of everyone of our camps were massage parlors; "Hotsi baths," as they are called out there; souvenir shops; restaurants of all various kinds; and that sort of thing. It was one of our first problems that we encountered with troubles within our own group between black and white.

Anderson: No kidding?

Simpson: Yes.

Anderson: This was one of the first times in your experience in the Marines?

Simpson: That was the first time that it was ever serious.

Anderson: Oh! Well, let's talk about that.

Simpson: There was a place there called Koza Four Corners, which the black Marines took over to be their "turf." And when a Caucasian Marine entered there, there were gang-fights. That was a source of big problems for us. But the problem was internal within the Marines, it was not American Marines versus either Japanese or Okinawan. And that sometimes was a serious sort of problem for us.

The VD rate was high, prostitution was widespread, the people were poor. The only people that really had any money

were the Okinawans or Japanese who owned the land where we had leased the land and built the American installations. There were a few, I didn't get to know them, but there were a few that became quite wealthy. It was often said that the best land hold in Okinawa was a guy that owned the land under that six feet of concrete that was the Kadena airstrip because it was going to be there forever, and he had a lease that would run til all time. Now, perhaps the Japanese had changed that since they took it over.

But, we didn't have any problem. We were not subject to Okinawan law--our people, for infractions were under the Status of Forces Agreement, were always returned to us for trial whatever it may be. That's no longer true under the Japanese. Now, I have not been--I've been through there--but I have not served in Okinawa since it returned to Japanese control. But people tell me that it's very, very uncomfortable, that the Americans sort of live within compounds now. Under that Status of Forces Agreement, if they commit an offense against the Japanese code off base, then they're tried in Japanese courts. And people tell me that it's not nearly as pleasant a place to serve and I'm sure it's not.

Anderson: And what's your opinion of handing it back to the Japanese?

Simpson: Well, it was inevitable, it was going to be done at sometime. If this country was not going to pose as an imperial-

ist conqueror, it had been Japanese territory--of course, it had been Chinese at one time too, way back there. But at the time of World War II, it was under Japanese control. It was, indeed, a prefecturate of Japan and so, really, in order to keep the faith and to demonstrate that indeed we didn't fight the war for imperialistic purposes, at some time or another, we had to return it to them with certain safeguards for our own troops. So, I think, probably, it was....From my standpoint, militarily, we didn't like it because it wasn't a pleasant thing to do and it posed all sorts of problems to us, but politically speaking, I think it was inevitable and I suppose the time they did it was the time they felt they had to. I think we resisted as long as we could. So, from a purely military standpoint, we'd have preferred to keep it indefinitely under our control, but we don't run those sort of things and I think the political facts of life were that it had to go back to the Japanese otherwise we would have been in the role of a conqueror and that we'd conquerored this land and we were going to keep it.

Anderson: Now, did you have any problems with the Americans who were civilians and who decided to stay out in Okinawa? I heard there was a large colony of Americans. There are a lot of people, of course, living off the American dollar of the military population.

Simpson: Quite a lot. No, no, quite a number of people, but

not a lot of trouble from our standpoint. I met some of those people; some were in business--most were in business of some kind. Of course, there was a large civilian government, so called, of civilians; some State Department officials, some that had been with the State Department, was really governing the civilian population of Okinawa at that time. They had a huge staff, a great bureaucracy. They didn't pose us any problem. I mean, we had five bases, the Marines had five camps or bases there on Okinawa and within those confines, we could do whatever we wanted to.

Anderson: How many bases or camps do you have now for the Marines on Okinawa.

Simpson: Four, four.

Anderson: Do you remember the approximate size of our contingent in Okinawa then and do you know what it is now?

Simpson: It's about the same.

Anderson: Oh, okay.

Simpson: Two-thirds of a Marine division, which is probably between 12 and 14,000 ground troops, and I would guess, an air contingent of--on Okinawa--an air contingent of about 7 to 8,000. That's roughly what they had--a little bit more air, the ground is about the same. See, in the Pacific, we have one Marine division, one-third of it, the brigade I spoke of before

is in Hawaii, two-thirds of the division is in Okinawa. So, theoretically, you could take that brigade in Okinawa and move it to--and a lot of contingency plans provide for that and, indeed, they did in Vietnam--they moved it out there and then you've got a full division. And the same's true, there's an air group in Kanehoe, Hawaii which is a part of the 1st Marine Air Wing, which is based in Japan. Well, now, I believe it's probably been moved down to Okinawa. So, the total U.S. Marine population may be a little bit higher because we've gotten completely out of Atsugi, which was a naval air station right outside of Tokyo. They still have a--I've forgotten the other one in Japan--they've still got one in Japan. But, it's probably a little bit higher.

Anderson: How did you deal with that black problem that you spoke of earlier?

Simpson: Never successfully. We pushed to have the streets (patrolled) heavily with military police, both black and white, usually travelling in pairs--one black and one white. And then we worked on it through our black noncommissioned officers --there are very few black officers. But I guess, what little success we enjoyed in controlling it was done through the black noncommissioned officers, the more senior noncommissioned officers. As a matter of fact, the division sergeant major was black and he was very effective in dealing with that sort of thing. But during that time there, it was never satis-

factorily solved. Whether it still exists, I don't know. But that was the most serious problem that we had and it was one internal to ourselves.

Anderson: Okay. Now, in November of '62, you left and you went to become the Assistant Director of Personnel, but you were only there for about four months. Why was your tour of duty so short?

Simpson: In Headquarters, Marine Corps?

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: I was again in a sort of holding pattern. I came home from Okinawa because of the end of my tour, but I was destined to become, as I eventually did, the G-1 in Headquarters, Marine Corps. But, they weren't ready yet to make that shift, and that Assistant Directorship of Personnel was an interim holding assignment in Headquarters, Marine Corps, but it was associated with the personnel business until the then G-1 was promoted. When he was promoted and moved on, then I took his position.

Anderson: You were there as G-1 and Assistant Chief of Staff from '63 to '65.

Simspon: That's correct.

Anderson: Now, this is, of course, during the period of John Kennedy and Kennedy had the all the idea of the vigar--I remem-

ber one of the things that he did was pull out some old Marine manual and found out that at one time they were doing 50 mile hikes, and then all of a sudden, I remember, all kinds of Marines were out there hiking 50 miles. Would you comment on that.

Simpson: Oh, yes. We were in Washington, of course, at the time so were weren't hiking 50 miles. But the Kennedy administration during our time there in Washington was an exciting one. He was interested in the armed forces, he was interested in the Green Berets in particular.

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: He was interested in physical fitness, the Marine Corps had always been interested in that, but as you say, we got into the business of everybody in the field out hiking 50 miles to prove they could do it. It was a really exciting time. The Marine Corps faired very well under President Kennedy. Of course, we were in Washington at the time of his assassination, shocked like the rest of the nation at that time. Oh, Washington was a rather exciting place to be under Kennedy. I had no contact with him. I met him once or twice, but I had no real contact with him.

Anderson: Did the Marines actually--did they get their men out there doing 50 mile hikes or was this a response to Kennedy? Did they make hikes mandatory or just what were the orders on that?

Simpson: There weren't any orders at all, Terry. This story got out about the 50 mile hikes, I've forgotten who did it, somebody down at Lejeune, first of all. (Ed. Note: General Tompkins? Simpson: Yes). They took off and they did 50 miles in I've forgotten how many hours. Well, of course, that caught on like wild flower in the Marine Corps. Rather spontaneous type of thing, you know, these guys can do it, we can do it in shorter time. So, people were doing it against time, but there were no orders from us about it, no orders from the Commandant about it, except, just as a sort of general admonition every now and then. You know, 50 miles is fine, you don't kill your guys in the process, make sure you're ready to hike 50 miles before you start hiking 50 miles. But there was no organized program as far as the Marine Corps was concerned, very spontaneous thing--like running today is the big thing, you know. You give so many times if you clock 1,000 miles jogging or running and so forth and so on like that. But nothing that was an organized program of 50 mile hikes.

Anderson: Okay. And of course, you're absolutely right that Kennedy took a lot of interest and especially elite forces like the Green Berets. Now, the Marines, also, they consider themselves an elite force. Is there any competition or rivalry between the Green Berets and the Marines?

Simpson: Oh, of course, of course. Just as there is rivalry--the Green Berets are not many in numbers now--but there's rival-

ry between--but, I'd say a rather friendly rivalry--between the Marines and the 82d Airborne or Airborne Corps. You know, they think they're more ready than we are and we think we're more ready than they are. As we get to it a little bit later, when we went into the Dominican Republic, we got a great kick out of the fact that we got in there before the 82d Airborne got in. But that's a very healthy rivalry, Terry. It's not a bitter, nasty thing. Oh, I'm sure it's engendered some barroom brawls, but the rivalry is a very healthy one because what it does is to bring out the sort of best traits or maximum effort to live up to their boast.

Anderson: Sure, yes.

Simpson: So, I think that's pretty good, you know. Got that 50 mile hikes and that sort of thing going, any man who is reasonable shape, that's no big deal. Of course, when you start cutting down on the timing, that becomes something of a problem.

Anderson: Now, did the Army get out there and hike too?

Simpson: Yes, right after we got a lot of publicity and got in Time and Life magazine, they started doing it.

Anderson: Did you ever go on one of these hikes?

Simpson: No, I never did make that far, I never did go that far. At the time that it was the thing to do, I was in Washington and by the time I got down to the 2d Division, it wasn't

all that big a deal anymore because it was boring as hell. We didn't have any one 50 mile stretch and so you're going around and around and around, you know. And I could not see much sense in it, I mean, I felt that I could hike 50 miles if I were called upon to do so, but just to do it for the sake of saying I've done 50 miles of hiking--I probably would have done it had I been in the division at the time it became a popular thing to do because everybody was doing it.

Anderson: Sure, yes.

Simpson: But by the time I got there, very few people were doing that sort of thing. Also, by the time I got to the 2d Division we were more interested in Vietnam.

Anderson: Right, absolutely. Well, let's go back to G-1 at Headquarters, which you did from '63 to '65. What were the problems there?

Simpson: Well, Terry, the problems were always those that then and now confront any G-1 who, as you know, is in charge of the personnel policy and planning, this type of thing. The problems of procuring the quality recruit that you want. We had no problem of procuring officers. The problem of inadequate pay, which was rectified, began to be rectified shortly thereafter by the House Armed Services Committee. The only real, to my memory now, the only real significant problem that we ran into which festered along during this period of time

and afterwards, it's a non-problem now but was a problem then and that was the fact that those 30 odd thousand troops in the Far East were supposed to be without dependents. And the Marine Corps went through a very futile, futile, and in retrospect, ridiculous campaign to try to keep dependents off the island, unauthorized dependents off the island. You see, some people brought their dependents out there at their own expense. The Marine Corps took great umbrage at that and tried to run them off and, of course, they were civilians and stood up to their rights as civilians. And the Marines who did bring their dependents out there got into all kinds of trouble with the duly elected representatives--we didn't handle ourselves very well on that, the Marine Corps didn't. And I had a terrible time, I had to defend that policy in Congress and it was a very awkward one.

Anderson: They called you in front of the Armed Services Committee?

Simpson: Oh, yes. I did a lot of testifying for the Armed Services.

Anderson: And when was that?

Simpson: Well, see, I testified on all the budgets, which every year, that would be a minimum of four appearances because we went before the House Armed Services Committee, the House Appropriations Committee, the Senate Armed Services Appropriation

tee. And four appearances, Terry, some of those appearances would be as much as two and three days running, I mean, that would be one appearance I'm talking about.

Anderson: It must have been a real drain.

Simpson: It was, it was a terribly emotional drain, because first of all, to prepare for it would take about three months. And then the testifying itself was a drain because you had to watch everything you said, you see, not to "sell the farm." So, it was an exhilarating thing, I mean a very challenging thing. I learned a great deal during that time. I learned the fact that you can conclude your prepared statement by telling the committee that you'll answer all their questions. One of my predecessors did that, and Mr. Vinson told him that he felt very confident, that his committee could ask him some questions, that he couldn't answer. And he had better modify his remark. So, by the time I learned of this, I concluded all my statements by saying, "Thank you, gentlemen, for your attention. I will attempt to respond to whatever questions you may have."

By and large, it was a friendly committee, a friendly Congress. The Marine Corps has enjoyed the confidence of Congress, and indeed, exists today only through the sufferance of Congress, by its support. So, the Marine Corps wants--I mean--the Congress wants the Marine Corps to look good. And so, by and large, their questions were friendly ones. I established very close relations, learning early on in the game,

that while it was important for me to meet and know the committee members, it was even a great deal more important for me to know the members of their professional staff because that's where the guts of the committee operation comes from, the general counsel and his assistants. The committee members themselves don't think of these questions. The staff prepares these questions and gives it to them, and I knew that. And so, we had arrangements set up that, you know, I could plant questions if I wanted to. You know, I could go see the chief counsel and say, "It would be useful if I were asked this." You see, he couldn't ask any questions, the general counsel wouldn't ask any questions, but he could farm out these questions to the committee.

Anderson: Sure.

Simpson: Now, of course, some of them had been on there a long time, I don't mean to say--I'm not speaking disparagingly of Congressmen because for most of them I had a rather high regard. But, a lot of them simply didn't have time to study the thing or ask in depth intelligent questions. However, some like Mr. Vinson, who had been there a very long time, he didn't need much help. He knew the questions to ask.

I defended the budget for what's called the Marine Corps Personnel--MPMC--I'm trying to think of what it stands for. Anyway, it was a budget then of about two billion dollars and it had to do with every personnel cost; the cost of recruiting--

the big cost of pay, pay and allowances--but also the cost for transportation; movement of people, household, families, dependents, and that sort of thing; and all rations. That's an awful lot of money. But, of course, a lot of those things, like other figures in the government budget, Terry, are built in and rather fixed. In other words, you've got so many people and there are various grades and the pay scales are set for them, so by just a sort of multiplication you come up with a great big glut of dollars. But those dollars are not hard to defend because they respond directly to the numbers and grades of the people that you've got. But we were entering the age of the use of computers.

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: And this was fascinating because here again, the Marine Corps makes the mistakes that industry had made, but no longer makes, I suppose. We had the computer capability, but we didn't really know enough about how to use it and we were hiring GS-2s, which as you know, is the lowest rung on the ladder in Civil Service. We were hiring GS-2s to punchcard the data into the computers. And the results we were getting were astounding. And then we learned the old idea of GIGO, you know, "garbage in, garbage out." And we learned that the computer itself didn't make any mistakes, computers don't make mistakes, people make mistakes in telling the computer what to do. But, we were going through a terrible trial at that time

because the computer was not answering the questions, that we wanted to know, accurately and we didn't know why until we found out that we were using people of very limited intelligence to translate the data to put it into the computer. And of course, the answers we were getting out were incorrect. It took us a long time to find out why, but like everybody else, we've overcome that now.

Anderson: How did you resolve that?

Simpson: Oh, by hiring fewer but more intelligent people to process the computer input. I daresay they've probably got a third less people than we had at that time at Headquarters with probably 100 percent more efficiency and accuracy.

Anderson: Of course, this is the time when McNamara came in with his so called, "best and brightest" fellows and they were doing a lot of computerization in the Department of Defense and this is having an impact of the Marine Corps then.

Simpson: On everybody. And of course, the "whiz kids" had us at a terrible disadvantage because they not only had computers, but they had good ones and they had good computer analysts. And they could take our data and do things with it that we couldn't do, which was sometimes very embarrassing to us because they had good computer set ups. We had the hardware, we didn't have the software nor did we have the computer analysts that we needed. We have since developed that capability and

can do all those type of things.

The "whiz kids" were frustrating to deal with.

Anderson: Why is that?

Simpson: Well, they are very bright young men, but the ones that I dealt with were in large measure lacking in what I would call common sense. They knew nothing about the military and they wore that lack of knowledge as a badge of office, badge of honor. Their lack of knowledge about the military, but they were program analysts and system analysts and they were convinced that everything, in McNamara's terms, everything in the military could be quantified. And there we became born enemies because I didn't believe then and I don't believe now that everything in the military can be quantified. As a matter of fact, I don't think everything in any form of human endeavor can be--everything can be quantified, there are some things that can't. But they cost us untold anguish in their belief that everything could be quantified to include on the battlefield. You know, they would say here's a tank and it can go so fast and it has a gun that can fire so many rounds per minute. Ergo, if you have X number of these tanks you should accomplish this and you should win this kind of battle. Assuming that every round fired hit a target and forgetting all about what is the effect of that tank commander's sergeant who got a "Dear John" letter that morning from his wife saying she is running off with somebody else type of thing? This we contend that you

can't crank this into the computer. They wouldn't listen to this.

Anderson: They were frustrating to deal with.

Simpson: They were frustrating for us to deal with.

Anderson: There was a lot of resentment too, wasn't there, among the general corps, or was there a lot of resentment?

Simpson: A tremendous amount of resentment because the McNamara and his legions of this bright young men treated us as if we were just a little better than illiterate.

Anderson: No kidding?

Simpson: Oh, yes.

Anderson: Just a little bit better than illiterate.

Simpson: Just a little bit better, you know. They were all PhDs in science of some sort, particularly, in computer science or systems analysis and very few of us were. I was not. They showed their sort of disgust for our lack of knowledge in these areas and in very irritating ways.

Anderson: For example?

Simpson: Well, they would talk among themselves in a group and then they would turn to us and say, "Well, we wouldn't expect you to understand."

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: And they're talking about our business, you know, "Why don't we do so and so and why don't we change X for Y and do this," and we'd be there sitting there listening, you know, and then they'd turn in a very condescending manner and said, "Oh, I'm sorry, you wouldn't really understand this anyway." And we sort of thought--they were right, we....don't understand!

End Side 1, Tape 7

Begin Side 2, Tape 7

Simpson: ..wasn't exactly the time-frame, but I tend to recall with vivid clarity the circumstances. Those of us that were charged with making these plans and policies and so forth, were called over to the Department of Defense one day--one from each service, I from the Marine Corps--and we were confronted by one of these people in Systems Analysis who advised us that our PCS (Permanent Change of Station) costs were too high, which we knew and we had discussed the situation at great length, about how can we reduce them. And this guy had the answer and he told us when we came in that our personnel costs were too high and that he had the answer. So, we said, "We would be happy to learn because we know they are too high, but we don't have the answer so what is your answer? How do we do this?" I remember this was in May, I don't recall which year, and I could be confused as to whether it happened when I was G-1 or whether

I was three star and Deputy Chief of Staff but the point is the same. The answer is really very simple; you simply freeze everybody in place for 365 days. And if you do that in the Department of Defense, you save 4.2 billion dollars. And he looked at us, he explained this to us and he said, "There, gentlemen, is your answer." So, we were stricken and the first man to speak was my opposite number in the Navy. He said, "Doctor, in the Naval Academy next month [meaning June] we will graduate and commission 992 young men at that time, primarily as ensigns in the Navy but some as second lieutenants in the Marine Corps. Now, are you proposing that we leave those 992 newly commissioned officers at Annapolis?" "Oh, no, no, you train them you've got to get them out to the fleet and get them to work." So, the others spoke up in turn and he agreed that we ought to do the same thing at West Point and Annapolis.

Anderson: And the air academy.

Simpson: At all service academies. Okay. So then I thought, well, I said, "Now, I don't have the exact data, but colleges and universities are graduating next month and some this month and we're commissioning a very sizable people out of the ROTC programs." "Well, yes, you've got to send them out." And I said, "I have 33,000 Marine in the Far East on a dependents excluded tour. They're out there for 13 months. Are you suggesting that they stay another 12 months?" "No, no, bring

them home." I said, "Well, remember now, when I bring them home over the course of the next 13 months, I'll bring 33,000 of them home, but remember that I will also have to send 33,000 of them out there." And he said, "Yes, that's right."

Well, it was a travesty because we led this guy down the primrose path. And we finally showed even him that you can't freeze the services in place. There's no way you can do that sort of thing. I asked him about Iceland, which at that time was one of our "horror" posts. Icelandic people hated the Americans for some reason. We had 72 Marines on guard duty up there, Naval Air Station, Reykjavik--they hated it, the Icelandics hated them. We cut it to nine months. Well, in other words, when we finally got down to it, the only thing we could do, and he did't think of this, we'd already thought of it, and what we started doing, extending tours of duty wherever possible. Where the tour of duty would normally be three years, if it were a reasonable post and if one can call Washington reasonable, we extended most of those to four. Some of the Army extended most of there people in Germany that were pretty well set up, they extended them to four.

Anderson: The people who were satisfied with staying in Germany.

Simpson: That's right, that's right, you know, the ones that were living comfortably. At that time, the economy was such that people in Europe were doing pretty well--the exchange rate was such.

Then we got into a program that we're stilling doing, which we call "cross-basing." For example, Camp Lejeune is a very huge base for the Marine Corps as is Camp Pendleton on the West Coast--the two largest we've got. Several major components there, three in number. In Camp Lejeune there's the Marine Corps Base, there is the 2d Marine Division--and they're what we call Force Troops which the Army would call Corps Troops. What we looked into was having a guy...First of all, it's professionally stagnating for anyone in the military, as you probably could well understand, Terry, to stay in the same job for four years as a max, beyond that, and that is really too long. But that's the maximum.

Anderson: Oh, yes.

Simpson: But what we started in to doing was having a guy serve say three years in the 2d Marine Division, and then rather than having--if he had a skill or anywhere else it was suited, we would move him from the 2d Division into the Marine Corps base, and perhaps have him do two more years there, you see. And we didn't move his family, we didn't move his household, or anything like that; and he was doing a different job supposedly career enhancing all in moving him into Force Troops--if his skills were such. We couldn't do that with everybody because, you see, the Marine Corps Base had no infantrymen, for example, and the 2d Division had a lot of infantry. But you could do it with a lot of supply types, you could do it with a lot of dif-

ferent kinds of people. So, we started doing that.

But the PCS bill is terribly, terribly high, we did cut down on what we call TAD, temporary additional duty travel--you know, there are tricks in that sort of thing. The kind of thing that I expect to see happen around Texas A & M, I note the amount of travel done by the facutly and staff and I would anticipate that in the years to come there is going to be some curtailment on that.

Anderson: Sure.

Simpson: And you can save a lot of dollars that way with air transport being what it is in this day and time.

Anderson: Oh, yes, sure.

Simpson: But, I use that case in point....

Anderson: As an example.

Simpson: ...as an example of why it was terribly frustrating to kind of work with these very bright people who prided themselves on having no knowledge of our profession and indeed did not treat it as a profession, which we found personally insulting because we thought it was, we spent a lifetime doing it.

Anderson: There were actual comments that some of these whiz-kids made that they did not think that the military was a profession?

Simpson: Oh, yes.

Anderson: No, kidding! This must have been very insulting.

Simpson: It was. In any other environment it would have led to blows. It never happened in my time and presence there. But, boy, the talk that went on when we got back into our own offices about these people, if their ears weren't burning they certainly should have because the vocabulary that we used, once we got out of their presence, was pretty caustic.

It was a painful thing to try to work with them. Much more pleasant to work with Congress than to work with the group in DOD.

Anderson: More pleasant to work with Congress than?

Simpson: Indeed! Oh, sure, absolutely. Rather do it anytime.

Anderson: You must have had a number of opportunities to meet with Secretary McNamara.

Simpson: I met him personally on two or three occasions, I was in many conferences where he was present and where he presided.

Anderson: How did he run those conferences?

Simpson: Like the cold fish that he was. He was a walking computer. He has sort of amazed me in what I've read about him in the World Bank and the compassion that he has expressed for

the Third World countries--is something we never saw. He was a brilliant, is a brilliant man, has the power of absorbing a great amount of material in a incredibly brief period of time and retaining it and being able to recall it selectively--was considered to be the only walking computer in the city of Washington. He had huge briefing notebooks that he would devour at night and then make Congressional appearances without reference to any of these notebooks, but quote from him in infinite detail. Not at all popular with Congress, he talked down to Congress--he talked down to everyone that I had had any contact with. I presume that he did not talk down to the President, but I was never around the two of them at that time, I presume he restrained himself from that, but he talked down all the rest of us.

His conduct of war in Vietnam was a great disservice to the country. Here again, was the concept that everything could be quantified.

Anderson: Yes, yes.

Simpson: And in his handling, once we were engaged in the war, and his incremental increase in forces was the reason we never were allowed to win the war. We certainly had the opportunity to win the war, which I'll come to.

Anderson: Yes, we'll get to that; I'd like your opinion of McNamara.

Simpson: A very brilliant man believing, of course, that he was--no question about his sincerity and no question about the fact that he was doing what he thought was best for the country. No one ever questioned that at all, but his dealing with the uniform military was distastful, I believe, at all levels, not only my level as a brigadier general but I think all the way up to and including the Chiefs of services felt that way.

Anderson: And did you ever hear any scuttlebut or conversations from, for example, like the Commandant or someone?

Simpson: They were somewhat along the lines that I just expressed, largely of sort of frustration. If he had any friends they were not obvious to us.

Anderson: No kidding?

Simpson: The friends that he had were purely outside of the military establishment. I suppose they were, maybe, in the Camelot set, I don't know. But I knew of no one in the Pentagon that counted himself as a friend of Robert McNamara.

Anderson: So, did the military attempt to befriend him?

Simspon: They were rebuffed on every hand. You don't make much effort to befriend somebody that obviously talks down to you, Terry.

Anderson: Yes, true, absolutely.

Simpson: You do your best to avoid them.

Anderson: True.

Simpson: Except as Chief of service, you can't do much avoiding of the Secretary of Defense.

Anderson: Yes, yes.

Simpson: I don't think he did a very good job as Secretary of Defense.

Anderson: This opinion is based on his performance in the war?

Simpson: I don't think he was doing a very good job when he...You see, these opinions of these lesser lights that I was dealing with, we felt very strongly reflected McNamara's own views. And I don't think he was responsive to the informed views of the uniformed military, just as his subordinates were not, because I think that if he had been at all responsive to the informed views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I think his subordinates would have listened with more interest to what we had to say who were playing a lesser role.

Now, I cannot point specifically other than his conduct of the war, once we get into it, that I object to as specific things that he did, but his attempt to computerize the art of warfare, even in preparation for war, I don't think was successful.

Anderson: Okay. Now, have you ever read a book by Philip

Caputo named Rumor of War?

Simpson: No, I'm not familiar with that.

Anderson: It dealt with a young man who went into the Marines at this time and he was taken up by the whole idea of Kennedy and do something for your country and don't expect something from your country--that idea. He went into the Marines and became a lieutenant and went to Vietnam and he talks about '63, '64, '65, these periods on the 50 miles hikes and all that as a period in which there is a lot of very high morale in the Marines in that time. And then he went to Vietnam and things change and ten years later he went back in '74 and '75 when we were evacuating and he wrote this interesting book.

Simpson: Was he still in the Marine Corps at that time?

Anderson: No, he was a journalist at that time. And I was wondering if, in your dealings with the personnel, if you thought that because of the sort of Kennedy flair and Camelot idea, did you find in working in the personnel that there was a high morale generated at this time?

Simpson: Sure, absolutely, by all means. We didn't have any morale problems that I was aware of. I think morale in the Marine Corps during that period of time was extremely high as it has been for most of my 37 years.

Anderson: Yes, yes. Now, we did have morale problems later on

in the early '70s, at least we did in the Army. Did we get those in the Marines?

Simpson: To some extent but not nearly the extent as in the Army.

Anderson: Yes, I would imagine.

Simpson: Except the experience that I related to you in our first interview of my early experience in the Marine Corps, prior to World War II.

Anderson: Oh, yes.

Simpson: And that was really my own morale more than anybody else's. I've never known a time of really low morale in the Marine Corps. I've seen units of low morale, I've had them under my command. I don't mean a whole division with low morale, but within that division there may be a company even a battalion that had a poor commander or a series of poor commanders. But as far as the Marine Corps as a whole, I've not experienced bad morale. I've seen it higher at times than others.

Anderson: It was about this same time, '64-'65, that, of course, we were drafting a tremendous amount of young recruits and many of these recruits were drafted not only into the Army but into the Navy and into the Marines. And did that drafting of--usually the Marines are a total volunteer outfit. Did drafting into the Marines present any new problems for you?

Simpson: No, we'd gone through it before. We had it in World War II.

Anderson: Yes, sure.

Simpson: Had it in Korea. No, the drafting of troops from the standpoint of the receiving service, except for times perhaps when the disenchantment of Vietnam set in, that by-and-large is a plus for the services because of the quality of men that comes to you. You may get a guy that's not at all enthusiastic about being in the Marine Corps but he's pretty damn intelligent. And that's a plus factor, he's not a mental Group-IV usually. We had college graduates, people with partial college degrees, a lot of people with college potential, which they're having a little hard time finding these days, in terms of they all want the Air Force. The draftees did not pose a big problem to us because they were bright, as a group, they were usually bright, they were smart. Most were determined to do their two years and get out. But, that's not bad, really, when you think about it, Terry. You see, you can't have a professional Army where everybody comes in and stays--a professional Marine Corps where everybody comes in and stays. It's very hard for some civilians and very hard for these bright young men, that we were talking about a little while ago, to understand this sort of thing. You know, General Motors doesn't go out an hire a whole new crowd of assembly line workers every year. They bring guys in and they stay on the assembly line, some of them stay 35

years, you know. Some move up to managerial positions that get out, but it is pretty hard for someone with no background of military experience to understand why we've got to have an input of new people, new officers and everything else, at the input level every year we've got to do this sort of thing. And we've also got to squeeze some out at these other levels in order to have any upward mobility in this business at all. So, the fact that we had an awful lot of them that came for only two years was not a detriment, they made a real contribution during those two years. And then we went and got another guy just like him.

Anderson: Okay. During this time you won the Navy Commendation Medal, and why was that?

Simpson: (Laughter)

Anderson: Well, it says for your performance of the job; it doesn't explain much.

Simpson: No, no, and deliberately not. The Army and the Navy and the Air Force after World War II got into the business of giving what we came to call "Good Conduct Medals." In other words, not associated with combat, not a decoration for valor, but simply you had done a good job in your assignment, ergo, you got decorated. The Marine Corps resisted this for a long, long time.

Anderson: They felt it was just your job to do a good job.

Simpson: And that a good fitness report and a pat on the back was the reward that you would expect. For a poor job, you expected to get transferred and a poor fitness report. And that's the way the Marine Corps had operated and had done so for many, many years. There were a lot of Marines that wore decorations but they were earned in combat either for valor or for campaigns. I had no objections to a campaign ribbon for a campaign that a guy went through. Maybe he didn't do any active heroic bravery but he did survive.

Anderson: But he was on the scene.

Simpson: And he did what he was supposed to do. But the other three services were giving out these medals rather generously. And our guys were getting a little itchy because they were meeting their counterparts and the rows of ribbons--even though there was not a war going on--the rows of ribbons were growing, and they weren't growing in the Marine Corps because nobody was getting any. General Greene was the Commandant of the Marine Corps and he called a meeting of his general officers one time--the general officers in Headquarters of which there were then, I think, some 13 or 14 of us--and he wanted to discuss this with us. And he thought, in his opinion, it was becoming a morale problem. Well, I knew what the meeting was all about, and I had very decided views on it. And I was the guy, as G-1, that was supposed to recommend policies regarding decorations, that comes under the G-1, you see. And so,

the Commandant said that he would like to have everybody's opinion, but he sort of prefaced this by saying that he thought it was about time that since everybody else was doing it, that we got on the band wagon and started doing some ourselves. Well, the people sort of laughed at me that were present at the conference about it because I got up and made one of the great impassioned speeches of my life. I stood up in this big conference room and I pleaded for my theory of let's award for valor and award for campaigns associated with combat, and unless somebody does something like Byrd going to the South Pole or something truly, truly spectacular recognized not only within the Marine Corps but outside the Marine Corps, then let's not cheapen the decoration by giving them away for somebody just doing a good job. And it was a hell of a speech, it was a tremendous speech. I had really prepared myself for it because I knew what was coming. I had been getting these rumbles.

Anderson: Did you know how the Commandant felt?

Simpson: Yes, I knew how he felt, sure, I knew how he felt. But I thought I had him persuaded. We left that meeting, he hadn't announced any decision. And of the other conferees, some were with me, there was no one staunchly in support of the idea.

Anderson: With the idea of giving medals out?

Simpson: Yes. There was some support for it, but nobody that

felt as strongly about giving medals as I felt about not giving. This all happened about two months, maybe less, before I was detached to go to the 2d Division. And by God, I was the first guy to get a medal for doing a job. (Laughter) Totally opposed to everything I recommended and the Commandant got the biggest kick out of this; he said, "I am delighted to present this decoration to you." He did it on the day I was detached. He said, "You're the one guy in the Marine Corps that doesn't want this medal, but you're going to have it, you can't turn it down." So, that's the reason I got the Navy Commendation Medal.

My contemporaries thought that was absolutely hilarious. And that went on and goes on today and you'll see I then was promoted to major general and picked up additional medals like Legion of Merit and that sort of thing, also for doing a good job, not for being any great hero. But, I thought you'd enjoy that story. I still feel the same way about it, but I no longer fight city hall, I mean, it's being done now. A guy can go through a whole career and never hear a shot fired in anger and end up with a whole chest full of "chewing gum wrappers" up there if he does a good job. I still, I accept what they're doing, I mean, I know what they're doing, but I still feel just as strongly that it shouldn't be done.

Anderson: I bet your colleagues got a big charge out of that.

Simpson: Oh, they did, they did. I got letters from all over the Marine Corps because they all knew how I felt and they

wrote just flowery letters of congratulations, "please send us a picture with your new decoration."

Anderson: Well, let's move on to Camp Lejeune. You were the Commanding General, 2d Division, and what does FMF stand for?

Simpson: Fleet Marine Force.

Anderson: Okay. Tell me about the 2d Division and your duties down there.

Simpson: That's a good job. You recall, I'd been in the 2d Division as a colonel commanding the 6th Marine Regiment. The division has a fine installation, about a 100,000 acres of permanent camp, good facilities, lacking only the ability to fire large bore artillery. We could fire everything else.

Anderson: And a great golf course.

Simpson: Two, two great golf courses--excellent quarters. The division trained hard, we had a battalion landing team in the Mediterranean all the time, as there is now. There always is when anything happens in the Mediterranean, you've heard it on the TV since Sadat was assassinated, about the Marines that are out there with the 6th Fleet, well they've been there--not the same Marines--but there have been amphibious units with the 6th Fleet for 30 years. And they've been useful, they were useful in Lebanon. It was our task to provide those people, to train them, load them out. See, that outfit is relieved on

station. By that, I mean, there are always Marines in the Mediterranean. So, we train and got together a new organization--not a new one but a replacement organization--put them on a different set of ships and they went to the Mediterranean and when they passed through the Straits of Gibralter, then the others were free to leave. And they sometimes passed in the Mediterranean just inside the Straits of Gibralter.

Anderson: Sure.

Simpson: We also had a similar type of organization afloat... part.time but those deployments out there were six months on station. And there is usually about a two week transit time, not quite two weeks, but they were essentially gone for seven months when you went to the Mediterranean.

We had a similar deployment in the Caribbean. That one was a little different because they were only gone three months and were not relieved on station. And they spent more than half of their time on the island of Vieques, which is just east of Puerto Rico--owned by the Navy at that time--in training. And there are good landing beaches on Vieques and they made landing exercises and so forth and so on. So, we had those commitments.

We sent the artillery regiment to Bragg to fire, Fort Bragg, because they have the full scale artillery ranges at Bragg, and as I say, we had limited artillery ranges there at Lejeune.

We were sending replacement units, replacement drafts to

the Far East, of course. We were a busy division, and of course, right after I got there, we became involved in the Dominican Republic affair.

Anderson: Right.

Simpson: That happened five days, six days after I took command.

Anderson: No kidding? Well, let's talk about that.

Simpson: Well, it was extremely interesting thing. We had, as you might expect, Terry, a contingency plan for everything. No contingency plan, of course, as you know, is ever carried out because the assumptions never fit.

Anderson: Right.

Simpson: But, they're useful, they useful.

Anderson: Sure.

Simpson: We had a contingency plan for Thailand and it was that plan that I drug out, that we drug out and dusted off the time that I went in there with that brigade. But anyway, this thing hit very quickly and we had, see, we kept battalions back in various stages of alert and we always had one on what we call Air Alert. And they were on Air Alert for 72 hours. And during that time, no officer or no enlisted man could leave the barracks. And the officers had to stay right there. They had to

be able to move in two hours. So, they were essentially "loaded and locked" for 72 hour periods. Then they would stand down and we would move another one up, but we always had one in that condition. And our departure airfield was Cherry Point which is 30 miles away. There is a small airfield, primarily, a helicopter base at Camp Lejeune, but it cannot handle heavy transports. So in order to make troop movements we had to go by convoy to Cherry Point and when we got the word to go, here again, I sent my ADC, I didn't get to go. I went down there for three days, but he went down as the brigade commander, the Expeditionary Brigade commander. And we got word to send out an Air Alert Battalion. Somebody else handled the air transport, but my task was to get the people over there and to the departure airfield. And then I sent him--then as soon as they did that, we moved another battalion up to readiness and then within hours we launched them. The whole camp was in a turmoil, the division, because we eventually sent five battalions down there. And I sent the ADC as brigade commander with the second battalion, a small contingent, and then we followed that with three--these are reinforced battalions, you understand, with artillery and that sort of thing.

Anderson: Approximately how many men eventually were there?

Simpson: I guess 10,000.

Anderson: And how long did it take you to get 10,000 down there?

Simpson: About six days. That's the one where we got there ahead of the 82d Airborne, which we love.

Again, you see, the advantage of the amphibious force, the first troops into the Dominican Republic were the afloat battalion. They had been moved over there, and they were just over the horizon out of sight of land, about 30 miles out when the word came to go. Well, hell, they had landed under command of this lieutenant colonel, they landed there before my troops back at Camp Lejeune could get to departure airfield. So, they went ashore and secured the airfield. And that's where all the American troops came in, on this airfield that they landed on. And when the whole smoke blew away and when we came out of the Dominican Republic, why, they got back aboard the ships and continued their cruise home.

Anderson: Now, when did you get to go down there?

Simpson: About midway, I've forgotten how long we were in the Dominican Republic, we weren't there too long, as you recall. It was a matter of weeks, maybe, as many as five weeks or six weeks.

Anderson: About half way in there, two or three weeks or so and then you went down. Did you go down there to take command of operations then, or was it just an inspection?

Simpson: They wouldn't let me. I'd been trying to go since the first one, but again, I was reminded of what my old division

commander told me, he said, "This was a brigadier's war," and this was a brigadier's war. The overall command was out of the Army and I was allowed only a liaison visit down there. And I went in on one of our resupply aircraft and came out the same way. All I could do was visit the troops, I had no command responsibility whatsoever.

Anderson: Yes. And how long did you stay?

Simpson: I stayed two days and one night.

Anderson: What were the conditions like?

Simpson: Oh, fine, fine. They were in camps, barricades, little shooting, some sniping, not a hell of a lot. But the troops were excited about it. But, we did have one incident that I thought might be of interest to you.

We had a--the U.S. Marine Corps and the Royal Marine Corps have a lot in common in terms of heritage and that sort of thing. We had then and have now an exchange program with the Royal Marines. They send two captains over here and we send two of our captains over there for a period of about two years. It is a highly sought after assignment on both sides. And I had one of those captains with me and he was a splendid officer, commando-trained. I could not give him command of a company even though he was fully qualified to command a company, couldn't give him command because not being a U.S. citizen, he couldn't exercise UCMJ, so I couldn't allow him--I couldn't make him a

commmander and still take one of the THL tools of command away from him. So, I made him an assistant S-3, operations officer of the battalion. And he was an excellent officer, splendid physical speciman and very popular with the troops, enlisted, and officers and all. He was in the Air Alert battalion when the word came to go. I'd forgotten about him. But I wouldn't have done anything if I had. Battalion commander, when they got to Cherry Point to load, he got worried about this. And we had a radio set up--we didn't trust telephones, had a radio set up--and I was in my office and had the radio contact right in there. They were along side the strip and he called me and he said, "General, I just wanted you to know that Captain McNaulty," or whatever his name was, I've forgotten his name now, "...is with us from the Royal Marines." And I said, "Well, he signed on for duty, didn't he?" I said, "You're duty is to go, you know where you're going." He said, "Fine, I just wanted you to know he's here." "Okay." So, there he went, we shot another battalion. Next thing, I got to thinking about it and I decided to call my superior who was Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic, whose headquarters were in Norfolk. And I called him and I said, "General, I don't know whether you know it or not, but we have a Royal Marine with us and he was in the Air Alert battalion and he's gone to the Dominican Republic." And he said, "Well, so what?" I said, "Well, that's what I thought, except, I thought you ought to know." He said, "Well, okay." He thought about it for awhile,

and he thought maybe he better tell the Commandant. So, he called the Commandant and the Commandant's reaction was the same. He said, "Well, the guy joined us for duty and the duty is to go to the Dominican Republic, so he's in the Dominican Republic, so what else is new?" Then the Commandant got to thinking about it and he thought maybe he better tell the Secretary of Defense. Anyway, he told the Secretary of the Navy, the Secretary of the Navy said, "Okay." Then the Secretary of the Navy told the Secretary of Defense. Okay. Then the Secretary of Defense said, "My, my, maybe I better tell the Ambassador." So, he called the Ambassador, and God, the Ambassador went throught the roof. And the next thing you know, I get a call not from the intermediate boss but the Commandant called and said, "Orm, get that guy out of there. The Ambassador is wild, he's talking to the President, get him out." By this time, my brigadier was down there, so I sent a "flash" dispatch, "Get him out on the first airplane, I don't care where he goes, get him out of the Dominican Republic." Then about three days later I go down, unrelated to this thing. I don't know where this guy is, except he's not in Dom Rep, as we called it at that time, Dominican Republic. So, I get down there late one afternoon, I spend the night with the brigadier general and his staff, get briefed on the situation, and the next day we started visiting troops. And we go over this battalion, which is the First Air Alert battalion and they look real fine, they got a CP dug out with a tent over the top and sandbags a-

around it and standing outside, bless your heart, is none other than Captain McNaulty. I looked at this guy. Battalion commander said very brightly to me, the Captain is going to brief you on our disposition on what's been happening since we've been here. So we went in and sat down, the Royal Marine went through a splendid briefing and then I asked the battalion commander to go outside, congratulated him on his briefing, and then said, "What the hell is this guy doing here?" "Well, I called and told you." I said, "Yes, but then did you ever get my despatch?" "What despatch?" Well, it turned out that in all the garble and everything, the brigade commander and nobody else ever got it nor did they ever find out what happened. So, I said, "Well, I hate to tell you," and then I told him the story. I said, "You tell the good captain that I will be leaving here tomorrow and that he is going with me." He said,"'You'll break his heart." I said, "That may be, but I also don't want to lose my two stars, so tell him he's going to leave." And then the battalion commander told me that that guy was so afraid this was going to happen that around camp, around Camp Lejeune he always wore a beret, a green beret of the Royal Marines, but when they rode over to get on the airplanes, he wore a helmet, a hard hat. And he wore that helmet until he got into the belly of that C-130. And he was in the same plane with the battalion commander and the battalion commander said he was watching him and when the aircraft started to role and when it was going sufficiently that he was sure it was going to take off,

off, he reached up and took off the hard hat and put on his green beret. He was a Royal Marine again, and he had on his damned green beret down there. But I took him with me the next day and he was crest-fallen. I had to go from there on over to Vieques, San Juan, and then back up that way. I liked the young lad, I thought he was splendid, and he was serious and I said, "Well, look friend, don't blame us. If you've got any bone to pick, you just take it up with your Ambassador when you get back there." But, it was kind of interesting because I felt sure that I had the guy out of there and it shows you how things can go astray. But, all of us on the American side didn't think very much about it, until, you know, we sort of reflected on it, thought maybe we would pass this back on up the line, and then, boy, when it got to the Ambassador, he just really stopped it.

That was probably the most interesting single thing that happened. The rest of it were not big exciting incidents. We were training for Vietnam.

Anderson: Yes, I wanted to ask you about that. I bet there must have been...This is, of course, '65-'66, this is the time that we're increasing troop strength in Vietnam and increasing the size of our military. That must have had an impact on training.

Simpson: Tremendously so. We were sending replacement drafts out there, but we were also receiving returning Vietnam veterans, people that had served out there. So, we started, in an isolated

area of the camp, we built a Vietnam "village." Vietnam veterans built it complete with booby-traps, which were big things at that time.

Anderson: Oh, yes.

Simpson: The primitive type booby-traps, the sharpened bamboo spears, that kind of thing. I've forgotten what you call it, but the one where they have this big round gadget with the sharpened spears in it and hang it in a tree and you trip the wire and the thing comes down and bangs you and that sort of thing. See, by the time I reached Vietnam, they were far more sophisticated, they gone completely away from the bamboo spikes, and they were into explosives totally, the "Bouncing Betty bombs" or 155mm shells strewn through the trees and that sort of thing. But, we built this Vietnam village, that is, they did, the people that had served in Vietnam and then we had them set up a training course and we sent all of our infantry out there. As a matter of fact, the entire division went through it. It was a day's time of how to take this village. We made up a platoon of Viet Cong, which was the main enemy at that time, all made up of Vietnam veterans. They defended the village and the other people took it as a training exercise type of thing, you know, stopped at various stages, here are the mistakes you made, a lot of blank ammunition fired and that sort of thing. They wore the black pajamas and coolie hats of the Vietnamese and had the little fires burning and all that sort of thing. It was a

very, very interesting exercise, got a lot of outside interest on that. We had people come down from Bragg.

Anderson: I know the Amry was doing these things about that same time, maybe a little after, I don't know.

Simpson: Yes, they were doing it, but they came down to see how we were doing it. We sent people up to see how they were doing it. There was a free exchange of ideas, I mean, anybody had any good ideas, why--but the Vietnam village was very popular and I think very useful for the time that it was in. I hope that we probably saved some lives by doing that sort of thing.

Anderson: Any conflict between the Vietnam veterans and new recruits that were obviously on there way over there?

Simpson: No, hell, they were eager to learn, eager to learn, no conflict at all. And of course, the adrenalin started pumping at that time, most everybody was anxious to go.

Anderson: Yes, yes.

Simpson: The younger officers figured it was the only war that was going to happen, so they better get in their shot at the thing. I made the mistake of playing God one time, first and only time, and would never do it again. Oh, by the way, it would be of some interest to know that my aide for the first three weeks that I was there was Chuck Robb, the current lieutenant governor of Virginia.

Anderson: No kidding?

Simpson: Yes, he was a captain and was under orders to...He had been the aide of my predecessor and he was under order to Marine Barracks, 8th and Eye, where he met Linda Robb, Linda Bird.

Anderson: Yes. And what kind of young man was he?

Simpson: Oh, just tremendous, just tremendous, very, very fine lieutenant. My wife thought he was a very fine looking young man--single at that time, of course--but great personality. Had he not married in the Johnson family, I think he would have been a career Marine, probably would have been very successful. Yes, I thought a lot of him.

Anderson: Did he know Johnson girl, Linda Bird, wasn't it?

Simpson: Linda Bird.

Anderson: Did he know her at that time?

Simpson: No, no. You see, he went to Washington as a single captain, and he was made a White House aide, and that's when he met her, that was after he had left me. He was under orders when I came. He was only with me three weeks.

The young man that succeeded him as aide was very anxious to go. And he felt, and I could understand the feelings of these younger officers. They had heard all this guff about Korea and heard a lot of us talk about World War II and they

suffered the same sort of anguish that we did in the late '30s here and the old timers talk about how it was in Haiti and Santo Domingo and World War II. And they figured at that time that it was going to be a very short war and they better get their licks in or they weren't going to go anywhere. And the Marine Corps was sending them out in rotation and this young captain kept coming in to me and asking me. At that time, when I initially got there, we had only advisors out there, you see.

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: And he kept after me to use my influence to get him moved up on the list so he could get out there and I made the gruesome mistake of doing it and he got killed. Now, who's to say, maybe if he had waited and in his turn he still would have been killed, but that's the very last time I did that. And when I became a division commander out there, I was hard fast and hard nosed about it. At that time the tour was a year and I made it 365 days....

End Side 2, Tape 7

Begin Tape 8, Side 1, October 13, 1981

Anderson: ...on to Parris Island.

Simpson: Yes.

Anderson: And you were going there as a brand new two star general. And today is the 13th of October and let's continue from there.

Simpson: Well, I should tell you about the circumstances of my going to--the reason I moved and moved in such a hurry, and by the way, I had made two stars well in advance of that.

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: But, as I told you, while commanding the 2d Division, Terry, I kept a battalion landing team--or a battalion landing team of that division was afloat in the Mediterranean at all times, they relieved on rotation.

Anderson: Right, yes.

Simpson: I made several attempts to get out there to visit those troops on station, but never had much luck getting it approved; the Commandant never really thought I should be gone out of the country, until finally, the Navy League had a convention in Madrid, Spain and the Navy League invited me to address the convention in Madrid. They addressed that invitation to the Commandant and he approved. So then I asked him to let me take a Marine Corps airplane and take some of the staff and after making the speech to go ahead from Madrid to go down to the ports on the Mediterranean and join up with these troops. That would be, as you understand, mostly a "be seen" type of an operation, I mean, I'm not inspecting or anything like that but just to let them know my interest in them. In any event, we took a C-130--Marine Corps C-130, KC-130 as we call it, which is identical with the Air Force 130 except the

KC-130 is configured for inflight refueling if you want to use it that way--and I took five or six members of the staff and we flew from Cherry Point, stopped in Rota and then flew on to Madrid. And we got to Madrid in, oh, I guess about midday or early afternoon, and checked into the hotel where this convention was and I was supposed to speak at noon the next day. And they had a huge banquet that night. And while I was dressing to go down to this banquet, I got a telephone call from Headquarters, Marine Corps saying that I was to return immediately, that Major General Bruno Hochmuth--also had graduated from Texas A & M, class of '35 a year ahead of me, and a very dear friend--had been killed in Vietnam. And that the next major general in turn to go out there was the then commanding general at Parris Island [MajGen Rathvan Mc. Tompkins] and that I was to return home and go to Parris Island and replace him so that he could go to Vietnam. I told the Commandant, who called me, that I was supposed to speak the next day and would it be alright if I went ahead and made this speech and then returned directly? And he agreed with that and so I started the aide trying to get...I wanted to send the staff on in the Marine Corps airplane to meet up with--I brought the chief of staff and several others--and I wanted him to go on down and meet with the troops. So, we started trying to get commercial reservations back the next day. And I was seated at the dinner along side a man I didn't know but I found very interesting and the aide was coming in and out during the course of this dinner reporting, "No success." And this man along side me

along side me overheard it--that is, getting out in the time-frame we wanted to, we wanted straight flight to New York--and he said, "What seems to be the trouble, General?" And I told him my predicament, it had already been announced that General Hochmuth had been killed and that I was returning the next day to release someone who would go out and replace him in Vietnam. And I told him that I was trying to return to the United States immediately after the luncheon the next day as he then knew, but that I couldn't get any commercial reservations in a suitable time frame. And he said, "What flight do you want to get on?" And I said, "I want to get on TWA flight so and so which leaves at 1:30 or a quarter to two," or something like that. And he said, "Well, forget it, you're on." And I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "I'm Vice-President of TWA." And he went out and made a couple of telephone calls, bumped a couple of people off and so the aide and I came home. The staff went ahead.

Came home to a...I had a very, very marvelous assistant division commander, Edwin Wheeler. And there is a little story in that. He had been with me then 18 months and I had rendered three fitness reports on him and his performance of duty was so superlative that I had run out of adjectives and so on the 1st of November I couldn't think of anything better to say and in my report to the Commandant on his, what we call fitness reports, I made the comment that, "This superb officer, brigadier general, is fully qualified to command this division today," think-

ing that that was the highest accolade I could paint for him. And would you believe, that 18 days later he was commanding the division, I was gone. But in any event....

Anderson: That must have made you feel quite good.

Simpson: Well, in any event, the departure from Camp Lejeune was a very, very emotional affair. They paraded the entire division, which then was about 22,000, I suppose--a magnificent parade. And then they had a huge luncheon and then we went back to our quarters and my wife and daughter, who was in high school in Camp Lejeune, a senior in high school, they were going to go down with me and then they were going to return and pack up and move and everything because we had to move in a hurry. And there was no immediate requirement for my quarters because the guy that was relieving me, at least temporarily, was already there and in quarters, so we went to this huge luncheon that they had for us and then returned to our quarters to change into civilian clothes and pack our car to drive to Parris Island. That's a drive of about six hours. And we were pretty much choked up at that time and, of course, we were up tight emotionally of--well, first the loss of this great and dear friend, and then second, the sudden departure from Camp Lejeune. See, I had been there 31 months commanding this division, that's the longest time--I checked the record--that's the longest time anyone ever commanded that division in a continuous time, 31 months. In any event, we went back to our

quarters and changed and some of the staff was there, well, the ADC was there and he said, "What route are you going to go off the post?" There were two ways to go off, this is a very huge post, and the direct route was a back road to the main gate and I indicated that I was going to take that. He said, "We don't want you to take that." He said, "You're supposed to follow me." And we followed a street down to the center of the post where we turned left and headed towards the main gate and then, would you believe it, they had "manned the rail," they had 10,000 Marines lined up, 5,000 on each side of the road and as we drove by in a very slow procession, they all came to present arms one after another as we went down there and they had the band at the gate playing "Auld Lang Syne." So, by the time we finally got to the main gate we were a puddle of tears all three of us.

We went down to Myrtle Beach that night where we made reservations. It was the winter time, Myrtle Beach is a summer resort, so it was pretty well deserted. But we had no trouble getting reservations, we had a suite there because of our high school senior daughter and the two of us, and when we walked into the suite, here were five, six huge bouquets of flowers sent by the people back at Camp Lejeune--so it was quite a send off.

In any event, that's how we got to Parris Island.

Anderson: And I'd like to ask you one last question about Camp Lejuene and the 2d Division. You were there 31 months; what

would you consider your accomplishments during that time?

Simpson: And increased state of readiness, the fact that we met all of our commitments that were imposed on us; including our deployments and maintenance of a garrison, defensive garrison at Guantanamo; and supplied replacements to Vietnam, individual replacements both officer and enlisted. I guess, the most single thing, Terry, I guess the fact that we met, in what I consider to be a very highly satisfactory fashion, all the conflicting demands. And as you can see, these were conflicting demands, to be sending people continually to Vietnam, absorbing new recruits, making deployments, and at the same time, attempting to...And of course, we had the Dominican Republic affair early on, and I would guess, no single thing but the fact that we were able to satisfactorly meet all of those conflicting requirements and never defaulted on a one, including not asking for any departure delays. In the overall, that is sort of my summation, not any one particular thing, there was really no great high point in it, but it was a gradual movement towards improvement in training, in readiness, in materiel readiness. Yes, I left there very satisfied, probably well that I did leave. I might have gotten complacent had if I'd stayed any longer, I don't know. I was never complacent while I was there.

Anderson: Do you think 31 months is too long?

Simpson: Damned near. I think three years is the max. I think after a period of time like that--I had not reached that

point--but I think after say 36 months, I think you tend to, at least I, I don't know about everybody else, but I think my inclination would have been not necessarily to "rest on my oars," but I think I would have been less innovative. I had been through all of the routine satisfactorily and I think there would have been a great temptation to do them in exactly the same fashion that I satisfactorily done them before. And that's not good enough. Whatever you do, even though it's done satisfactorily, you ought to do it better the next time around. There is always a better way to do things, if you're willing to search for it. And I'm not sure that after three years that I would have been searching for new ways, I would have perhaps repeated myself in the same evolution knowing that they had been successful before. They probably would have enjoyed that same degree of success, but if I had used the same amount of initiative and innovation in the follow on that I had at the outset, I could have done it better. So, that's the reason I think, as a commander in particular--particularly commander of a large unit--I think...Now, in wartime, that could be a different circumstance.

Anderson: Different circumstance, sure.

Simpson: Because you're meeting entirely new challenges all the time, you never repeat yourselves. It was a very satisfying tour.

Anderson: Okay, let's move to Parris Island.

Simpson: One of the more interesting assignments I've ever had in my life. The training of Marine Corps recruits. Nobody knows exactly what makes a Marine, as I think I've mentioned to you before, but it all starts in Parris Island and San Diego. And it's a very strange and serious process. I had not been associated with except for a brief time when I was a second lieutenant in San Diego in 1936, they also trained recruits there, but I was not associated with the training of the recruits. There was a recruit training activity on the base; I was in what was called the Fleet Marine Force, which was a line outfit, but I saw the training but I was not familiar with it. I had been curious about it for years. I had been military secretary to the Commandant during that horrible Ribbon Creek tragedy where those six Marines were drowned and I had wondered a great deal about it. Not an assignment I had asked for, but a challenge that I welcomed when the time came.

Whereas, Camp Lejeune is a very huge installation of perhaps a 100,000 acres, a great many troops spread over a large field, a large landscape there and deployed half-way around the world, here I was confronted with a geographically very small command. Parris Island is not as large, the usable parts of it are not as large as the Texas A & M campus to include some of the places across the tracks over there. I had nobody outside that little complex or compound, but the challenge within was enormous. Recruits were coming in continually and leaving continually. I soon found out that the real mystique,

and if you will, the key to training Marine Corps recruits is the drill instructor.

Now, the drill instructor is referred to in the vernacular outside the recruit depot as the DI, that's the big story you hear, that's the term that's used on "Gomer Pyle" and all the rest of this sort of thing. I think it would interest you to know that I never heard that term used in the entire year that I commanded Parris Island. It is always drill instructor, they use that term "drill instructor," never used "DI."

These are selected, highly selected experienced non-commissioned officers; very, very proud, very dignified. Many have combat decorations, many of these have been decorated in Vietnam, some of the senior ones in Korea. The recruit platoon is composed of people who arrive at about the same time, usually at the same time. And there are 50 in the platoon, or where at that time. This may be modified some now. There are three drill instructors assigned to that platoon.

Anderson: Three just for 50?

Simpson: That's right, three.

Anderson: My goodness, that's a lot different from the Navy.

Simpson: Now, in the next seven weeks, it was at that time and I'm not sure how many weeks of recruit training we have now, but in the next seven weeks, one of those three drill instructors is with that platoon at all times, day and night.

at oftentimes, all three of them are.

Anderson: So, boot camp was seven weeks long then?

Simpson: Seven weeks. It had been shortened because of the demand for people to go to Vietnam.

Anderson: That's just exactly what I was going to ask, it was shortened from what?

Simpson: Nine.

Anderson: From nine down to seven. And has it gone back up now?

Simpson: I believe it has, yes, now that--I would think so.

Anderson: Okay.

Simpson: We thought nine was better. The seven week course that we ran was the nine week course run in seven weeks. We didn't eliminate anything, we just compressed it in the time frame. Really, we lengthened the working hour, reveille was five o'clock, taps was 10:30. During that time, the recruit had 45 minutes which was counted as his own time. That was supervised all the time, by that, I mean he could write letters or something like that. The rest of it was all instruction, all very basic, an awful lot of close order drill, hand to hand combat, pugil stick. The recruit, when he leaves Parris Island then and now, probably is more proficient in close order drill than he will ever be again in his entire Marine life unless he

should go to the ceremonial function in Washington's Marine Barracks. Other than that, he goes down hill on close order drill.

We had a drill field which was, well, it would have been three times he size of this green place out here, three at least, maybe four. But, it was asphalt and if you recall, Parris Island is in South Carolina and gets tremendously hot, but that's the way close order drill was done.

The recruits arrived, normally, from Savannah, they were gathered together--we had a little detachment in Savannah--and they were sent down to us in bus loads of 50. As they assembled from the various recruit districts. The dividing line, generally, is the Mississippi, and we got all the recruits that were recruited east of the Mississippi River and those west of Mississippi River, by and large as a general demarcation, they went to Recruit Depot, San Diego, which followed a similar syllabus to ours. They arrived normally at night, sometimes early in the morning by bus under the small receiving detachment that we maintained in Savannah, had several NCOs there and one would bring this bus-load of recruits down.

It's very much like the movies, they get off the bus and on the pavement by the side of the bus are painted yellow footprints. And that's where they learn to fall-in for the first time. You fall-in simply by putting your feet into the footprints. And then they're in a column of two, and they go into this receiving building and the first thing that happens to them is that they're

given a lesson on contraband, what they can have and what they can't have. The drill instructor that gives this is very skilled, his chant is almost hypnotic, through me as a bystander, you almost feel like you want to search yourself to see if you've got any of this stuff on you. In any event, he has a few training aids up there of prohibited items and he gets down to a point and he tells them that he's going to give them 15 seconds to empty their pockets. And then he starts counting backwards from 15. And here they come. An interesting thing on the money; they can put coins on--they're standing at a long table, and they can put anything except folding money on that table. If they arrive with currency, folding money, they're supposed to take that and hold it in their hand, he never touches that. The rest of the items, he and others will go along and pick up switchblade knives, razor blades, marijuana, whatever the hell they got on this long list of prohibited items. Those are destroyed. But, the recruit keeps, he alone touches the money. Now, at a latter point in this receiving process, that money is taken from him by someone else, but he's given a receipt for it and he gets it back when he leaves boot camp. But, everybody starts out with no money. And then they get their first hair cut which is 12 seconds. From there, they go to the clothing warehouse--now remember, their receiving operation runs 24 hours a day. And they draw their--the three drill instructors assigned to that platoon are there to receive them. And they actually escort them through this whole process. And they go

ing general, of course, because you may have as many as 50 platoons at one time in various stages of training.

But it was interesting to get to know the drill instructors. As I say, they are men of great dignity, great pride, and very reserved toward the general officer. Always speaking to you always in the third person. "Would the General like this," or "What would the General like to do?" Never, never first person under any circumstances, never in my entire time with them.

Anderson: Well, why do you think that is.

Simpson: That's the formality that's associated with this thing, but they in turn expect the recruit to do the same thing. The recruit never says, "I would like to go to the head." He says, "Sir [and they use Sir in talking to the NCOs], the private requests permission to go to the head." That sort of thing. It's useful, it's useful for awhile. For seven weeks or nine weeks it's very good training because it's entirely different when they leave that and go into the regular service, as you know. But a lot of those habits sort of hang on.

Anderson: How did you get along with the drill instructors as the commanding general?

Simpson: I got along fine because I never flattered them, I returned their dignity and their poise and their reserve, but in very subtle ways I let it be known that I knew that they

were the ones that were doing the training and they were responsible for it. I say I got along fine with them because they invited me on about eight occasions to have lunch with them which is very unusual, those drill instructors who were not on duty. And of course, as you might imagine, like the CPO mess, they had the best food on the island.

Anderson: Sure.

Simpson: Best food, far better than my own mess, no question about that.

Anderson: Really?

Simpson: Oh, sure. As I say, they had the best cooks, and I'm sure they got the best meat from the commissary, being the senior NCOs like Navy chiefs, they knew how to get those things done. Of course, I expected that, I'd been in a long time by that time and I'd seen the senior NCOs work and seen them operate and I knew they knew how to do things like that. And they did it very well. Yes, I was greatly honored and when I finally left Parris Island, I was presented with a drill instructor's hat covered in gold which I have at home now, which not everybody's got one. Everybody can have a drill instructors hat, but not a gold plated one with a plaque on it, you know, it's all mounted on a big board like that.

Anderson: You know, the average American, when they think about a drill instructor in the Marines, they think of somebody

who is really tough not only in language but in physical ability; and movies, television portray these people as almost animals, just on the verge of being animals. And I've been into the camp before and I know--I have a good idea of the reason for their behavior and I'd like you to address that question. Do you think they are portrayed in a realistic way?

Simpson: No, absolutely not, absolutely not. I agree with you on the portrayal, it verges on the sadistic.

Andeson: Yes, it does.

Simpson: But, I detected none of that there. They have a purpose in what they're doing. Now, they're not always right, they're not always right, none of us are. But they believe, Terry, that they have a very high calling. And they think that it is their task, and rightly so, they believe that it is their task to prepare this man to go out and fight like a Marine and to defend his country and to be worthy of the confidence of the buddies that are on his left and right, and to give him that kind of training and that kind of confidence to do that--and they consider that the highest calling that a man could have. And sure, their methods are to a casual observer, they're very, very rough and they do a lot of screaming. We have eliminated a lot of the profanity, not all of it, but a lot of it. We've gotten away from the nose-to-nose thing that was so popular in some of the series that you've seen. But it's true, they never promised you a rose garden and they don't have one. But here's

one of the....

Anderson: What about the physical contact?

Simpson: That has now been eliminated.

Anderson: When was that eliminated?

Simpson: Well, partially during the time that I was there, but totally since I've been there.

Anderson: Did you have a role in that?

Simpson: Yes, I did, but others had been working on it too. What it is now, is that a drill instructor can touch a recruit only for the purpose of correcting a position or a position of the weapon. In other words, if he said, "Right shoulder, arm," he can reach over there and move that rifle this way or that way. If he strikes a recruit, it is a general court martial offense. And I had several of those while I was there.

Anderson: No kidding.

Simpson: Oh, yes, oh, yes. When they strike them, they do it in frustration. Not maliciously, not sadistically, not really attempting to hurt the guy, even thought they know damned well they can because they are magnificient physical specimens, but they do it invariably the court martial showed this recruit had pressed him to the brink of disaster. Provocation, some of them just that dumb.

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: Others were street fighters that took them on, challenged them and did not respond to their instruction. Yes, we had some cases of maltreatment, fortunately none seriously. We had no deaths, no serious injuries. There were some bruises, some sprains, and that kind of thing. The penalty and punishment is severe. And of course, a drill instructor that goes on the field there puts his whole career on the line because he can get a general court martial and the general court martial, as you know, particularly convictions, and you almost always get it because you don't go for a court martial unless you've got it, it is the death knell of a service career, except in the most unusual cases.

My sympathy lies with the drill instructor, even though I don't approve with everything that they do. I know what they're trying to do and I know how they're trying to do it. I think they do it wrong in many cases, I mean their methods are wrong, their purposes are immaculate, their purposes cannot be faulted--the methods by which they achieve them. Here's sort of the proof in it.

The recruit develops a love/hate relationship with the drill instructor. You've been through it, you know. But I thought this was significant. We had a very hard and fast rule that we strictly enforced that nobody, recruit platoon or no individual within that platoon, could present any kind of present regardless of what it was to his drill instructor when

he left, absolutely not. Yet, during the time that I was there, and I don't have any numbers on this because they're too numerous to mention, at least 50 instances that came to my attention and probably more times that many that didn't come to my attention, where when the drill instructor or instructors...See, they stayed right with the recruit platoon until the time they put them on a bus to go to Camp Lejeune, which was advanced training.

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: And they were right there with them, they put them on the bus at five o'clock in the morning. And I was there frequently, not everytime, of course, but I did all the various evolutions. I had breakfast with the recruits, supper with them, dinner--lunch--all those various things. Not with everyone, but I did it all on various different occasions. But on at least 50 occasions...You see, when the three drill instructors had completed their platoon and shipped them, as they say, they'd either on to advanced infantry training or gone on to something else, in other words, they're off Parris Island. Now then, those three drill instructors then got four days off, regardless of what days they were, there were days before they were to come back and get a new platoon. And those days were totally theirs, they weren't counted as leave, liberty or anything else because they'd been on this round-the-clock thing, so they had four days. And on at least 50 occasions that I know about, three that I personally witnessed, when the

drill instructors went to their cars after the busses had left with the graduating platoon aboard, they went back to their cars and on the seat of the car they'd find an envelope with 100-200-300 dollars. And they could never figure out how the hell it got there because somebody was watching these recruits all the time. But the kids would take this up and they'd leave notes in there. Now that told me an awful lot, that told me an awful lot, that these people had been according to the movies and the television, had they been so terribly abused for seven months would somehow get together money and leave a parting gift of up to $300--I believe that's the largest one that I know anything about--for these drill instructors which they are presumed to have hated, leave that in cash for them.

Anderson: Now, what did the drill instructor, according to the regulations, what were they supposed to do with the money?

Simpson: Turned it in; we put it in Navy Relief.

Anderson: Oh, really?

Simpson: Yes. But, I think they did turn it in. Now again, it was a court-martial offense not to.

Anderson: Oh.

Simpson: We didn't have any instances of shake-downs by recruits that I knew of, that came to my attention. I've heard of things like that that had happened. If any happened during

the year that I commanded Parris Island, I never knew about it. But I did say there were many, many instances in which gifts were left behind. Sometimes it was a--most all the time it was cash, occasionally it would be a couple of bottles of whiskey or something like that. And I finally figured out how they got that.

See, their parents came to graduation, and they would bring it. The kid would write them a letter and tell them, and they'd bring it and then, I think, sometimes it was the parents who probably got it in their car. Now, in the case of the whiskey, we simply put that behind the bar in the staff NCO mess. In other words, for everybody's use. The drill instructor himself could not keep anything for his own personal use.

Anderson: Now, you said that you had a role in decreasing the amount of physical contact of the drill instructor. Could you tell me about that?

Simpson: Well, a very subtle kind of thing. We had, you see, the recruit platoons were organized into companies and there was an officer commanding a company, and I dealt mostly with the officers, not directly with the drill instructors. I had no idea to go into Parris Island and overhaul it overnight. If I'd stayed another year, I would have overhauled it a lot more than I did during the time.

When I went there, it was a successful operation and I

viewed it as my initial responsibility to find out how the hell it worked rather than to come in and throw my weight around and run the risk of tearing up something that was functioning satisfactorily.

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: So, I spent about the first three months trying to find out how it worked because it was a strange and new operation to me. I'd never seen it before and it doesn't exist anywhere else, that I know of. So, I spent a lot of time looking and observing. And then in meetings with the officers and the others, largely one of reason, of saying, "Do you really think this is necessary? Couldn't we cut back on that a little bit?" Now, it wouldn't have done any good to go in there and just publish an order and say, "There will be no more physical abuse." This would have turned the drill instructors against me a hundred percent. And you either have them with you or you don't. And if they as a body turn against the commanding general, he's entirely impotent. He might as well get transferred then, because they're going to fight him in subtle ways on everything that he attempts to do. So your first task, as I see it and as I saw it then as I would do it again if I went again, was to gain the confidence of the drill instructors and then just as we're attempting to do--and I've been attempting to for eight years with the corps cadets--essentially to sort of reason with them, "Look, is this trip really necessary?" type of thing,

"Have you ever thought about the fact that we might accomplish the same thing without all this much profanity?"

Now, when I arrived, it was a court-martial offense for the physical abuse, the striking of the recruit; that had already been done.

Anderson: When was that done?

Simpson: Oh, actually put into the books following the Ribbon Creek thing, in 1956. But, it had been enforced rather unevenly, I believe, my best guess. I became very hard-nosed about that. And if charges were preferred, and there was substantial evidence, I let it be known in advance that I was in favor of severe penalties and the penalties were quite severe. Of course, the drill instructor, whatever his penalty, immediately left Parris Island regardless of what the sentence was. I think now, I don't believe, that there is--from what I understand, I don't believe that there is any physical abuse of recruits. Now, I recall--I've forgotten the name of that boy from Texas that several years ago, since I've been retired, died in San Diego in a pugil stick accident in training.

Anderson: Yes, yes. I wanted to ask you about that. Would you explain the reasons for that and, you know, this gets a lot of press coverage and what's the Marines' rationale for using those sticks, what type of training are they....

Simpson: Hand-to-hand combat.

Anderson: Hand-to-hand combat.

Simpson: I don't know the details of that, I really don't know very much more about that and I know even less about this recent one that they've got where the recruit drowned in San Diego.

Anderson: Yes, I saw that too.

Simpson: I don't know anything about that. I think it is largely a matter of poor judgement in terms of the pugil stick thing. You see, what they do--you're familiar with the pugil stick you know what it is, you probably used it.

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: And what they do is, they put these people in this ring to fight each other with pugil sticks. They have a lot of protection, they have head gear on, they've got heavy gloves; and there to fight. The drill instructor is supposed to blow the whistle when one guy is about to get hurt. But what you have to watch, is the coward, the guy who is going to quit. What you're trying to do is to build up, very frankly, you're trying to build up a killer instinct in the guy. You really want him to go where--you really want him to want to go over and hit this guy because the next one he comes up against won't be with a pugil stick, it may be with a bayonet or knife or something like that. So, you really want to build up that instinct. But, there is a kind of fine line as to where you

stop that stuff.

Anderson: Yes, that would be a problem.

Simpson: Well, it's hard, it's very hard to do. Now, that particular training, in our camp, I don't know about San Diego, but that particular type of training, pugel stick training, was not run in Parris Island during my tenure, was not run by the drill instructors in charge of the platoon. We had special training instructors for that. And these guys were specially skilled, supposedly, in pugil stick and hand-to-hand combat, that type of thing. The drill instructors, one or more, would take the platoons to them, but they would turn them over, for this two or three hour period of instruction, to these instructors that were there. The same was true with the rifle range.

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: So, these people were supposed to know when to blow that whistle. Now, it's real easy, Terry, to blow it early, soon as the first blow is struck, you know, it's real easy to say, "Oh, that's all." But you don't gain anything by that. However, I do believe that pugil stick training has been, and I can't say this for sure, but I think that they have probably discontinued that now in recruit training; simply because I guess the considered judgement was that there were more injuries than would warrant the value that was gained out of it. And what you gain out of it is an immeasurable kind of thing, you

can't quantify that again. And it probably various between each one of the 50 guys in the platoon as to what he gets out of it or doesn't get out of it type of thing.

We had two weeks on the rifle range. Here again, special marksmanship instructors are used. The drill instructors were there and present, but the marksmanship instruction was done by by marksmanship detachment who were there permanently, and they were all expert marksman and were highly qualified in that kind of thing. The rifles that the recruits used, that they drew and used throughout their training were not the rifles that they fired for record because their rifles took such a beating in their normal training, with coming down to order arms on that pavement, that they weren't really in much shape to fire for record when they went out to the range, so we kept a whole new issue of rifles out there. And they drew--these weren't special rifles, they were just good rifles that were maintained by the range armors and were in much better shape. You could take a drill rifle that's never fired and you can run it through many, many recruits. But, if you're going to try to fire it for record, you've got to keep it in much better shape, which they couldn't do.

Anderson: If you decreased the amount of sleep that your recruits are getting down to six and a half hours a night over a seven week period, did you have an increase in the amount of illness?

Simpson: Not illness, fatigue, yes. One of the other problems

that we fought in Parris Island in the summertime was heat.

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: I was hotter in Parris Island than I ever was in Vietnam.

Anderson: Yes, that is awful.

Simpson: And it gets 100, 110 and a very high humidity in the 90s. We had a series of flags that we flew, white flag, you'd go ahead and do anything you needed to; that's what flew over the wintertime. But in the summer, we had, I think there was a green flag, a red flag, and a black flag. I could be wrong in these colors except black, I know, is stop everything right where you are. These codes were given to us by a team of doctors specially trained in heat stress, and they were reading both the temperature and the relative humidity and they had a bunch of curves and this kind of thing.

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: The green flag meant to go ahead with your training, but exercise some reasonable caution particularly in running. And then the red flag was go very easy and the black flag was simply stop everything in place, get under a tree, get inside.

Anderson: Where all the facilities air conditioned?

Simpson: No.

Anderson: I didn't think so.

Simpson: No, they weren't and they were hot. But a black flag day was a lost day to us in terms of our syllabus. Now, we could still use lectures and that sort of thing, but that's all. We could nothing physical.

Anderson: Okay, so the impact of Vietnam seems to be that you shortened the sleeping period, you increased the number of recruits, and you decreased the time of boot camp.

Simpson: Right.

Anderson: Any other impacts of that war on training Marines?

Simpson: Well, yes. In the fact that an increasing number of the drill instructors that were under my command, I do not know the percentages of them, but during the year that I was there of essentially the year 1968, the percentage of those drill instructors that were Vietnam veterans....

End Side 1, Tape 8

Begin Side 2, Tape 8

Simpson: ...pretty deaf ears. But everybody in those recruit training platoons was pretty damned sure that he was going to Vietnam and did. And so, he listened to what these people had to say. A lot of the things that they did on a survival course, a "slide for life," and that sort of thing, you know, where you

slide down a rope.

Anderson: Sure.

Simpson: They could relate that to their Vietnam experiences and the recruits listened. So, I think, probably, we got more training done because of that. We didn't have an indifferent audience for the drill instructors to talk to. And see, all the instruction was done by NCOs, the officers did no instruction at all of recruits. Their's was a supervisory role of drill instructors only. And by and large, the role of attending grade officers was essentially one of making sure that there was no maltreatment, that's about what it amounted to. They didn't have to be in constant attendance; they had to show up at any odd times days and nights in the barracks and on the rifle range and the fields wherever we were, the recruits were. But they did not, unlike the normal Marine organization where the officers do indeed do some instruction, they did none there.

We had a drill instructor's school which lasted three weeks. And everyone that came to Parris Island to be a drill instructor went to that school, unless he was on his second tour as a drill instructor. And then, if he was on his second tour, then he spent only one week which was a sort of refurbishing type of thing. The drill instructors course, too, was vigorous physically, to make sure that the drill instructor that went on the field was in shape to do the kinds of things that they had to show the recruits what to do.

The drill instructors school was real good. As a matter of fact, it was so tough, Terry, that we had a failure rate of 20 percent in that.

Anderson: No kidding.

Simpson: Yes. The impact of all of this on the recruits was very interesting. We had a battery of six psychologists because, see, this stress produced some extremely unusual--I suppose when one sees it not to be anticipated, but you can't tell in advance how people are going to react. But we had a reject rate, overall, of about ten percent, that is, ten percent of the recruits that entered did not graduate.

Anderson: Then they were basically shipped home usually?

Simpson: And discharged, yes. And this is an expensive operation for the Marine Corps. I thought, overall, that a reject of that cost to the Marine Corps in identifiable dollars was $2,400. Now, that's starting from the time he was picked up at recruiting station, shipped to Parris Island, stayed whatever period of time he stayed, then we had to ship him back home. You had some items of uniform that were nonreissuble, in the meantime, you'd fed him, you housed him, you clothed him, that sort of thing--$2,400. That was an average.

Anderson: Did that ten percent, was that an increase or decrease from the peacetime of the '50s Marines?

Simpson: About the same, the same.

Anderson: About the same.

Simpson: About the same. Usually a little higher than San Diego and I was never quite sure. We thought we were a little tougher. I don't really think that's good. I think we got overall a lower quality of individual than did the West Coast. We drew a lot of people from the mountains of West Virginia.

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: We had 50 dentists. The dentist told me in the course of a day it was not unusual to examine eight or ten recruits who had never seen a tooth brush.

Anderson: Gee whiz.

Simpson: We had a naval hospital there, not on our base, but the naval hospital served the Marine Air Corps Station, Beaufort, and also the Recruit Depot, Parris Island. Large contingent of doctors.

For the most part, the recruits arrived in poor physical shape, but also, those that graduated, left in excellent physical condition. Their conditioning would put some of these guys over here to shame, although, they won't admit it. What could be done for them in seven weeks was utterly amazing in terms of their personal endurance.

Anderson: Yes, absolutely. I was wondering about another issue.

During this time, of course, 1966 and 1968, there was one heck of a lot of black riots in this country. And I was wondering if you had any problems with black recruits into the Marines at Parris Island?

Simpson: None whatsoever. We had a lot of black drill instructors.

Anderson: Did you really?

Simpson: Oh, yes.

Anderson: Was that an increase?

Simpson: Yes. We went out and looked for them, we wanted them.

Anderson: So, the Marines sort of had an affirmative action program to get more blacks.

Simpson: You better believe it.

Anderson: What was the reason for that?

Simpson: Well, we wanted to show these black recruits that a black could advance in the Marine Corps and could become a drill instructor, which to a recruit is God. I mean, that's the top of the ladder. There may be some old grey-haired general around, but they could care less. The idea of the "man" as they called it, is a drill instructor. And we thought it was an excellent idea to have some of those good black NCOs.

Now, we never lowered our standards for drill instructors, but we had a significant number of black drill instructors there. And some of our very finest were black.

Now, we never put three black drill instructors on one platoon, we didn't do that. And, of course, we never had a black platoon, we had some totally white platoons because we didn't have all that many blacks. But we never had a black platoon. That went out after World War II. But we didn't have any problems as far as blacks were concerned. That is, at least, that came to the commanding general's attention. The drill instructors may have had a few, but I never heard of it, I never saw it. And some of our outstanding graduates, recruit graduates were black.

One amusing story, we had graduations twice a week. And the graduation ceremony would be two companies which would normally be six platoons. Now remember, during this time, this was the end of the seventh week, remember, they've had no liberty, they've had no visitors.

Anderson: They didn't even get one night off in seven weeks?

Simpson: No, sir.

Anderson: Now in the Navy, we had about two nights off in seven weeks. Why is it that much different in the Marines?

Simpson: We didn't have time. I think they used to get a couple of nights off when they had a nine week program, but

when we went down to seven, there was never a night off. And no visitors, unless the guy was sick. Of course, no off post liberty. A couple of visits along about the fourth week, supervised visits to the post exchange with a limit on what you could get. I mean, you weren't going in there and get pogey bait, and that type of thing. You really went to get health and comfort items is what it amounted to. So there was no shopping spree.

But, the parents were invited and did come to the graduation review. And that was always a great thrill to me. I attended everytime that I could, which was almost everytime. And the parents arrived during the day, or night, the graduation was normally about 10 o'clock in the morning. But, they couldn't visit their son until after this parade was over. And I'd sit there, I had a special viewing stand or covered stand and we were normally alerted if we had any Congressmen and VIPs or other kind, they'd sit with me. And it was not unusual that we would have the son of some Army, Navy, or Air Force, Marine officer who was graduating and if so, why we asked them to sit with us. So, we had an active duty Army colonel and his wife were there to see their son graduate. I restrained myself from asking him why this guy was in the Army--I mean, the Marine Corps. He was an active duty colonel, and a very pleasant fellow and so was his wife. Now, when we got in the reviewing stand or got in the stand, the stand is here and the recruits are lined up over here, this distance is about 150 meters.

They knew the order of the platoons, there are six of these platoons along here, so they knew which platoon their son was in. The platoons were numbered sequentially, 1 to 100. The parents had binoculars and were trying to pick their son out, you see. They can't find him, they know he must be there. But in any event, they came on down here and we get up here and I varied the reviewing party. Sometimes I took it, usually a staff officer, anyway, they come back into this position. Now, the recruits facing the crowd again. They're under the command of the drill instructor and the senior DI, senior drill instructor, when all of these ceremonies are completed...Oh, we did get the honor man. The honor man of each platoon gets a set of blues. And ten percent of the guys get promoted to PFC and E-2. So, that's all done and they're back in line. And so, the adjutant of the parade, who is an officer, gives the command to dismiss the troops. Senior drill instructor is out here, he does an about face and he says, "Platoon, dismissed." Now, on that word, they can break and run towards the stand. That's the first time they've ever been released like that. As a matter of fact, for seven weeks, they've never been dismissed. They were told to fall in the night they got off the bus and now they're dismissed.

Well, I'm standing here, I got out of the stands and was standing right here because it was very thrilling to watch these parents as their sons finally came up to them, standing tall and straight and so forth and so on. Well, this colonel

and his wife sitting along side me had a great debate as to whether they could pick their son out and they could never spot him even in the line of troops when they came by. But he knew they were there and so we moved out into right here and this youngster broke and came across from away over there and I was standing there along side the colonel. The colonel was in uniform and when this youngster was about ten paces away, he stopped and drew himself up and saluted and he said, "Good morning, sir." And he was saying it to his father not to me. And the colonel turned to me and he said, "Good, God, that's the first time he said "Sir" since he was four years old."

But, the pride of the parents was just tremendous. The recruits had the rest of the day off, but they couldn't leave the island, couldn't leave Parris Island. But we had things set up where they could have picnics and get with their families and groups. They were free from the end of that parade until about 1900 that night. Then the parents had to leave and we got the troops ready to ship them off to wherever else they were going to go. There still was no leave, there was no recruit leave at that stage of the game. But they had a free afternoon and, of course, they would take them around all over the depot and show them how tough it was and the pugil stick course and the slide life, the rifle range. But they were free to go anywhere on the island they wanted to for a period of about six or seven hours.

But I guess the part of the great thrill of it was seeing the pride in these young men and also the pride in their parents

when they had successfully completed recruit training and knew they had done something real tough.

Anderson: Now, were you ready to go to Vietnam in December of '68?

Simpson: Sure.

Anderson: Had you asked for the duty?

Simpson: No. When you get to be a major general, you don't bother to ask, they're going to send you. Now, what they were doing was sending us in rotation based on the guy longest back from an unaccompanied overseas tour went next. That's the reason I went down to Parris Island rather than going direct to Vietnam. It would have been simpler for the Marine Corps to send me to Vietnam, but I'd been back a little bit less time than this guy at Parris Island, so he went and then I went a year later. Yes, I knew I was going. Sure, I was ready, I didn't ask for it. Well, you always ask for duty in the Fleet Marine Force. But when you get to be a general, they're going to send you where you want to anyway--where they think they need you and they've got a few enough generals that they can manage them, at least in the Marine Corps they can.

Anderson: Now, where was the 1st Marine Division located in Vietnam?

Simpson: In Vietnam--here is the Han River and the DMZ. Now,

I have to tell you, this is a configuration when I was there. Here is the coast line, down here is the harbor of Da Nang, there is a mountain range that runs right there and there are mountains that literally surround Da Nang. This is pretty heavy mountaineous country, fairly flat in here. Que Son is right here. This is the 3d Marine Division.

Anderson: So, it's way up north in I Corps right across from the DMZ.

Simpson: We were all in I Corps.

Anderson: All the Marines in Vietnam were in I Corps.

Simpson: At this time, at this time.

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: 3d Marine Division, the 101st Airborne...Oh, in here too was the 1st ARVN Division. Now just how their blue lines went, I not real sure, but there were three divisions up there. Then, the 1st Marine Division here, and the Americal.

Anderson: So, you would have been east of Da Nang.

Simpson: No, no. Da Nang was here and and my chore was to defend Da Nang.

Anderson: Oh, yes, okay.

Simpson: So, I had everything to the west of Da Nang.

Anderson: That's what I meant, west, not east.

Simpson: See, this is the East China Sea right here.

Anderson: Yes, right.

Simpson: We had a huge airstrip here, 12,000 feet. And we had Marble Mountain in here and then the helicopter facility right over here, and an awful lot of stores and supplies and this is an excellent harbor, one second only to Cam Ranh Bay only, splendid protected harbor.

So, the 1st Division was scattered all over all this area in here. And its primary thing was the defense of Da Nang, though we did sorties back here into the back country, the out back or the bush, as we called it. But the Americal was south of me, the 101 was north, the 3d Division was on the line, the DMZ. That's the way we were configured and all five of those divisions made up I Corps.

Anderson: Okay, so, your mission then was the defense of Da Nang.

Simpson: Yes. Number one, is the defense of Da Nang because this is a tremendous supply depot for all of our corps, both north and south. It had to be defended, there was a ring of low hills around there. Now, I was also tasked to....

Anderson: There is also a river that goes out through here, isn't there?

Simpson: Oh, yes, there is a hell of a big one. And when the monsoons came it got two miles wide at one time. My command post was on the lee side here, this being the ocean, up on the side of this mountain right in here. One of the things that I was tasked to do was to defend Da Nang against the rockets and that was a damned near impossible task.

I had a very large division. At one time, I had four regiments of infantry, each of three battalions, a total of 12 battalions, I had 178 tubes of artillery, I had tanks. When I entered the Marine Corps, Terry, in 1936, there were 990 officers and 17,000 enlisted in the entire Marine Corps--that's when I was a second lieutenant. In Vietnam, the 1st Marine Division Reinforced had 3,200 officers--no--2,300 officers and 32,000 enlisted. That whole division was just twice as big as the entire Marine Corps that I entered in 1936.

Anderson: Let's talk about the problems of defense.

Simpson: Alright, that's what I'm getting ready to talk about.

Anderson: Okay, good.

Simpson: I want to tell you about the two kinds of rockets they had, the best one was the 122. They had a little inferior one, I've forgotten what that was.

What they had was two kinds of rockets, the 122 being the best one and then they had another one which was somewhat inferior to that in range and in destructive power. They had both, the

NVA did. So, we had all the ballistic data on their weapons, we knew what they were. By the way, these are damned good weapons, real good.

Anderson: Yes, Soviet made.

Simpson: Yes, we never had anything like that.

Anderson: We didn't have rockets as good as the 122?

Simpson: No, hell no. We don't today as good as the 122. I guess they do today, but we didn't have one. We had a hell of a lot of artillery, but we didn't have a rocket that would shoot like that.

Anderson: What was the range fire power?

Simpson: Well, the 122 maximum range was about 14,000 meters. Now, what we did was, we took the range, in other words, we drew what we called a rocket belt, and our ballistic guys could figure out that they had to shoot from somewhere in there. You see, they had a mask to go over, they had to go over these mountains. So, they could figure out that using either one, they had to be either here or there. Now, we put up eleven observation posts to do nothing but look for the flash of rockets. They're very easy to detect at night, hard to detect during the daytime. You can if you know what you're doing. Now, these OPs were purely rocket OPs. Oh, if they saw enemy troop movements, they were supposed to report those, but there were

other people looking for that. They're primary thing was to detect the flash of rockets. Now, we had artillery spread all over here. Of course, I had some out in here, but the vast majority was back in here. We developed an SOP in which any piece that was...Now first, everytime there was a firing of rocket, we pin-pointed the location. And so, we knew where they had fired from. And these batteries that were back in here, if they were not firing a mission, they were loaded and they were laid on one of the known firing sites. And that was true all the way around here, ready to go and people standing there with the lanyard in the hand.

Anderson: No kidding.

Simpson: Oh, hell, yes, 24 hours a day. Now, the big trick was, we patrolled out in here, so it was a tremendous matter of coordination of making sure if we had a patrol going through here, that these guys in here knew that we had friendlies in here. Because if this guy in this OP right here, if he spotted a flash here, we had a radio frequency that was dedicated and he sees the flash, and the first thing he does is scream over this frequency, "Rockets, rockets, rockets." At that time, everybody in here shoots. Now nobody knows where it is, yet. But everybody shoots except if you're masked, if you've got a patrol in here. So, they're shooting here, here, here, all over the place. Then this guy takes a cut at this thing and he screams out the azimuth that he's got and usually, the next guy--

he can talk over here--and this guy has seen it. And so, we get a fix. Okay, this is where he shot from. Then, every available piece--now we know where he shot from--so, every available piece that can train on this--and not everybody could, of course--depending on where they were, then everybody lets go on this. This is 8 inch, 105, 175, the whole damned schmeer, well, we didn't shoot 175 too long. But 155, 105, and 8 inch would go in on this place. And very often we got them. We were lucky.

Anderson: About how long, usually, would it take for--let's say you saw a flash--about how long before you're 105s would hit on impact?

Simpson: You mean, before we got trained around and got in on that particular spot?

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: It would be--the first part of it, we'd be shooting in three seconds at whatever, but within 12-14 seconds we'd have guns trained in on that position.

Anderson: No kidding.

Simpson: And then the rest of them would come in as they could get to it. We had some real good kills that way. As a matter of fact, we totally destroyed their accuracy. See, the 122 comes with a good sight on it and a good mount. And what

they would do, since we had such good air surveillance, you see, they would move these rockets at night. Now, there is a great big river back down in here--and I'm running out of space--there's a great big river back down here, we had a combat base over in here. But they'd come down from the north--Ho Chi Minh Trail comes down like this--they'd come down from the north and they'd land this stuff and they'd bury it. And then at night, they'd move it up and bury it again, and night they move them up and bury it again. And finally, they'd get up in firing position. And they'd fade into the woodwork, go underground, or whatever during the daytime, hell of a hard time finding them. And then they'd initially--and this was all perfected before I got there--but they had been setting up their mounts and their sites and the rest of the stuff, and if you do it right and know where you are, the 122 rocket can be just as accurate as the 155. And then they'd fire a round or maybe a couple of rounds and then they'd take down their equipment and they'd fall back. Well, when this counter-battery scheme that I've outlined to you was developed, in the midst of breaking down their equipment, all of a sudden, they got blown out of the damned sky. So, by the time I got there, they weren't using their sights. They used two pieces of bamboo put together with fishing line, like this. And they just mounted the damned rocket on that thing. It wasn't a bad idea because....

Anderson: Fire it and then run.

Simpson: Yes, haul ass. That's exactly right.

Anderson: Which means, of course, their accuracy was awful.

Simpson: Yes, but it didn't make that much difference because this complex that I'm drawing in here was so intense, there were a million people to begin with, a million Vietnamese in addition to all of us. And ammunition dumps all over the gazu. So, you really, it'd be pretty hard to do no damage at all. So, they just--what they were doing was lobbing those things over the hill. And usually when they did they'd hit something worthwhile.

But, we followed this technique faithfully and boy it was loud. I'm telling you; and we got rockets, I'd guess twice a week or sometimes, of course, during Tet we'd get them every night. But they must have averaged two to three times a week, usually not more than one or two during the night. But that one usually ruins your night sleep when that happened because the Corps or III MAF as we called it was right over here and, of course, they were on the horn, "What are you doing?" "We're getting hit by rockets." "What are you doing?" "Well, we were always doing the same damned thing."

To tell you how fast this system worked, in one instance when I was there, the 8 inch happened to be laid...One of the faults of the NVA was that they were creatures of habit and that's the reason this system was developed. They tended to fire from the same places, even though we'd blow the hell out

of them. And of course, that was the basis of training on a known firing site.

Anderson: Sure.

Simpson: But one night, the 8 inch down in here was trained on this site and by God that's where they shot from and the 8 inch passed the rocket in the air. Before the rocket got over the mountain, the 8 inch shell was on the way and hit the guys and blew them all up, eleven of them, got every damned one.

It was quite interesting. That was our primary task and the defense of Da Nang meant, of course, that I could not take this division, even if I'd wanted to, and take off and go somewhere with them. We could not run division wide operations other than defensive ones.

Anderson: And who did the patrols on the field, then?

Simpson: Oh, I don't mean that we didn't do patrols, but we couldn't do the large division wide. I could not move the division.

Anderson: Yes, right.

Simpson: I was anchored on Da Nang. I had to defend Da Nang, and then I was free to do, once having defended Da Nang, I was free to do whatever else I could with the troops that were left over. And I could make various movements around depending on what the enemy was doing. See, my enemy was the NVA. The Viet

Cong, well, they were a goddamned nuisance, but we had them pretty well in hand. The Viet Cong didn't bother us very much...Well, he did. Not in a combat way. They harrassed the villagers that were trying to relocate out there, they threatened them, they hurt us terribly in terms of booby-traps.

Anderson: Yes. Of course, that's another major problem. You want to talk about them?

Simpson: Yes, I would. Let me finish this comparison. We had no problem with the Viet Cong as an organized military formation. Oh, we killed a lot of them, but they were ones and twoses, type of thing, and the black pajama types, and that sort of thing. The NVA, on the other hand, was a trained military organization. And our pitched battles that we had, of which we had a good many, were with the NVA not with the Viet Cong, even though in some cases when we'g get on a battlefield, when we policed the battlefield, we'd find on occasion some VC in there with the NVA and we reckoned that they were guides, they were locals showing them in.

Yes, the booby-traps were a very, very tough problem and they had reached a very sophisticated level when I arrived. Do you recall that I told you in Camp Lejeune we were showing the pungi sticks and those sort of things? That was all gone. Oh, there were still a few left there, but they were into far more sophisticated things because regrettably, the ARVN now--I'm talking about the Army of the Republic of Vietnam--their security

of their ammunition dumps was notoriously poor, I regret to say that, but it really was. And the VC could get into those ammunition dumps and did and stole munitions. And then we'd get those same damned munitions back because they'd convert them into booby-traps. The most hideous of these...Now, they had the standard land mines, you know, the Bouncing Betty, you know what that is, which was a terribly distructive kind of thing. But the kinds that really got us, Terry, were where they would string 155mm shells in trees and we'd have a patrol going down a ravine, you see, and these things would be concealed by the brush--the jungle is very, very thick, triple canopy and you can't see it. Those guys would get in there and hide this stuff and you can't see it. Anyway, you're going down there very cautiously and they're hidden back here in the trees and they wait for a platoon that's in the ravine and then they detonate this thing and it goes off like a string of firecrackers, except they're 155mm shells--shrapnel.

Anderson: How could you combat that?

Simpson: Never successfully. We used an awful lot of artillery fire. My division fired an average of 5,000 rounds of artillery everyday that I was out there.

Anderson: No kidding, 5,000 rounds?

Simpson: 5,000 a day, average. We topped out at 9,900 rounds. Of course, we had to have a lot. See, we had it all right here.

Now, you've heard all these stories about the ammunition restrictions. We were never restricted, we had plenty of ammunition, we'd shoot anything we wanted to. Probably shot too much, but well, in retrospect, I don't take any of it back because I never knew which one of those shells blew up one of those booby-trap things, and as far as I'm concerned if we could have plastered the whole damned landscape, that would have been good enough with me. That is, that we knew we had no friendly civilians or friendly troops in there. The booby-traps were up until my departure a serious problem.

For example, I was told in the early days that they were using fishing line for the tripwire that crossed the trails. Well, you could see those pretty well, and that's what the guys used in our Viet Cong village that we put together in Camp Lejeune. By the time I arrive, for God sakes, they'd gotten a hold of monofilament line. And you know for a fishing line of thin monofilament line you can lay it across your hand and not see it. And our guys couldn't see it. You know, you looked and looked and looked and you just walked into it. We had a lot of lower extremity injuries from those--amputations.

Anderson: I've heard that the booby-traps were more damaging to the troops than the enemy fire.

Simpson: Well, yes, because they're--well, in the sense of being demoralizing, you see. You can't see that. If you can see an enemy and bring your fire power to bear on him or go

after him or shoot him yourself, that's one thing. But if you're just walking along on patrol and you're being as alert as can be and you can't see anything that's threatening you and all of a sudden right in front of you the whole damned earth comes alive, that's quite demoralizing. As I say, we had a lot of lower extremity serious wounds, a lot of amputations, but we also saved a lot of men.

Our surgical teams were terribly busy and the doctors told me that the techniques had been improved so much from the time of Korea to the time of Vietnam, that they said that--I've forgotten--a very high percentage of the limbs, the lower extremities that they saved by their new techniques in surgery, particulary, in veins, arteries, and that sort of thing, would have been automatic amputations in Vietnam.

Anderson: You mean in Korea?

Simpson: In Korea. But even so, there were quite a lot, regrettably, there were quite a lot of amputations--single, double, quadruple, whatnot--of necessity because there was no hope for saving them.

Anderson: Those were two of your problems. What about dealing with the Vietnamese. First, let's talk about dealing with the ARVN troops. Was that a problem at all or did you have much contact with ARVN?

Simpson: I had the 51st Independent ARVN Regiment was in my

zone, commanded by General Kim, I mean, he was the Vietnamese Corps commander and he commanded this 1st ARVN Division up here as well as he 51st. We did a lot of joint operations.

They were pretty good. They were brave, fairly well trained; encumbered to an extent, as far as the 51st ARVN--that's the only one I had any contact with, I didn't have any contact with the 1st ARVN Division, the 51st Regiment--they had their dependents with them. And this was a problem. And they didn't have anywhere to take care of them. They had been based in Da Nang before the war started so all their families were there, the kids were there, and I don't mean they were right down here, they were right out in the brush out here with them. And this posed some real problems because, you know, you don't march off to war and leave your wife and kid. The Vietnamese government--army--refused to recognize the presence of these dependents and did nothing about it, not only didn't get them out, they didn't do anything about helping out as far as feeding and housing and that sort of thing. And I finally got to the point where we saved all the wooden boxes that our ammunition came in and we hauled all that out to this base camp of the 51st ARVN and they built huts out there to live in out of our ammunition boxes. They built great signs of appreciation, oh, pitiful, they had so little. I thought the ARVN, the ones that I was associated with, they were pretty good troops.

Anderson: What about the officers?

Simpson: They were quite adequate as far as I could tell. Officers in the, as you know, the officers in the Oriental armies on a whole are younger than ours. For example, in Korea you've got to retire when you reach the age of 37 in the South Korean army. So, their officers were a little bit younger than ours. They also had their dependents. There was a gap between the officer and enlisted man, no comraderie, I don't think very much compassion between the officers and the enlisted men, I mean, the officers for the enlisted men. Regretably, the NVA were better.

Anderson: Let's talk about that. Do you think that the North Vietnamese army was better than the ARVN, in general?

Simpson: Yes, in general.

Anderson: How about the training of their officers and their enlisted men.

Simpson: From what I could see, they were damned well trained, very well trained and very well equipped. They had good fire discipline. Sometimes, you know, it is pretty hard to judge an opponent like that in battle; you don't see much of him, you don't know, but fire discipline is one of the things that I look for. They had the AK-47, which was better than anything that we had. They had the RPG, we didn't have that. We haven't got it yet--I guess we have now, I don't know, we never had one. RPGs are damned deadly things. That's the thing they

shot--that's the gadget they shot, you know, the Commander in Europe.

Anderson: Oh, yes.

Simpson: That was a rocket propelled grenade. That's a simple damn weapon and God almighty, terribly destructive. Just as simple as it could be. We never had anything--oh, we could overpower these guys because we had so damned much fire power that we could blow the hell out of them and did. But, we had the M-16 rifle and I think it's a serious mistake to ever put in the hands of a rifleman a fully automatic rifle because he tends to spray it. RRRRRRRRRRR like that and he burns up all kinds of ammunition. I don't mind him burning up ammunition, except maybe that's all he's got. And I'd much rather have some aimed fire rather than some firehose type of thing. But, that rifle is equipped with that automated selector on it and even though we told everybody to keep it on semi-automatic and use aimed fire, as soon as they got in a combat situation they flipped that damned thing back--and I guess I would have done the same thing if I'd been equipped with one--and they just sprayed, you know, the whole 36 rounds, whatever they had in their clip. As I say, we had nothing that compared with....

Anderson: Do you think that the Russian rifle is better?

Simpson: AK-47, oh, hell, yes. Much simpler, doesn't jam near as much. Oh, sure, I think the AK-47 is much better than

the M-16. And that's what the NVA has. Now, the Viet Cong, they had a bit of everything.

Anderson: Whatever they could get a hold of.

Simpson: Whatever they could get a hold of. And one of my trophies that I have at home is kind of interesting. I was on a mountain top one time watching a company patrol work through a valley and, of course, there was a code word from me that changed every week, and the battalion commaner is talking to this guy in the valley and told him that "Wizard" was here--that happened to be my code name at that time--well, that meant the division commander was there watching and so forth. And so, the company commander came back on the radio about 30 minutes later. We were watching him work this valley and he was an expert, we could see the enemy moving ahead of him and see his maneuver to trap them and that sort of thing--just like looking at it on television. We were about 3,000 feet above him. Anyway, he said, "Tell the "Wizard" I've got a present for him." Well, I knew better than to ask what it was. But three days later back at the command post of the battalion when I visited there, the company was back in by that time and these guys presented me with a Springfield model 1903 rifle.

Anderson: No kidding.

Simpson: And they had a brass plate made. They killed a VC and he had a U.S. Army Springfield model 1903. And I've got it

to this day. And we tried to figure out how the hell it got there. As best we can figure, it was in the hands of the Chinese at the end of World War II, the Communists took it over from them when the Communists got Chiang Kai Shek's Army on the mainland. And they got these weapons and it filtered on down the Ho Chi Minh Trail and here it was shooting back at us with that same damn weapon. I've often thought I'd like to take that serial number and trace it through and find out where it started, but that would be too much trouble. But they had every conceivable kind of thing.

Anderson: Now, how good were the Viet Cong as soldiers?

Simpson: Well, they were sly and devious and they would never stand and fight, they much preferred to booby-trap you or burn you out. I never saw them in a formation, I never saw more than six Viet Cong at any one time. But I've seen two battalions of NVA. The biggest operation we ran, no we ran two six battalion operations, six infantry battalion operations. There is a place down in here called Go Noi Island, that had been occupied by the Viet Cong. The river comes down and splits around this, this is the big one that we were talking about.

Anderson: About how far is that from Da Nang?

Simpson: Oh, about 13 clicks, about 13 kilometers. And I don't know why the Marines had never cleaned this out before, but it was a staging base for NVA and a stronghold for the VC,

and we knew that from our interpreters and the prisoners we took, which we didn't take very many. But, we decided one time, by God, we'd clean it out and we did. We got a Korean battalion, and I'll talk about them later if you want me to.

Anderson: Yes, I want to talk about that.

Simpson: We got one battalion from them, I used the 51st ARVN and I used four battalions from my own and I took a company of tanks and we took two of our battalions, USMC battalion....

End Side 2, Tape 8

Begin Tape 9, Side 1, October 13, 1981

Anderson: So, you pretty much surrounded the Go Noi Island then.

Simpson: We surrounded the island, we had people here, had people here. There was no escape. We killed 321, two day operation. See they just sat here, they put in a block and then we swept down here, we could ford tanks across here and did. It was a fascinating operation; I was up here in the mountain.

Anderson: How many did you lose?

Simpson: 21, 21 KIA, 41 WIA. But we cleaned it out.

Anderson: And so, in other words, the kill ratio is about 5 to 1?

Simpson: About 10 to 1.

Anderson: About 10 to 1. Now, I've talked to Marines and they said that they thought that the average kill ratio should have been about 10 to 1 because they thought they were ten times better.

Simpson: Well, I would never say that, no. I think in some cases we probably were. The big thing we had was mobility, helicopter mobility and an awful lot of fire power. But also, we had some very brave Marines too, and very, very competent Marines.

We could defeat, we could defeat the NVA at any time we could fight him, and did. We were never defeated by him at any time during the year that I was there.

Anderson: Even on the small patrols? How about ambush or something like that?

Simpson: Well, yes, yes. But I mean in a set piece battle, one where we took in something at least the size of a company or a battalion and we were actually in an engagement, a planned engagement; we never lost one of those. Oh, sure, we were ambushed. That's part of that crazy war.

Anderson: Okay. So that was one of the major operations in your year. Was there another major operation?

Simpson: Yes, we had a--up here, the river goes like this,

and this is called the Arizona Territory, we called it that. This is flat, here is a big, huge fire base called An Hoa. This is completely under sandbags. If you can imagine 4,575,000 filled sandbags all in one place that's where they are, 4,575,000. I didn't know there were that many sandbags in the world. Behind this is high mountain, and the moutains sweep on this way. The favorite line of approach for the NVA battalions when they came down to sort of make a raid in force--they never made an attack on the division as such, they would make what I would call a raid in force. They would come with a battalion, maybe two battalions and hit and then withdraw. Okay, they would hit, they'd go back and we'd go back. We could go back into these mountains and did, but there was no particular point in staying there. We couldn't find them because the mountains went from here to Laos and they got higher and steeper and whatnot. And they could just withdraw into this territory and they had the internal lines of communication. See, the Ho Chi Minh Trail came down here. So, we made sorties back--we chased these bastards back into the mountains occasionally, but it was very hard to catch them out here in the open and once we got into the mountains, we could shoot a few of them but it didn't get you anywhere. We made some two or three battalion operations back in here; very costly because we were hit by snipers and that sort of thing and we could not get a hold of them, we could not get a fix on them, so I didn't keep anybody back in there. This base was permanently occupied.

But we sent a deep patrol, a reconnaissance patrol really, and they captured an NVA prisoner back in here and our interpreters in talking with him found out that these people were going to come out here on a certain morning or night in two battalion strength. So, again we mounted an operation that turned out to be almost a classic. We put two battalions on this side of the river, we had another one blocking them down in here and we thought we knew when they were coming out. It turned out they did. And when we got them out in here, we moved two battalions around behind them by helicopter.

Anderson: They didn't know it?

Simpson: No, well, they knew it when we went in there, they didn't know what the hell we were doing when we flew over but we landed behind them and had them boxed in. And then we crowded them into this corner.

Anderson: And about how large was this so called Arizona Territory that you crowded them into?

Simpson: This is about, I guess this is about three miles and that's about five.

Anderson: It's about three by five and it's not jungle, it's dry?

Simpson: It's flat.

Anderson: It's a flat dry area.

Simpson: It's a flood plain in the monsoon season.

Anderson: Oh, well, they didn't stand a chance.

Simpson: Oh, hell no. My God, we brought everthing in I Corps area to bear on them. And all the aviators were standing in line.

Anderson: Yes, eager to get up there.

Simpson: They all came up, everybody wanted to get in the act; Navy, Air Force, everybody that had an airplane that would shoot. The Army wanted to get in with their gun ships, and of course, we had three Marine squadrons--tac squadrons firing. And we had them stacked up at one time at 25,000 feet waiting their turn to get a shoot in. Because see, we closed this thing pretty....

Anderson: You didn't even have to use your troops then.

Simpson: Oh, we didn't close it very fast, once we had them in here what we did was blow them away. It was what we call a "Turkey Shoot," and I was on an OP right here and I got so damned excited, I got outside the OP and got on top of it watching this thing. But they got me back inside pretty quick when--I saw these guys running, the NVA running in this direction, and I'm standing up there like a cheerleader, you know, and saying, "Shoot them, shoot them." And about that time they shot at me with a .50 caliber. They grabbed my butt and threw me back

inside there. So, I was laughing, played Rommel with it. But that was really one of the most thrilling things that happened, we had every kind of aircraft that could shoot, and of course, we didn't close until late in the day. We just closed the loop so they couldn't get away. Then we let everybody shoot. Boy, it was....

Anderson: What was the casualty rate on that?

Simpson: Oh, my God, we had 400--we could identify 400 plus bodies. We thought there were more than that, but we...You see, the carnage was tremendous, overkill, but deliberately so. Our losses were very small; we had five KIA and about 30 WIA, I guess. Designed to be that way.

Anderson: Sure, absolutely.

Simpson: I mean if we could of done it without anybody getting hurt on our side we would have done it.

Those were the two biggest operations we ran. We ran enumerous battalion size operations.

Anderson: Now, in any of these battalion size operations out in the field, did you ever go?

Simpson: Oh, sure, hell, I was not supposed to go out on any of them. If it were a two or three day operation, Terry, what I would normally do is visit them some morning by helicopter. You understand, 90 percent of our fighting in Vietnam was done

at night. These two operations which I have outlined to you were out of the ordinary because they were done in the daytime. But, 90 percent of our fighting was done at night. So, battalion on a sweep like that would normally rest during the daytime. We cover them with air power, have observation overhead, and give the guys a chance to not sleep, but to rest a little bit because they had to fight most of the night. Normally during that time, I would visit them. I did not think it was my role as division commander to get out on foot and walk at night with these people.

Anderson: Oh, no.

Simpson: If I had any worth at all to those 35,000 Marines, it was to stay alive and there was no point in me trying to prove how brave I was.

It was interesting, Terry, I made myself visit our division hospital three times a week and when I say made myself do it, it was an exercise in self-discipline and reminder to me of the cost of the war that I was waging . It was one of the fascinating things would be that I would visit a battalion out here outside of An Hoa for example, visit the battalion out here, make the acquaintance of an NCO or trooper or somebody--Marine-three days later I would encounter him in the division hospital here. And invariably, the guy would say, "General, I met you the other day at An Hoa where..." and then invaribly they would follow that with this, "Please, don't go

out there, that's our job. We don't want you to get killed." And then they would hammer, hammer, and here's a guy strung up, shot through and through and telling me to take care of myself. You sometimes have to turn away from a thing like that.

I mentioned this fabulous grade of NCO called the drill instructor. One day in one of these battalions out here in the bush I encountered a company gunnery sergeant and recognized him as a drill instructor from my our days in Parris Island. He was splendid, he was on his third tour in Vietnam.

Anderson: No kidding.

Simpson: And he was a wonder. And one night about 5 o'clock, I was back in my CP...See, I flew in helicopters almost all day, averaged six hours a day in helicopters. Had two dedicated helicopters, well, had four helicopters and two crews that flew my own helicopter because I flew more than the pilots were allowed to fly during the month because I wasn't flying, even though I learned to fly--which is another little story I'll tell you in a minute. Anyway, we're back, we didn't do much of this at night, only under extreme circumstances at night. Normally because of weather and lack of visual aides and that kind of thing. But anyway, I mostly spent the night in the bunker or in my bunk, one of the two depending on what was happening. But I got back about 5 o'clock and got a telephone call from the Army, I mean, Air Force Evacuation Hospital. The Air Force ran all the medical evac aircraft, you know, the DC-9.

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: And that Air Force lieutenant colonel doctor down there called to tell me that Gunnery Sergeant Veitch, was there, that he was blind, that he was being evacuated in 30 minutes. And I said, "I'll be there." And we got the helicopter and the aide and I flew down to the air evac hospital which is right here along side the airfield. And we jumped out of the helicopter and we could see the plane there loading the wounded and we ran down the ward where they told us he was and outside the ward was an Air Force nurse and she was standing there crying. And she said, "General, is that your man in there?" And I said, "Are you talking about Gunnery Sergeant Veitch?" And she said, "Yes." And I said, "Yes, he's my man and I"m here to see him." She said, "He's totally blind but he's in there running the war." And I said, "That's Veitch." So, I went in and I said, "Veitch, what the hell have you been doing." He said, "General, I expected you to come down here." He said, "You know what, I'm going home now, but I want you to take care of yourself, don't get yourself shot, you're due to come home in about three months." And he said, "You join me again in Parris Island and we'll teach those damn recruits all that we've learned in Vietnam." Now, this guy is totally and permanently blind. I said, "Alright, Gunny, I'll be there." I walked out to the plane with him, I wasn't going to leave him out there, and he said, "General, you're going to the plane?" And I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, which way is it?"

No Page 454

He grabbed hold of my arm like that and remember, this is a guy who has just been blinded two hours before, walked out, he walked up that ladder into the plane, sat down, strapped himself in, and he said, "General, see you." God! I got a tape from him, from a VA Hospital in Massachusetts, and of course, he couldn't write, and he told me that it's now October--and I believe he was wounded in July--they had taken out one eye, his other eye they retained it, but he had no sight in it, but they had to put in a glass eye. So, they were getting ready to fit this glass eye and he demanded that the glass eye have a Marine Corps emblem in the pupil. And they got it for him, and he told me on this tape that he was going to Parris Island for the Marine Corps birthday on the 10th of November and he was going to wear his Marine Corps glass eye and his dress blues, and he did! The was just an incredible guy, just absolutely incredible.

Anderson: Talk about dedication.

Simpson: I'd like to tell you about "Stack Arms." The stress in Vietnam was enormous as evidenced by the fact that everybody there drew combat pay; there were no safe areas. That's the only war that I've ever attended where that was true. You see, the rockets could hit Da Nang anytime as well as the troops. Of course, the stress on the infantry out here can't be measured. They were in constant danger 365 days and 365 nights because we couldn't rotate it. These guys that lived back here had it made

pretty good.

Anderson: Down by the command post artillery positions.

Simpson: Well, they had the bomb proof, what have you. Yes, they had good food, they had showers, they had bomb proof shelters that they could get into. The infantry didn't have any of this. And I watched them and they'd go on those patrols and they'd go three weeks without a bath other than what they might be able to get out of a helmet and that sort of thing, never a shower.

Anderson: Wasn't there any way that you could rotate them so that they could get some proper hygiene every once in awhile?

Simpson: Well, we did to the extent that we could, but going three weeks without a bath was pretty much routine for the infantry in Vietnam--if they were on any patrol. Now, when he could get into a base like this, we had water in there and around in here, but I wouldn't say that was the norm.

Anderson: It was real tough conditions.

Simpson: Yes, real tough on the infantry. The infantry had it the toughest of all, as they always do. And I worried a lot about that. And one day I called in my ADC, BGen Jaskilka, who was a very energetic guy, and I said, "We're going to do something a little different." See, they had brought in amphibian tractors and amphibian tractors weren't very much use in Vietnam. They're

too big and cumbersome, bridges wouldn't hold them, such bridges as we had. So, here was a little compound right in here with wire fencing around it and all; pretty safe haven. This is the South China Sea here and there were all the LVTs. We used them occasionally, we'd take two or three out and during the monsoon season when this river got up why we'd use them. But they were sort of dead cargo, but they were there. And this was a pretty safe compound and we had bled this battalion down to where it was not any longer a functional battalion of LVTs, it was essentially a guardian to guard all these tractors that we had and we put the rest of the people out there as replacements, we put them in the line. I told Jaskilka, "I want you to go over there and build a camp and we're going to build it big enough for an infantry company and we're going to bring these kids in for 48 hours on a no notice basis and I want you to go first class. I want you to get bunks, I want you to get sheets, I want you to get food, movies, beer, the whole schmeer. And do it in such a way that they don't have any duties during that 48 hours that they're in here." And I said, "That's your project." The ADC always needs a project, this was a very energetic guy and he went to work on it. He begged, borrowed, and stole stuff all over the place--literally all three. And we built this camp behind screens, we put in shower points, we got the food, we got the movies, we got the beer, we got soft drinks, and then we started out when we were all set. I was down there the morning...I

called it "Stack Arms."

Anderson: Stag Arms?

Simpson: Stack Arms.

Anderson: Oh, okay.

Simpson: Stack Arms because that's essentially what it was, "stack arms." We brought them in there, we took their weapons away from them, they came in with individual weapons. The individual weapons were TI'd as we called it, technical inspection, they had no guard duties, they could swim in the East China Sea [South China Sea], they could eat as much steak as they wanted to. We put the MARS Lines in there, they could call home over the MARS radio. We had a place for them to sit down to write, we had movies, outdoor movies, of course. I went down there the morning...We never told the companies in advance when they were going.

Anderson: How many companies would you put in?

Simpson: One at a time, 48 hours. I would arrange it with the regimental commander and the battalion commander; they would tell me what would be a good cycle to pick these people up on, you see. We wouldn't pull a guy out on the line that was in combat.

Anderson: No, of course not.

Simpson: But usually, what we wanted to do was get him after he made a hard patrol. But we never wanted anybody to know when they were going. And we'd land out there with three CH-53 helicopters and pick up the whole damned works. We took nobody above the company level, and we'd take anybody that was with them, like a forward observer. If he'd been with them, forward artillery observer, forward air observer, if he'd been with the company we'd take him. We wouldn't let anybody on the battalion staff and nobody on the regimental staff go.

And I was down there looking at this thing the day before we opened it and the engineer said, "Boy, we're all set, we got 10,000 gallons of water." I said, "Are you sure that's enough?" He said, "Oh, plenty." Okay. One of the things that we had a lot of in Vietnam was charcoal. So, we had charcoal barbequed steaks. We put 275 men, that was the reinforced company, into that first one and that day they ate 979 charcoaled broiled steaks. It was fascinating.

Anderson: Did you get into hot water?

Simpson: Well, I was going to tell you, that was one of the funniest things. I didn't go down there for the first company when they arrived because I didn't want to be the big wheel type of thing. The press was there and the TVs were there and that sort of thing; so I deliberately stayed away because otherwise there was going to be, "See what a bright boy am I" type of thing. But I visited almost every other time. But

this first one was really funny because the engineer was telling me about this, he ran out of water and he had to go get some more water and all that sort of stuff. I went down there for the second infantry company, and the engineer was telling me this story and he said, "By the way, you've got a guy in there I can't get out. He's been in there for about two hours now. All he does is come out and drink a beer and goes back in." And you know what a shower point looks like, all eight showers are running at the same time--you don't have individual controls on them. So hell, all this water is going down the drain. And this boy is in there and I looked at him and he was having the time of his life. He had a beer in his hand, was rubbing the soap all over himself and everything else. I buzzed him to come out and I said, "Hey, friend, how are you getting along?" He said, "General, I haven't had a decent bath in six months. And by God, I'm going to have one now."

It was kind of funny. They were terribly suspicious when they first landed and boy, you take those weapons away from them, they don't know about this goddamned thing. So, we had a fine old gunnery sergeant that really ran the camp and we had coconut log benches out there in the movie theater and he'd get up there on the top and he say, "Well, you're the damnedest bunch of Marines I've ever seen. Here it is 11 o'clock in the morning and what the hell, you haven't even got a beer yet." They can't believe this. So, they'd run over there and we had these 55 gallon drums of beer and soft drinks and they'd get some and

then he tell them--and they still don't believe this--you can swim, you can sleep, relax, you can call up your girl friend on the MARS radio, you can write letters, you can eat, you can drink beer or soft drinks. And then it would finally dawn on them that it was real. We had bunks, sheets, pillows--we got all these things from the hospital. Not stolen but we....

Anderson: Requisitioned them.

Simpson: Requisitioned them. They lived better during that 48 hours than--I made sure they lived better than any of the troops back here for that 48 hours.

I think that was one of the most satisfying things I did in Vietnam, was build that camp. And they'd given me a photo album about that big that I really treasure, with pictures of these kids and that sort of thing, taken throughout the course of our stay. It was still running when I left. See, that was the only break that the infantrymen got.

It was another thing on battalion commanders. You've heard of "punching tickets?" The Army uses that term, you know, you've got to go out there and get your ticket punched, you've got to command for awhile. And I determined that I wouldn't turn over the battalion commanders every six months simply for the sake of....

Anderson: Yes, that's one thing I wanted to talk about, the rotation of command every six months. Some critics have said that it was basically careerism, it wasn't good military lead-

ership. What's your opinion of that?

Simpson: Okay. I'll be happy to tell you about it now. What I'm saying applies only to infantry company grade officers and infantry battalion commanders--nobody else. Artillery battalion commanders are the same, artillery regimental commander for 12 months when I was there. Other colonels came in got the job. This guy was an expert, I kept him for 12 months. Artillery battalion commanders I never relieved except for cause or rotation. I never gave anybody a command for the sake of them having a command. And I had heard all this stuff about six months is plenty for a battalion commander--infantry battalion commander--and I said, "I've got to watch this."

What I found, Terry, was that an infantry battalion commander in Vietnam at the end of six months, if he had done his job, he was so damned tired that then he was beginning to make mistakes that cost lives.

Anderson: I see.

Simpson: And if he hadn't--if he wasn't that tired, he hadn't done his job very well. And so, somewhere around six to seven months, I changed them, but for that reason only. Nobody came out and said, "Where's my regiment or my battalion?" Now, if we had stayed longer, if the individual officer had stayed longer, he could have done six months as an infantry battalion commander, come back here to the division CP, been an assistant G-4 for three months and then he could have gone back and he would

have been better off at that stage. But, I'll give you an example. A very superlative officer came out, a lieutenant colonel, had been a battalion commander for me in the 2d Division, and indeed, he was there on the staff--on the division staff...This sometimes happened, you get a staff officer, you get an excellent officer and they'll staff them off at division and they never get down to command a battalion because they're so damned good.

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: And if found this guy on the staff and I figured why he was on the staff because, hell, he could do anything. He could be a battalion commander, he could be a G-3, he do whatever was asked of him. He was extremely desirous of commanding a battalion. And I was fully confident of his abilities to command one. And when we rotated an infantry battalion commander home, I took him down and gave him a battalion. He was superlative. But I watched him tire. He grew grey, not in his hair but in his face. His eyes sunk back, almost never slept.

Anderson: Sure.

Simpson: But he did a great, great job. We had a program in Vietnam, as you know, of voluntary extension. The tour was one year but you could extend for six months and in return for extending for six months you got 30 days at home or anywhere you wanted to go. I moved in on this when I was there and I made

sure that they were all the volunteers that stayed. I found that was not necessarily true when I arrived that--you had a leeway of ten days before the end of tour and ten days after the tour and people were leaning on the good people to stay that additional ten days to break in their replacement or in some cases, they were sending people home ten days early. I changed all that in the 1st Division during my tenure and I said, "365 days is a tour and that's when you'll go, and you'll go on the 365th day, not one day early, not one day later." And there were enough airplanes leaving at that time, they were charter flights, to do that. Anybody that volunteers has to be a true volunteer and you won't lean on anybody. What it was good for, and it was a good deal, for a 19 year kid that was unmarried, no dependents, saving money to go to college. See, enlisted men had no income taxes, you know, and there was combat pay and hazardous duty pay, and all that sort of thing. So, for those kids that were true volunteers, okay. I was very askance at a married man who wanted to extend. And I would never, to the extent that I could control it, allow any pressure on anybody to extend; simply on the basis that you better not try to play God. You get that guy to extend and he gets killed next week, the blood is on your hands, remember that. So, I got that pretty well established. But in any event, this guy gets carried away with being a battalion commander. And long about the four and a half month point of his tour as a battalion commmander, he said, "General, I'd like to extend." And I

happened to know he was married and had two children. And I said, "What are you going to do that for?" He said, "I want to continue to command this battalion." And I said, "Charlie, you're at liberty to extend if you want to, but I think you are a damned fool knowing that you've got a wife and two children back home that I know very well. But, the regulations say you can extend if you want to and you can, but you're not going to extend on the condition that I let you stay and command this battalion." "Oh," he said, "that's the reason I want to extend." I said, "If you extend, you'll be given some job, maybe eventually, you might get back to the battalion, but I won't promise you that. But don't extend on the thesis that you're going to be a battalion commander because you're not." And every time I was down there--I visited his battalion about once a week--"If you just let me keep this battalion, I'd be happy to extend." "Quit talking about it because I'm not going to do it." "No, I'm doing fine, I'm fine." Okay. So in one day comes a guy that I also know from the States. Remember now, I had more lieutenant colonels than I had battalion commanders, I mean, I had some lieutenant colonels that never got a battalion during my time and never would, and also, they're not colonels today. But I had a bigger obligation to the troops than to just punch people's ticket. So, I got a guy in from the States that I knew and I knew he was a competent infantryman, competent battalion commander, second tour in Vietnam. And it was about time for this guy, Charlie Mize's tour to be up. So I called the

regimental commander and I said, "I have your relief for Charlie Mize," told him who he was, he said, "Just great." And I said, "When?" I said, "Well, what's Charlie doing right now?" He said, "Well, he's in a sort of quiet period right now." I said, "Okay, I'll pick you up [I'm talking to the regimental commander] tell Charlie I'm coming down to visit him, but don't tell him why." And I said, "I'll pick you, the regimental commander up and your sergeant major at 0930 and we'll go down and effect the relief." So, we get the helicopter and we go to the regimental CP and we pick up the regimental commander and the sergeant major and we fly in there, and I've got this guy with me. So Charlie comes out to meet the airplane, the helicopter, and he saw this guy whom he knew and his face fell. I said, "Charlie, here's your relief." He said, "Well, you couldn't get a better one." But he said, "It will take me about two or three days to turn over, you know." I said, "No, you've got 30 minutes." I said, "Get what troops you've got around headquarters here and your sergeant major, we're going to have a change of command right now. Then you've got 20 minutes to get your stuff together, say goodby to your troops." He said, "I can't say goodby to all of them, they're out in the field." I said, "That's too bad, you're going back with me right now." So, we passed the flag, change of command, put him in the airplane, he protesting all the way, "Wouldn't it be better if he stayed down there a week showed, him around?" "No."

We got back to division, I had a couple of huts for visit-

ing officers. We lived "high on the hog." The officers were two to a little hut. My own quarters was two bedrooms, bath, air conditioned--marvelous mess. Anyhow, we get this guy to the CP when we get back there, told the aide to take him down and get him in him bunked in one of the visiting officer's quarters and tell him we usually gather for one cocktail at 1800 and then we had dinner. At 1800 I went down got a cocktail and this guy was nowhere to be seen. I sent the aide down and came back and he said, "He was alseep." He said, "Do you want me to wake him up?" I said, "No." He said, "He never took off his clothes, still got his boots and his jungle fatigues one." I said, "Fine." The guy woke up at 10 o'clock the next morning, slept 24 hours straight, 24 hours. I was gone when he woke up, I didn't see him until dinner that night. By that time, he sort of caught himself together and he cleaned up and put on a fresh uniform and shaved and he said, "You were right." I said, "You hadn't made a mistake yet, Charlie, but you're tired, that you were going to take that outfit out there into a sweep one of these days and--you're the kind of tired that 24 hours sleep is not going to cure. You've been averaging about two hours a night." And I said, "You're going to need a couple of nights to get back to battery. And I wanted you to go before you made a mistake that cost the lives of some of your people, maybe your own." He said, "I agree."

So, that's the reason I turned the battalion commanders over about every six months. Because the stress was so great that

they were so tired at that time if they'd done the job right, that they were at the point that they liable to make mistakes. And some made them at five months. Some could have gone to seven, seven and a half. But, I usually changed them between five and a half and six and a half months, but not to give people additional experience in command.

Anderson: Sure, not for career advancement.

Simpson: Not for career advancement but for the sake of the command, sake of the command. So, we didn't have any of that ticket punching. We got a lot of tickets punched and some battalion commanders didn't last six months.

Anderson: Now, would a battalion commander...Of course, some of the problems--some people feel that a battalion commander wouldn't have the opportunity to know his men, know the combat situation, and know many of the problems of his command in a six month period of time. And that was one of the arguments and, of course, the other arguments that many critics have said of rotation is that, gee, look at World War II, some people might have a command for two or three years.

Simpson: Oh, oh, entirely different war, entirely different war.

Anderson: Yes, yes, sure.

Simpson: Remember now, I said everybody in Vietnam was draw-

ing combat pay. Now, I have a friend that entered the 2d Battalion, 6th Marines in World War II before the war as a second lieutenant and he stayed with it until he was a lieutenant colonel commanding for four damned years. And during that time, he went through Tarawa, well, he had three big major operations. But, in between, they withdrew to Maui, where they regrouped, retrained, replenished, and recharged their batteries. Now, if he had to do Tarawa every week, he wouldn't have lasted three months. And that's the reason in World War I--World War II--you could have a guy in command. There were also safe areas, even in Korea. Even in Korea we had--the opposition had no air and limited artillery. And so, in Korea we could bring a regiment or a battalion back into a safe area and the people could go to sleep at night and have a reasonable assurance that they were going to wake up the next morning. And there wasn't a damned soul in Vietnam that knew they were going to wake up the next morning, including me.

Now, we could have done it differently. Instead of having a 13 month tour, we had a longer tour--turned some of these infantry guys around. In other words, this guy that was so tired, I could have brought him back to the division staff where he was relatively secure, given him a desk job, let him recharge his batteries, and recoup, and so forth. And in another three or four months I could have probably sent him back out there for another three or four months. But that wasn't the way it worked and I was not going to let him extend and risk his life

for that purpose.

Anderson: What happened to him, by the way, do you know?

Simpson: Hell, yes. He's a major general today. Sure. He's a major general commanding the Educational Center in Quantico today. I had a letter from him just the other day.

Remember I told you when I was--my first aide in Camp Lejeune was Chuck Robb?

Anderson: Lieutenant Governor of Virginia, yes.

Simpson: Okay. When I got to Vietnam, I spent five days with the guy I was relieving. For a division commander, some little overlap is useful.

Anderson: Oh, sure.

Simpson: When it did, it's useful in any command, in this case, it's not particulary indicated. Remember this, I had said this guy was on his second tour in Vietnam. Anyway, I had five days. The first night we were sitting there after dinner talking and the guy I was relieving said, "Well, I want to tell you that your first task is to take care of Chuck Robb." And I said, "What! What the hell is he doing?" He said, "Well, he's in the division G-4 section, he was a rifle company commander but now after six months we pulled him out." We tried to do this with rifle company commanders but we couldn't always do it, we did't have that many. I mean change them the same way

we did battalion commanders. But he said, "After six months we pulled him back and he's here in division G-4 section. He's doing fine. But, every Friday night, you have to send a "Flash" dispatch which goes through channels, it is a coded dispatch that has a code word in it which simply means that Chuck Robb is alright and that's got to be in the White House by Saturday morning, every week." And he said, "Whatever you do, don't screw that one up." So, they had a little SOP set up for this damned thing. And I knew Chuck Robb, but I knew also that he was trying not to be the President's son-in-law; so I didn't seek him out or anything. I saw him eventually and spoke with him, but I deliberately--and Linda Bird used to embarrass the hell out of him because when he was a rifle company commander out here in the boondocks, she'd get on that White House communication system at night and call him, and damn, it would come all the way from Washington all the way through to Da Nang and down through my switch board and all the way down the radio to him out there in the field. And she'd sit there and talk to her husband, made him mad as hell and everybody else were absolutely furious, they couldn't talk to their wives. He never called her, but she'd call him.

But in any event, one night we were sipping after-dinner coffee in my mess and mortars began to land right outside. And the chief of staff looked at me and he said, "General, they're shooting at you," which they were. See, our mess was up on stilts, there was no armor or anything else. But every-

body broke like hell and, of course, when the mortars came in as when the rockets came in we never knew whether that was a presage of another attack. So, it was clear as hell what we did. Our helmets and our flak jackets were hanging--it was just like the old gun fighter days, you came into the mess and hung up your gun and your flak jacket and your helmet on a peg by the wall and that was your peg and when the fire bell rang, why, you went right to it and picked up your stuff and went. Well, everybody ran for their particular duty station and I grabbed mine and went on down the hill into the big bunker where I could watch this display and everthing and see what the hell happened. We had about four mortar shells that landed out on a helicopter LZ, there were no helicopters there. That was only about 30 yards away. As a matter of fact, some of the shrapnel came through the building. But we ran down this ladder and into the big bunker and then we were watching this display board. We were getting these reports, we were trying to find out if anything else has happened. In the meantime, they lobbed a few more into the division CP. But I'm watching these boards to see whether it lights up, you know, whether something is coming or not and they had a big captain's chair for me where I sit in the combat operations center and watch this thing. And they came over and said that they had a hit on the G-4 section with one of these. Again, it was unarmored, it was just a tin shack, I mean, a shack with a tin roof on it. And then it came back and I said,

"Well, is anybody hurt?" And they said, "Yes, we've got some people hurt." Robb never occurred to me. I had a lot bigger things to worry about, I thought, at that particular moment. And after about 45 minutes they came and said, "We've got three KIA and four WIA." But then the action stopped, no more mortar. But I stayed there for a minute or two and the sergeant brought me coffee and that sort of thing and then a guy came up from down below there, one of the staff officers, and he said, "All the wounded are in the hospital and they're all going to make it. By the way, he said, "Chuck Robb did a fine job." I said, "Oh, good God, you don't mean to tell me..." "No," he said, "he's not killed and not wounded. He was in the other end of the building when the mortars hit, but he did a great job of getting the wounded out of there." I said, "Well, that's fine, I had forgotten all about that." I thought that I would congratulate young Robb the next time that I saw him, but I wasn't going to make any big deal out of it because Chuck didn't do anything that anybody else should't have done under the circumstances.

Well, the time this happened, Terry, was a fairly quiet time around Da Nang, that is, quite from the standpoint of the international news media and we hadn't had a hell of a lot of big combat operations to get their attention and they were bored as hell and what not. And the next day, I get a telephone call from the Commandant of the Marine Corps. And it comes bang, all the way from Washington to Da Nang, straight through.

Our communications were extraordinary. I mean, as a matter of fact, they were too good. We got too much help. But, he said, "Hello." I said, "Hello, General, I can hear you, what's the trouble?" He said, "Why didn't you tell me Robb was alright?" I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "You had a mortar attack last night?" And I said, "Yes." And he said, "Robb didn't get hit?" I said, "No, he didn't get hurt." "Well, why didn't you tell me?" I said, "Well, Jesus, General, we had a rocket attack two nights ago, he didn't get hit then, I didn't tell you that. How the hell did you know all this?" I figured from his briefing that he'd known that we had had mortar and he'd known that we had three killed and four wounded which would be normal, but what had happened was when this little ruckus went on up there, the press down in Da Nang were bored stiff and they didn't have anything to do so they came running up the hill. I didn't know this, you see. And they found old Robb in there pulling the wounded out. So, they sent a flash dispatch back and LBJ gets up the next morning and here is a headline in the Washington Post saying, "President's son-in-law is safe." So, LBJ gets on the phone and he called the Commandant and he said, "Why the hell didn't you tell me this?" The Commandant calls me. I said, "Well, I've been sending you that damned dispatch. What do you want me to do now?" He said, "Lord, I don't know. The only thing I can think of is that anytime you think the President might read about Robb, please let me know first." So, from there on anytime we had a rocket attack on the CP or

mortar attack of any consequence, we sent a dispatch to the Commandant and said, "Robb is okay." I was sure glad when he got on that airplane and went home.

Anderson: Of course, that raises another question, and that is the press in Vietnam. This is really the first televised war we had. Of course, they had some television coverage in Korea, but nothing like this and the press had almost no rules and regulations because it was not a declared war so there was not the ability to censor the press and many military men have criticized the press that they hindered America's cause a lot more than they helped it. I'd like your opinion on the press. You must have had an awful lot of relations with the press.

Simpson: An awful lot, an awful lot.

End Side 1, Tape 9

Begin Side 2, Tape 9

Simpson: Walter Cronkite...since he was named on the CBS evening news until the day he retired, as does Dan Rather now, shows up as managing editor. Now, I don't know exactly what that means, but I presume, and I may be wrong, I presume that means that the managing editor has control over what the script says. I presume that to be true. At any rate, I have related to you my enthusiasm about my project called Stack Arms, and I thought this was great. And a CBS team came in one day, and by this time they were on a regular beat. In other words, they would repeat

their routes, that's the reason I got to know these guys. Because we didn't have very many of the big names that stayed in Da Nang, they stayed in Saigon and they would make their way up the peninsula and back down again, you see. So, I would see them frequently. And one day the CBS crew arrived, and I've forgotten who it was, but it was one of the people that we see today, that was the head of it, and he came up and he said, "General, what's new?" And I said, "I've got something new for you, I want to show you this thing." So, I got my helicopter and flew over there and we got there just before--I told him enroute about what this thing was all about--and we got there just before the infantry happened to land. They stayed there all day, they loved it. They wanted me to be in the piece and I refused. I said, "I'm telling you what you got here, your story is the infantrymen. It's not the division commmander." And I refused to be in that spot, I was in a lot of them in other circumstances, but I didn't want to be the big wheel that set up--the big godfather that took care of the infantry. I said, "But your story is that guy who gets off the helicopter, watch him, watch him all the way through." Well, they came back wildly enthusiastic and they said they had so much tape that it would be documentary rather than a film clip. And I thought that was great. So, I wrote my wife and I told her about it and in the meantime, I'd written her about Stack Arms and I said, "You watch for this," because see, we never knew when we did a television interview, we never knew whether it

would be on in a couple of nights or two weeks from then or whatever. So, I would tell my wife when I was interviewed on television and then she'd write back week-month later that she had seen it or not seen it as the case may be. Anyway, I told her to watch for this thing. We wrote everyday and after about a month she hadn't said anything about it and I wrote her and she said, "Haven't heard anything about it." So, these guys came back through in about two months. And I didn't tell them what she said; I said, "How about the documentary, when are you going to air that?" And it began to get very embarrassing and they said, "Well, we got to level with you. You've always leveled with us and we'll level with you. It's not going to be on the air." And I said, "Why not?" And they said, "The word that we have from New York is that's not what we want to show about the Marines in Vietnam." And I said, "Well, I'll be goddamned. What is it that you guys really want?" They said, "Don't get mad at us." I said, "Well, I've got to get mad at somebody. Now that's something positive, that's something the American mothers ought to see that we're trying to do something for these guys. Now, I'd like somebody to tell me why that's not worth showing, if some of these blood and guts things are." "Well, General, we can't do anything about it, that's beyond our level." Well, there was too much of that.

Anderson: Yes, I've heard that same thing from other general in Vietnam. I've also heard that the press, well, at least

I've heard and I'd like your comment on this, did you feel that the press was trying to spectacularize the war?

Simpson: Oh, absolutely! No question about that, no question about that, yes. The slow tedious process we made in what invariably has been called pacification where we uncovered areas, made it safe; when I left Vietnam, they had some public elections. Do you recall the figure of how many people voted in our national election last time?

Anderson: No. Oh, in ours?

Simpson: In ours.

Anderson: In ours, just about 50 percent.

Simpson: Okay. We had province elections in our province. 82 percent of the eligible voters voted. 82 percent, this is a country at war and these guys are scared to go to the polls, but 82 percent of them went. 90 percent of the children in the Da Nang sector that were eligible to go to school were going to school when I left there. I don't think we do much better than that in America. We've probably got more drop-outs than that, or absentees. But the press was never interested in that. My point was, we are getting somewhere. Now, whether we're winning the war or not, I don't know. I said, "I don't think we ever going to really win the war until we can somehow engage the NVA frontally and defeat him. And I can't do it a battalion at a time. I can defeat him wherever I can find him, but if I can't

find him than I can't find the great mass of NVA because they're back there in the hills and I can't go get them. I don't have that many people. So, yes, we were doing something positive, but I never got the press interested. And so, when are we going to end the war? See, I had to be very careful about what I said. We became very cautious about what we said. We could not speculate, they would not honor an off the record conversation.

Anderson: They wouldn't?

Simpson: No, no. They said they couldn't guarantee it, so they didn't get anything.

Anderson: Besides the press there were other problems. When you arrived, it was December of 1968, about 11 months earlier in January of '68 they had the Tet offensive. And I was wondering about--of course, Tet had a tremendous impact at home. But did it really have much of an impact that you could see as far as the morale of the Marines?

Simpson: Hell, no!

Anderson: That's what I thought.

Simpson: Gosh, no, we didn't lose all that much. As a matter of fact, we won Tet.

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: It never really shows up, but I mean when you analyze the whole schmeer of the thing, it was won. You'd never believe it from reading the American press. We had another Tet offensive in February after I got there; it was nearly as big, we were ready for that one, as I think we were ready for the other one--pretty well ready for it. That one didn't make the headlines because we won almost every engagement in that one and so that was not news.

Yes, I was extremely disappointed--I have to say though, Terry, I would say in all fairness to the correspondents I was in day-to-day, not day-to-day but almost day-to-day, contacts with them, the correspondents of the press and the news media to include television that I was in contact with in--I feel very strongly that they were not operating on their own convictions but on orders from higher authority. In other words, I feel that this was a policy decision of CBS not to air that documentary on the Stack Arms, which I thought was one of the most worthwhile things that I did on television all the time I was there--I did four television...I think that was a deliberate policy decision made back in the United States and not by the correspondents themselves.

I found them to be extremely interesting people, warm and friendly and bright as hell, as they would be; people that were on the top.

Anderson: Quite knowledgeable.

Simpson: The writers from Great Britain, Reuters, those people of the international press, they didn't seem to operate under that sort of bias. I really enjoyed them, they were very pleasant. I got along alright with them. I got exasperated with all the press when I couldn't get the things across that I thought, as I've tried to say to you, that I thought were significant in terms of what the Americans were doing there in that war. But I got tired of being asked when's the war going to end because we'd already missed about three good chances to end the war and it was pretty apparent during the time that I was there that we were essentially in a stalemate position, cast in that role by our own timidity. As I told you in the outset, the big lesson that I hope the American people and its administrators have learned from Vietnam is that you must never go to war unless you're prepared to win it.

Anderson: But, we're going to get to that, we're going to get to the reasons why we didn't win it. I want to ask you some other things before we get that far. What about the problem of interservice rivalry?

Simpson: I've got 15 minutes.

Anderson: Couldn't we cover interservice rivalry in 15 minutes?

Simpson: Sure, I can cover it in lots less time than that, we didn't have any.

Anderson: You didn't have any interservice rivalry?

Simpson: Hell, no. Oh, sure.

Anderson: What about the issues of....

Simpson: Who controlled the air.

Anderson: Exactly.

Simpson: Oh, sure. I'm talking about me, I'm a ground officer. That was a continuing and severe problem about Marine aviation and who controlled the air. Sure, that was a real serious problem. It did not hinder my operations as a ground officer. I had Marine air support throughout the entire time I was there. I had it in quantity in terms of offensive weapons. I did not have, and it was no fault of that agreement or disagreement, I did not have and the Marine Corps did not have enough helicopters to do the kind of things that we wanted. We were extremely jealous of the 101st Airborne who had 400 helicopters of all shapes and sizes. However, on various occasions, I borrowed helicopters from the Army and they were good enough to come down and help me. They were fine pilots, and had excellent machines. There was some friendly rivalry between the ground forces and that sort of thing. But, the biggest interservice dispute that had to do with the Marine Corps out there had to do with that agreement about who's going to control the air. And that was bitter and it continued, but I can say in all honesty that it did not hinder my either offensive or defensive operations as far as 1st Marine Division was

concerned on the ground. I got the air support that I needed. I did not have enough helicopters or the Marine Corps did not have enough helicopters to do all the things that I wanted to do at the same time, but that had nothing to do with rivalry.

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: But we did have good cooperation from the Army in loaning us helicopters with their own air crews, of course. When we needed them particularly, for difficult resupply missions...See, the XXIV Corps was up here in the north and that had that, the XXIV U.S. Corps had the 3d Marine Division and the 101st Airborne in there. And that corps commander was Dick Stilwell, who was a good friend of mine, and he came down and visited me from time to time and he came down one time and I had a three battalion operation going on back in those mountains that I showed you and I was having a hard time resupplying them and he saw it and he said, "You need some help." And I said, "I sure do." And boy, the next thing you know, he had helicopters carrying extra loads up there.

Anderson: So, you worked quite well with the Army helicopters?

Simpson: What?

Anderson: You worked quite well with the Army helicopters?

Simpson: Oh, damned right, sure, sure.

Anderson: Okay. Here's another question I think we can take

care of very quickly and that is, of course, by 1971-1972, after you were gone, there was a problem with drugs in Vietnam and I was wondering if you had any of those problems with the Marines.

Simpson: Some, with rear area troops.

Anderson: Not the combat?

Simpson: Back in the Da Nang complex. We had problems with VD and some problems with drugs. None out here, that I knew anything about.

Anderson: None in the combat zones?

Simpson: None at all that I ever heard about in the combat zone. These guys back here--the drugs were supplied by the Vietnamese. We knew this, the prostitutes were supplied by the Vietnamese. There was no prostitution out here, there were no drugs out here that I ever heard anything about. The problem was back here, it was not a major one during the year that I was division commander. It probably did become major later on, but not a major problem at that time.

Any use of drugs is too much, but it was not a problem of significant proportion to me. Understand, I don't under rate it. As I say, one guy on drugs is too much. But I can truthfully tell you, Terry, that the drug business did not adversly affect the capabilities of the 1st Marine Division during the time that I was in command. Whether it did at a latter time, I

could not say, but it didn't during that particular time.

Anderson: Okay, we should probably stop here.

Simpson: Yes, I think we better.

End Session 4, Tape 9, Side 2

Begin Session 5, Tape 9, Side 2, 27 October 1981

Anderson: Well, let's continue, and we were discussing Vietnam last time, and I'd like to continue along that train of thought. There was a number of questions that I have to ask about Vietnam. One of the major problems that most military experts, most soldiers say about that war is how do you measure success? And one of the ways that they came up with measuring if we were or were not winning the war was the body count, which also came under some discussion as far as if it was measuring and if it was accurate. Would you like to address that; the body count and how we measure that war?

Simpson: Yes. Well, I don't think body count is--that one got completely out of hand, Terry, as far as I can tell. That's a very poor way of determining whether you're winning or not. I realize that some of the military and a great deal of the press, in particular, out there, they egged it on, they wanted to know how many bodies can you count and so forth and so on. People sort of fell into that trap and it began to be, well, if you can count 200 dead bodies and you only lost ten, why, you're

doing pretty good and so forth and so on. I don't think that's true. The measure of winning that war, which we didn't win by the way, we lost it. We would have won if we had been able to restore South Vietnam to an era of peace and in which the people were allowed to resume their normal pursuits; farming, fishing, whatever it might be. We achieved that in limited degrees in certain areas; to the extent that it was achieved over all in Vietnam, I have no way of knowing. We achieved limited success by that measure in the Da Nang defensive area, as I mentioned to you I believe last time about the number of people--the percentage of people that were voting in elections and the very high percentage of children that were in school. I counted that as a successful type of thing. At one time I had available the hectares or the acreage, as we used to have to do it, because that was the only thing we knew, or square kilometers of ground that was made safe enough for people to return to farming and to fishing and that sort of thing. It would be a rough guess, but I would suppose in the area that I was responsible for during the year that I was in Vietnam, the 1st Division Reinforced must have doubled the area. Now, that doesn't mean anything to you because you know what I'm looking at and I can't tell you in terms of square kilometers or square yards, but it was a significant amount of acreage in which people were able to return and start in a very rudimentary fashion to rebuild their villages, to go ahead with rice farming, and the other kind of crops that they did. We were able to get some of

Vietnamese back into their fishing boats and allow them to fish offshore, which had not happened before. Those are the kind of things that you measure success in. We had a very limited success in that area, but make no mistake about it, we lost the war.

Anderson: Now, what about the issue, like you just said, that body counts were--that these were exaggerated by the press. This is one of McNamara's....

Simpson: Well, no, no. Whether they were or not, I don't believe I said they were exaggerated, I said they....

Anderson: The importance of those....

Simpson: Yes, the importance was greatly exaggerated by the press and people fell in to this trap. The military fell into this trap and so it was a great business to go in, after we had a skirmish or a small battle, to very grandly report how many bodies you had, you see. And that's where body count came from.

Suppose you kill 200 of the enemy. If he only had 205 to begin with, you have accomplished an outstanding success, but if he started with 1,000 and you accounted for only 200 of them, you killed the same number of people but you haven't really decimated his force. And usually, you didn't know how many you were opposing; our intelligence wasn't all that good. So, that's one of the poorest ways in the world, unless, you

count the bodies and there are no more, alive or otherwise. Then it might be significant, but we never knew since most of our fighting was done at night. We never knew; we could count the bodies in the morning of the enemy that were found on the field of battle or in the wire, very often. But that didn't mean a hell of a lot. I mean, there were, except for the elaborate booby-traps and that sort of thing, I can't recall a single instance in which in any kind of an engagement we actually lost more people than the enemy did. But that doesn't mean very much. As I say, there were some instances, you see, in which they had--remember I was describing to you the sophistication that they got to in booby traps where they would take these 155mm shells and put them in the trees. Now, I had a platoon of 20 men go down that trail and they set off eight of those 155mm shells over their heads. I think I lost eight KIA and probably eight WIA; don't believe we got any of the enemy. That, one could say, we lost that. Well, lost what? We walked into a trap, ambush, if you will. Yes, we did lose more than they did in that particular thing. On the other hand, we really never knew with any degree of precision, as a matter of fact, we didn't know at all. Remember, I told you we were firing an average of 5,000 rounds of artillery a day, and I mean a 24 hour day. Nobody ever knew what that accounted for in terms of body count.

Anderson: Yes, sure.

Simpson: It might have counted for a lot, it might have counted for very little.

I remember one instance of body count that was kind of amusing as we think of it now. Remember I described to you the rocket belts around Da Nang that we had to expend this sophisticated fire of artillery that we had on this thing.

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: The surveillance of the rocket belt early in the morning and late at night at very low level was of great importance. And the Army had a helicopter with the code, not code name but nickname, if you will, the popular name of Loche. Whether that was the name of the manufacturer or what it was, but anyway, it was a very small bubble helicopter. We didn't have any of those. They were ideal for this particular purpose, so we borrowed two from the Army with the Army warrant officer helicopter pilots. They were based down at the artillery fire support command center because the FSCC were the ones that were monitoring this thing. And every morning and every evening, that first light in the morning and just a dusk, they would patrol this rocket belt at very low level. They carried a pilot and a gunner. Now, the helicopter is not armed, but the gunner tied a safety belt around him and sat in the open doorway with an M-60 machine gun and they were not supposed to engage, but of course, this helicopter is very vulnerable to ground fire. They were close to 50 feet, you see.

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: So, it was really a defensive weapon, and he kept this 60mm, I mean this machine gun loose, actually had it in his hands and if they saw anybody that they knew to be NVA or VC, well, they fired on them--defensively. He began to tell us all these stories about the people that they'd hit and you know, he'd come in and want to be racked up on the board as body count of two or three or four and so forth and so on. So, we didn't do it; he was sort of aggravated about that because he wasn't getting scores whereas other pilots in other sectors were--they were taking there verbatim word for it that they killed four or killed five and what not. I didn't attach much significance to it, but this guy got sort of exasperated.

Anderson: Well, why were we not taking his word for it and why were we taking pilots in other areas?

Simpson: Well, we were not taking anybody's word for it.

Anderson: Yes, they didn't bring the bodies in, anyway, so.

Simpson: We were pretty hard-nosed about it. With our infantry and other people, we had to have somebody that had counted and verified it; A. they had that many bodies.

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: Well, he got a little exasperated at us because of our hard-nosed policy on this sort of thing so one night he

came back in from his reporting and he landed and damned if they didn't have a body in there--they killed an NVA soldier and they landed and picked him up and threw his body in the helicopter so we'd count him.

All that's extraneous, it doesn't mean a damned thing. The body count was blown way out of proportion by both the press and the military. It was not then, is not now a measure of success in battle. Success in battle is measured by whether or not to the degree by which you can impose you will on the enemy. And that's the whole thing.

Anderson: Yes. Now, you said that it was blown out of proportion by the military.

Simpson: Got to be competitive.

Anderson: Yes, okay you address that. What do you mean, would you continue on that line--it got to be competitive?

Simpson: Well, you see, one outfit would come in and report to the press, "We just made a sweep, we made a search and destroy mission and we made a sweep and we killed 150 NVA." And the press would write this all up. So the next guy that would go out, his mission might have been quite as successful but he felt constrained to report at least 155. So, it got to be a game as to who had the most. That's the reason that by the time I got there in the 1st Marine Division we were pretty hard-nosed about this body count type of thing. They never

took the word of one man, it always had to be at least two. For example, we had these sniper teams, armed with Star gauge rifles, they worked in pairs. They could both shoot, but one was observing the other was looking through the scope. They were both looking through magnifying glasses and they were getting kills at 1,000--1,500 meters.

Anderson: My goodness.

Simpson: But if both came in and said that they got a kill, we counted that. But, no, I know I'm being redundant but I think body count--of course, there has even been a book written about it--is not a measure of success in that war nor any war that I've been a participant in because it is meaningless unless you know 200 out of what, or five out of ten, yes, that's real good; 5 out of 100, that's not very much; 5 out of 300 is not anything at all--you affected very little damage. So, we did it, we reported it because everybody else was reporting it, but our scores that we reported were habitually lower than some of the other divisions. And in some cases, perhaps, rightly so. The 3d Division which defended Khe Sanh was up north near the DMZ, they were in much heavier combat than we were. So, it's a measure of what you are opposing as what you're up against, you see. I would have been very happy if we could have pacified the entire Quang Nam Province totally and completely and have no body count. That would have been great with me, no body count on either side. I always thought that was great, we

weren't able to do that.

Anderson: Did you visit Khe Sanh?

Simpson: Yes, but not during the siege. That siege happened before I got there. But Khe Sanh was abandoned by the time I got there, it was no longer a base. You see, it's like anything else out there, Terry, we could take and we could hold any piece of terrain we wanted to. But after a time it became useless. We did not have the forces, even with 500,000, we didn't have the forces to seize and hold every strong point in all of South Vietnam. As as I say, even the 1st Division, we could make sorties out into the mountains, we could go as far as we wanted to, but we hadn't done anything when we got there. We were there and we were shooting, we were taking casualties because they were all around us and they were firing at night, and snipers and that sort of thing. That area back there was largely unpopulated then and now. Never has been populated, very, very extremely precipitous, mountainous, triple canopy vegetation, that sort of thing. No farming, nothing like that. I saw little point in going back there. We could go, we had the fire power and we had the airlift and the rest of the things to do it and we did. As a matter of fact, when I took over the division, we were engaged with five battalions (Task Force Yankee) that were about six kilometers west of An Hoa, which was my furtherest permanent base--by furtherest I mean furtherest from the China Sea, 14 kilometers, and that was a permanent base. That

is the one that I mentioned had 4,000,000 sandbags. Now, we considered that important to hold on to that for two reasons because between there and Da Nang people were farming, they were going to school, they were rebuilding their villages. And we felt we had to hold them there and it was on the flank of that area, that base was on the flank of this Arizona area that I mentioned to you once before where we had this set piece battle.

You see, we had the capability and did, we could defeat the NVA at any time they chose to come out and fight. I saw no point in trying to pursue them all the way to Laos. On lengthened supply lines and that sort of thing, it was not territory that was useful to me, it was not territory that was useful to the native South Vietnamese--largely uninhabited for hundreds of years, and I'm sure still is now. So, I saw no reason in going there. Along the coastal plains were people could grow rice and other kinds of crops and where they could live and survive--uncovering that land and making it reasonably secure was, I thought, a useful proposition. And that's what we concentrated on. So, we did not go very deep. The 3d Division, up north from here at the DMZ, made an opertation into the A Shau Valley--what they hell did they call that thing. [Ed. Note: Dewey Canyon] It was very spectacular. The present Commandant of the Marine Corps, Bob Barrow, was then a colonel, regimental commander, and he led this thing. Considered a great success because they did get astride for awhile of what was then the Ho Chi Minh Trail and they got into a lot of things.

They did a lot of useful things. They blew up a hell of a lot of stuff back there, but they didn't stay. They were there for, I guess, about a week and then they all came out again. Took all the helicopters in I Corps to get them in and out of there. He took four battalions in, I believe.

Anderson: Did they meet a lot of resistance?

Simpson: Not an awful lot, not an awful lot. They had some pretty good battles. But you see, the NVA....

Anderson: They just basically withdrew, let them sit there, snipped at them at night, and then when they left....

Simpson: That's right, and then throw some mortars in and that sort of thing. But no frontal attacks, no set piece battle. So, there they are, they could have stayed indefinitly if we wanted to spend the price in terms of airlift of supplies and replacements and evacuation of the wounded. But for what reason? After they had found and destroyed or evacuated whatever supplies were there--rice we never destroyed, rice we always brought out because we could distribute that to the South Vietnamese natives. As a matter of fact, we had our public affairs officer on the division staff was known as "Uncle Ben" because his primary job was the distribution of captured rice. And we thought captured rice was a real fine booty for us to get because people needed it and we brought it in by the helicopter loads, sling loads, you see, simply big

burlap bags. And whenever we could we'd bring that rice in and we had a central distribution point. We primarily used--we didn't want to get into the business of distributing this rice ourselves. We were trying to reinforce the fragile structure of the South Vietnamese civilian infrastructure that was there and we were trying to reinforce it, so we turned it over to them and let them distribute the rice to their own people, you see, to try to build up these people, these so-called village officials in the eyes of their own folks. Of course, the people knew where the rice came from, but we thought that much better than setting up our own distribution systems and we also supposed that they would know the persons that needed it the most. Now, we assumed they did, whether there was graft involved in that, we don't know, but after all, it was there country and if they couldn't distribute the spoils of war expertly, certainly we couldn't because we didn't know.

Anderson: Let's turn to tactics a minute. We just mentioned search and destroy mission. What was your opinion of the search and destroy tactic?

Simpson: That was sort of passe by the time I got there.

Anderson: Okay. How had that changed?

Simpson: Well, the words weren't used. I don't really know what search and destroy was when it became a popular phrase. I'm not really sure what they did. I can tell you what we did.

Well, let me go back. My understanding of search and destroy was a sort of a scorched earth policy in which you fanned out and covered an area and essentially destroyed everything in there that you thought could give health and comfort to the enemy. We didn't do that. And as I say, that phrase, I read a lot about it in the press before I went there, but I didn't hear it a half a dozen times in the year that I was in Vietnam. Whether they were still doing it in the south, I don't know. Of course, Westmoreland was gone and Abrams was there. Abrams, I never heard him use that term.

We did make many sweeps. We did not destroy anything except those structures occupied by the VC or NVA and we did that in a sort of defensive mission. In other words, there were instances in which we had to destroy huts and other things because the enemy was holed up in there and in order to destroy the enemy, we had to destroy the hut. But simply for the sake of going in and burning down a village, we didn't do that. We took a lot of villages, we captured them, we cleared them out, but we didn't willfully and knowingly just go in and burn the hell out of everything because it was there. Because we were hoping that if by our presence there we could push the NVA and VC out of there, that maybe the South Vietnamese could reoccuppy those villages. After all, they had built them. And in many cases, they did. And we helped them rebuild them to the extent that they could. So, we did not practice search and destroy by that name. And what we destroyed in the 1st Marine Division

sector was that which was necessary because we were engaged with the enemy.

Anderson: What about the idea of free fire zones?

Simpson: Very difficult in our division to have a free fire zone. The only thing that was really free fire was this mountainous area back there because I knew there were no South Vietnamese in there. But remember, in the province that I was in, Quang Nam Province, there were 1,200,000 South Vietnamese and I didn't know where the hell they were all the time.

Anderson: Sure.

Simpson: So, I didn't have any free fire zones except beyond the perimeter which I knew--a rear perimeter--that I knew that the South Vietnamese did not go back of. And back there, I assumed anything that was moving was an enemy. And the air was free to fire on them as was the artillery.

Anderson: McNamara came home with this idea of the so-called McNamara Wall. Did you hear about that? The McNamara line? Would you explain that and give me your opinion on that.

Simpson: Oh, yes. I don't know how many millions of dollars were invested in that. The McNamara people conceived the idea that you could practically withdraw from South Vietnam if you lined the south bank of the DMZ, the southern part of the DMZ, if you filled that with elaborate and sophisticated sensors.

And this would tell you anytime when anybody passed over there. And they actually shipped a great deal of that equipment to Vietnam. Very, very expensive sensor equipment; pneumatic sensors in the sense of long--this doesn't sound very sophisticated, but we used some of them, a lot of them because they gave them to us. You know the kind of air hose that you'd put in a filling station that you run over and tells the manager that somebody is out there? Well, they had a hell of a lot of that sort of stuff which was nothing more than pneumatic hose buried one inch under the ground and it was super sensitive that if anybody touched it, an alarm went off and the gauges would tell you where it was. It cost an awful lot of money. I don't think of foot of that line was ever installed. A lot of that stuff came in by sea into Da Nang Harbor and was stockpiled down there. And some people from the III MAF, which was our corps area, and some of the people--I've forgotten who they were--from Saigon, who were all hep about this thing, came up there and they told me they had all this gear. One of the things they brought in was just shipload after shipload of barbed wire. And we used a lot of that, though we were never really short of barbed wire. We sometimes were a little short of that--we still called it barbed wire, but you know, the ribbon, the real sharp ribbon that doesn't have any barbs on it but it's like a razor blade, the one that's 9,000 miles long. That's really great. That's far superior to barbed wire because that really cuts the hell out of everybody. You can defeat

barbed wire fairly simply. And you can defeat this as you can defeat anything else. But there were times when we were a little short of that, but they brought in an awful lot of that stuff and I asked for it and they gave it to me and then they told me about this other stuff that they had. So, we took some of it out. We installed it and sort of played with it, but when I say played with it, we experimented with it, Terry. Sort of like a burglar alarm, sort of like this gadget we've got here on the campus, forgotten what they...Hawk Eye type of thing. About only one in a hundred alarms were real, the rest of them were false alarms. The Hawk Eye, for example, sends in to our police station about 75 fire alarms a month, and month after month they're all false. A malfunction or somebody lit a cigarette, something like that. So, to the extent that I know about it, the McNamara Line was a total fiasco. I think poorly conceived, an enormously expensive project. They never knew how much money was spent on it. We utilized some of the material that they shipped not at the DMZ because we weren't on the DMZ, we were south of the Hai Van Pass. We used it simply because it was there and we were trying it to see, but we never--I shouldn't account for any single instance in which that material...maybe we weren't all that sophisticated in its use--but I can't account for a single instance in which that detected an enemy patrol.

Anderson: Could it ever have worked?

Simpson: No.

Anderson: Why not?

Simpson: Too complex to have been effective. I think if they had ever installed all that gear all the way...Well, first of all, they would have gone around and in, they would have gone back into Laos and come back in that way. I mean, if it were too much trouble to go across. And then I think with all the sophistication of it, I think it would have been a fire drill on the DMZ entering false alarm. But I don't think it would have worked simply because if it were at all effective, the NVA wouldn't have crossed that way. They would have gone as far back into Asia as was necessary to go around the end of it. And you couldn't build the damned thing all the way across to Thailand and to the Sea of Thailand. You couldn't go quite that far with it. There was really no way to wall that thing off. So, I think it was a very bad idea.

Anderson: Now, you said that your men never went out as far as search and destroyed, just destroyed villages. And of course....

Simpson: No, I have to qualify that.

Anderson: Okay.

Simpson: They never did under any responsible order.

Anderson: But there were examples of this?

Simpson: No, no, I don't know of any. But it could have happened without my knowledge. Small patrols, nothing of the size of a company or above ever did. But we had a lot of small patrols and under NCOs. And I don't know of any instances, but I cannot truthfully say that sometimes somebody didn't get real mad and burn down some three or four native huts or something just out of sheer frustration. Maybe he'd taken a couple of guys KIA and had not been able to get to the enemy and he gets so damned mad that he just went in and burned these three or four huts. But, that might have happened. I don't know that. But no, we never under the orders of any responsible officer ever went on a simply destroy mission.

Anderson: Because I wanted to ask you about My Lai and your feelings toward that and Lieutenant Calley.

Simpson: Well, I feel very strongly about it. I think it was a tragedy and disaster and I can't believe that there is any justification for any commissioned officer ever getting to the point that he did what I understand he did at My Lai. That was south off of me, I didn't know very much more about it than....

End of Side 2, Tape 9

Begin Tape 10, Side 1

Simpson: I read it in the press as you did.

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: Read about the trial and that sort of thing. I find no justification for that kind of action. It's your job as a commissioned officer to maintain some control on your emotions and control over your people. And to destroy defenseless civilians, outside of strategic bombings such as was done in Europe and Japan, the fire bombing of Tokyo and that sort of thing, I'm able to live with that alright; but closer in individual combat or contact, no, I cannot by any stretch of my imagination justify the actions that I understood took place at My Lai.

Anderson: Let's turn to the quality of Marine leadership, quality of the officers under your command. Would you discuss that?

Simpson: Yes, I thought it was excellent with some exceptions. I relieved, I believe, three battalion commanders, I believe it was three. There were a number of company commanders that were relieved for incompetence. They were well trained, by and large, the officers were well trained. They were highly motivated, they were brave, they were conscientious. Now, except for those on their second and third tour, they were not as experienced as the combat leaders in the Marine Corps in let's say 1944 because people simply didn't stay long enough to become--well, most of the company commanders by the time they finished the end of their tour were damned competent, perhaps, as competent as any time. But, they were also exhausted, as I've covered with you before. So, we did have a lot of turn-

over and I think I've covered the fact that I never turned over just for the sake of turning over. But, I found the quality of officers to be superior to or at least the equal of those of World War II and Korea. I find no faults with the officer corps that was provided me; I was well satisfied with some exceptions.

Anderson: What about the quality of the enlisted man?

Simpson: The enlisted men that fought the war in Vietnam were the equal of any that this country has fielded in 200 years of its history. And one of the great tragedies of the Vietnam War, and there are many tragedies, but one of the great tragedies that I have lived through after I came back was the derogation of the enlisted men who fought the war. The enlisted men did not make policy. Some career NCOs that did not ask to go to Vietnam, but once there, they fought with as much gallantry, as much skill, as much bravery, as much fortitude as anybody since Bunker Hill. And I think it is to the discredit of this country that the country's frustration over the war in Vietnam took its form of contempt for the enlisted men that fought it. Now, for those of us who are, were career military who learned long ago that we were never going to be popular unless we were winning, if they want to blame us for it, so be it. But to blame the draftee who is 19 years old, a graduate of Bryan High School, who didn't ask to go to Vietnam but was drafted

and sent, and there I know from personal observation that he fought with great skill, great gallantry, great fortitude; and then for him to come home and have somebody blame the war on him is an absolute outrage. And I resented then, I resent it now; and I've made 150 speeches since I've been back against that sort of thing. Even wrote one called, The Man with the Rifle. The only time in my life I've ever sought a platform to speak from. I spoke to 64 Rotary Clubs in one year by invitation.

Anderson: No kidding. This is after you came back?

Simpson: After I came back. I'll tell you what got me started on it. I think I've told you this story, Terry, about the radio guy that came home and said, "I'll never go home again."

Anderson: No, I don't think so.

Simpson: Alright. I may be repeating myself. But this I think will give you the measure of my indignation as to why I've become so very strong about this thing.

We had the policy in Vientnam, as you recall, that a person could extend for six months and he got a month home. I was very worried of that policy because of the constant danger that was there, but I thought it was probably a good thing we a, let's say, a young man who wanted to go to college and who was unmarried and no dependents. See, the enlisted men paid no income tax in Vietnam and they had no place to spend any money.

But, I told all of my people that whoever volunteered would in fact be a true volunteer. That I would permit no pressure of any kind on anyone, but if a person truly wanted to volunteer, then that was his privilege and he could do so. This was to keep the lower unit commanders from putting pressure on their best enlisted men to extend, to stay with them because they were good. I counted that as playing God, and my word to these people was, "If you overly encourage somebody to reenlist or to extend his enlistment and the next week he dies, the blood is on your hands. And you better think about it. And so, in our division, by and large, those that extended were single, young, and for the most part enlisted men. There were some single officers that did. I guess probably some married officers too. But, to the extent that I could control it, they were all volunteers.

One battalion that I visited about three times a week, the battalion commander had a radio operator that was a bright cheery young fellow from the Mid-West, always had a big grin on his face. He'd been there with the battalion ever since I became division commander, been the radio operator, and I knew him by name and always spoke to him because I enjoyed his smile. One day I went down to the battalion CP and he said, "Well, I won't be here next week when you come." And I said, "Well, gosh, I didn't realize your time was up." But he said, "I'm coming back." And I said, "Oh, are you volunteering to extend?" He said, "Yes, I'm saving money to go to college." I said, "I

know you're not married." He said, "No, I'm not married." And then he told me how much he'd saved in that year which was quite a lot. And he figured if he extended for another six months he'd have enough to put himself through two years of school, which I thought was pretty sound reasoning. He hadn't been wounded. And of course, as long as he remained the battalion commander's radio operator he was in pretty good shape. Not really, but compared to the guy in the rifle squad he was. Anyway, he disappeared. See, that 30 days was pretty long because that was 30 days in the States, travel time added on to it. He was really gone about six weeks. And I forgot about the guy and then all of a sudden I was down there and here he is back. But now, he's down in the mouth like this, no smile, nothing. "Good morning, General." I sat down on a sandbag along side of this kid and I said, "What the hell is the matter with you?" And he said, "General, I'm never going home again." I said, "Why?" He said, "Well, you know, I thought we were doing some good here in this battalion." You see, everybody associates with what they are doing, I mean, he didn't really associate with the 1st Division--his battalion. And then he talked about the schools that they'd built, the people that they got to farming, he said, "I thought we were doing some good." I said, "You are." He said, "Well, I went home and I wore my uniform and I walked down Main Street in my town and people spit on me. And then they said, 'You and your goddamned war.'" So, he said, "I'm never going home again." I got to thinking

about that and it absolutely enraged me. Here was a young American, 19 years old, didn't voluteer to go to defend the flag, he was drafted, they sent him to Vietnam. He did the very best he could, he thought he was doing some good, and he was. And his outfit was doing some good. But he comes back to a small midwestern town and the people over frustration over national policy take it out on one of their own hometown boys who is a Pfc and it's his war--it's his war. And that I think is an absolute disgrace. And so, when I got home and I confirmed that. Now, of course, nobody ever said that to me, you know, I mean, they didn't spit on my uniform, but I knew that feeling was there. So, I sat down and I wrote a speech and I called it The Man with the Rifle, and I never used anybody's name. And I asked to speak to a local Rotary Club. And I really opened their eyes. And then I said....

Anderson: Of that town?

Simpson: Yes, this was in Albany, Georgia.

Anderson: This was the same town that he went to?

Simpson: No, no, no, I didn't visit his town. I figured this was endemic of the country and it was, it was. So, it didn't make a damn where I spoke. So, I really got on the soap box, and I asked to speak, I asked for any platform I could get to make this same speech. I changed it around a little bit, but essentially told the same story. And I said, "Blame me, if you

will, blame Washington, but don't blame the 19 year old graduate of your own high school. It wasn't his war. "And he's done just as well," I said, "Now, when this kid came home [and I looked at these guys, you know, 55 years old]...when you came home from World War II, they broke out the high school band. They paraded and gave you a gold watch, didn't they?" You could see them sort of nod like this. I said, "What the hell are you doing for this guy? Nothing! You're doing nothing for him. And he did just as well as you did, as a matter of fact, he was probably exposed to more danger than some of you guys were!"

So, I feel very strongly about that point. I think America has not recognized the enlisted men that fought very, very bravely and had nothing to do with national policy. I can understand the country's frustration with the conduct of the war in Vietnam because I share that, but to blame it on the young Pfc who fought the war is entirely wrong, entirely wrong. And I think the country has been disgraceful with its conduct toward the Vietnam veteran. And I'm not talking about the professional soldier, I'm not talking about that. We take our lumps on that sort of thing, but I'm talking about the draftees and the volunteers that went. I think they have been disgracefully received since they came back.

It's quite interesting, Terry. I've been to three wars and after World War II and Korea we all sat around and we talked about the campaigns we were in in World War II. After Korea

and before Vietnam, we sat around and we talked ad infinitum about where we were, what piece of the action was ours in Korea. But do you know that people do not, even professional military men do not now sit around and talk about Vietnam? It's a lost war and one that everybody hopes to be forgotten, but not by us that attended it.

I hope the country will never forget it because of the primary lesson that I think, I hope the country learned out of it.

Anderson: Well, we're going to get to that lesson.

Simpson: Okay.

Anderson: But before we do, let's talk about another thing we were talking about....

Simpson: Now, you understand that what I'm speaking about from my personal observations of these enlisted men, I'm speaking only of my personal observation, of those in the 1st Marine Division. I mean, I can't speak for what happened in the south and so forth.

Anderson: Absolutely. No, no, absolutely, that's exactly what we're talking about. The reason I ask is because there was--and this might have been blown out of proportion by somebody. I'm not going to blame anybody. But this might have been blown out of proportion too. But, there were some cases of fragging in Vietnam which is not typical of the type of behavior of

most enlisted men toward officers and I would like you to address why had fragging and if you had any problems or knowledge of any incidents like this in your division.

Simpson: No.

Anderson: No.

Simpson: I did not. I never knew of a single instance of it. I heard of it in other areas, I heard of it with sufficient frequency that I believe that it must be true, at least to some degree. I never knew of an instance of fragging in the sense that you and I are using it here, that is, our own enlisted men throwing an M-16 grenade into a tent or under a tent floor of officers in the 1st Division. This is not conceiveable to say that it didn't happen. I do not believe that it did. It could conceiveably have happened in an instance where a unit was attacked at night and enlisted men having some bitch against their officers might have taken advantage of the enemy fire to mix in their own grenades. I'm setting up a conjectural thing there. I never knew this to happen. But, it could have happened; I do not think it did. The attitude of the enlisted men that I was associated with toward their officers was not that kind. I've heard in other wars of officers being shot in the back as they were leaving their troops. I have never seen that in any of the wars that I've attended. It conceiveably could have happend, but I don't know.

Anderson: Do you think that because of the frequency of hearing these stories, do you think that fragging was more of a problem in Vietnam than it was in either Korea or World War II?

Simpson: From what I've heard, yes. I've heard a great deal more about it in Vietnam than I ever heard of it in World War II and Korea.

Anderson: Why do you think that there was a higher incidence of fragging?

Simpson: Terry, I would suppose that--now remember, I have to conjecture on this because I didn't encounter it myself, I don't know.

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: I believe it must have been due in large measure to the frustration of the people feeling that they were not winning the war. And they felt that if they came they wanted to win the damned thing and get it over with and they could see that they were not winning it the way it was being fought. Yet, they were getting shot at. And this leads to great frustration. And I would suppose--and you see, the 18, 19 year old enlisted man doesn't project his thinking into the area of national policy.

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: Where it belongs. But, his only immediate thing is his officers saying, "Saddle up, we're going on a patrol today."

And they're going to go on a patrol with 150 men and they're going to come back with 125 and they know that and one of the 25 that don't come back may be them and they don't see any point in going, you see. Because they're not getting anywhere. They're not advancing their lines, they're not winning a Tarawa, for example, or a horrible thing like Okinawa, where peaks of violence were very, very high. Casualties extremely high, but eventually they won it and they could see that they were winning it. They were taking enormous casualties, but they could see that they were gradually defeating the Japanese. That was never apparent in Vietnam, at least by 1969, it was not apparent that we were really getting anywhere toward actually winning the war. I was frustrated.

Anderson: What way did you exhibit your frustration?

Simpson: I did not. Just like I was scared to death and I never exhibited that, I hope. Anybody that was in Vietnam in combat that says they weren't scared is either lying or crazy. But, you can't be a division commander and exhibit fear. And I did all I could to try to convince my people that we were in fact doing some good even though we weren't advancing our lines very much. Using these statistics and the evidence that they could see before them that people were forming rice paddies that had been abandoned for ten years. This I tried to tell them was a symbol of progress. Now, that's not all that satisfactory to a 19 year old guy who came out to win the war, not voluntarily, but he was told to go out there. And since he was

there he wanted to win it and go home. And he could tell he wasn't going to win it on his watch, so he wanted to stay alive. So, his enthusiasm for going out on patrol is not all that great.

Anderson: How did you as a general combat that, try to increase his enthusiasm?

Simpson: By trying to show them evidence on the ground of the fact that we were aiding the Vietnam people. It was not a very satisfactory solution. I told you before the press were continually asking me, "When are we going to win the war, when is it going to be over?" That was a terribly frustrating question to me because I could tell in '69, I didn't believe we were going to win the war because of the way we were set up. We could defeat the NVA anywhere we could find him, but he very wisely and shrewdly chose not to come out and confront us in a set piece battle, except, on occasion. And when he did we really bloodied his nose everytime he did that, so he decided not to do that. He figured out, or at least his commanders figured out exactly what was going to happen. They didn't know exactly when, but they figured we'd get tired of this war and the country did get tired of it and they brought everybody home and the country collapsed. Now it's totally communist and they won, there's no question about it. Sure, I went there, well, I had hoped, you know, as we all did early on--'65 on--we really hoped we could win the war. By the time I got there it was apparent that we weren't going to win it because of the way we

had chosen to fight it. So, it was a tough proposition, Terry, to try to buck up the morale of he people when you knew deep in your heart that they weren't going to win the war; I wasn't going to win and they weren't going to win it. And so, we did try to inflict maximum damage on the identifiable enemy, meaning those in uniform. VC were a big problem, but had the VC been alone, they could have been handled with a third of the troops we eventually put in there, perhaps, even a fourth of the troops. NVA was a big trouble and, of course, they were the ones that kept supplying them, the VC, with arms and ammunition. But the VC were in black pajamas and so was everybody else. So, that's pretty hard to find; you get them every know and then but not too often.

Anderson: Let's talk, for a minute, about black troops. There were a higher percentage of blacks in the military in Vietnam than there were Latin American society. Did you have--you must have some black Marine troops. What was their quality compared to the whites?

Simpson: Just as good.

Anderson: Just as good, yes.

Simpson: Just as good. Black officers were superior. In order to be a black officer, a successful black officer in the Marine Corps, you have to be better than your peers, or you did then. And they were. No, we didn't have any black/white

problems at all. The blacks were just as brave. As I mentioned, in '69, we didn't have any significant drug problem, and I knew of my 365 days in Vietnam, I know of no single race incident.

Anderson: Great.

Simpson: Our troops were all mixed in, we had black NCOs, some black officers. Not as many as I would liked to have had. Some of our very finest staff NCOs were black--tremendous, tremendous.

Anderson: Okay. Westmoreland said this is the most technological war in American history. What impact did new technoloy have on the way that you fought the war?

Simpson: Really not all that great. We utilized what we had. And I think I described this laser range finder, we used that with great effectiveness. Our weapons were better, to some extent. I'm not a great admirer of the M-16. I think it is a mistake to arm an infantry with a fully automatic rifle--all of them, everybody--with a fully automatic rifle. I think it should be semi-automatic but I don't think it should be automatic. But I toyed with the idea of welding the switches on ours, but I never did go quite that far because everybody else had one and I think it would have caused a lot of outrage. I mean, all the other troops had the fully automatic M-16.

We utilized whatever was there. Our airplanes were better,

our fighting position was, the night vision devices were highly useful to us.

(Interruption)

In the air, there may have been a great deal more sophistication, I don't know. But, by and large, we were using the weapons that he started the war with. The grenade was better, the M-16 fragmentation grenade is the best grenade I ever saw. They may have a better one now, but it was a tremendous weapon. But it added no particularly new dimension to the war. It was a better grenade, you could throw it better, you could throw it farther and more accurately, and when it went off...But, as I point out, speaking of technology, I think the NVA had a better rifle than we did. I think the AK-47 is a better rifle than we were armed with because it was simpler, it didn't jam near as much. We did not have, and I don't think we have yet, anything that compares to the Russian RPG. My God, that damned thing was terribly destructive. And you still see them. You see them in the press today, they've got them over in Europe, they've got them--well, that's what they shot the general's car with down there. I don't know, perhaps they've armed our people with something like that--we didn't have anything like that. We had the 175 artillery piece; very long in its range, 32,000 meters, but not terribly accurate. We had the 8 inch, but we also had the 8 inch in World War II. And that is, of course, the most accurate artillery weapon ever conceived by the mind of man. We used it wherever we could, wherever we could find a

target for the 8 inch. The helicopter, of course, added a new dimension to it; but we had introduced helicopters in Korea. But we had better helicopters and higher lift helicopters. And the way we fought the war, command and control was largely in helicopters. I spent an awful lot of time in helicopters. Med evac with the use of the helicopter was superior to any other war. (Frank: When did you learn to fly it?) At Camp Lejeune when I was G-2, 2d MarDiv. Not a pilot, but I could land and take off.

Anderson: Was it easier to command the war from the helicopter or the command post?

Simspon: Sure, sure, you can see what's going on. And with your radios and that sort of thing. Of course, as division commander, you don't do a hell of a lot of that or you shouldn't. That's a good weapon for the battalion commander or even regimental commander. But the division commander really ought to stay out of that sort of business. Some division commanders got into it, but I don't think the division commander needs or should be operating at that level. The helicopters were a lot better. The Army had better helicopters than we did, the Marine Corps.

Anderson: So, in general, technology really didn't have that great of an impact.

Simpson: No.

Anderson: Okay.

Simpson: See, McNamara was going to have a great impact with his McNamara line with high degree technology; but that, as I mentioned, was an absolute fiasco.

Anderson: Okay, let's talk about the relations between the Americans and the Vietnamese civilians. There were programs that you had.

Simspon: Yes, yes, people-to-people programs or different kinds of things, you put in a sort of a monitor you have on the thing. I'd say the relationship was real good, Terry. I was in touch with the province governors and those kinds of people. They recognized what we were trying to do and they cooperated, very largely to the extent that they possibly could, with us. They were fully cooperative. We didn't have any trouble, we didn't have any riots, anything like that. Of course, back in Da Nang there were areas of prostitution and that sort of thing that caused us trouble, but that's been true in any war.

Anderson: Oh, yes.

Simpson: And true in the next war. Vietnam had no monopoly on that sort of thing. Wherever there are great masses of armies there are going to be prostitutes, and they were there. And, of course, that then begot venereal desease among the rear area troops. But we didn't have any real problems with them.

Anderson: Did they accept you?

Simpson: Oh, yes. And we got along wonderfully well with the South Vietnamese Army. Some of my trophies at home are touching sort of gifts that these people hand crafted and gave me from the 51st Independent Regiment that we fought with on several occasions. They're the ones I mentioned to you that had their families along. We tried to help out there. We carried out medical aid programs. However, there were good hospitals, supported with American supplies. There was a German hospital ship in the harbor of Da Nang that treated everybody. They treated anybody. And when that hospital ship cast off and went to sea at night, we all took cover because we figured there would be a rocket attack and nine out of ten times there were. And we figured that they were treating Viet Cong and the Viet Cong told them to get out, so they did. And when that hospital ship sailed, as they would often do at dusk, why, we battened down the hatches because here it came.

Anderson: No kidding.

Simpson: Yes.

Anderson: So they'd treat anybody.

Simpson: Anybody, anybody.

Anderson: Was it an East or West German ship?

Simpson: West German.

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: It was sort of like the ship Hope, beautiful ship.

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: But, they were manned by a group of people, not in uniform, that were on a true peace mission, and you couldn't really deny them. They didn't treat our troops because we had our own facilities. But any Vietnamese, civilian, army, Viet Cong, I'm sure they treated NVA. We didn't know it because naturally they wouldn't bring any NVA inside our compound in uniform. But they did a wonderful, good work. There was a leper colony. Had been there sponsored by the French and still there. Well, I don't know, but it was there when I was there. Had been there about 30 or 40 years.

So, we didn't have any trouble with the civilian population. I think they appreciated what we were trying to do. We made it real clear that we didn't want their country, what we wanted to do was go home. But, we also said and this was a broken promise that we weren't going to leave until they were secured. We did.

Anderson: What about liberty? What kind of setup did you have for--you've already told me about Stack Arms, but what type of setup did you have for liberty for your troops?

Simpson: We didn't.

Anderson: No liberty?

Simpson: No, there wasn't anywhere to go. There wasn't anywhere to go.

Anderson: Well, how often did you give the R and R? R and R was really played up in the press, as they'd get to Saigon or Da Nang, or they'd get to go to Australia or Japan.

Simpson: Hawaii if they had family and friends. That was the only liberty that anybody had and that was great, that was great. That was a tremendous refresher. The single man went to Australia where they reported some very interesting times. The married men, those that were happily married, usually went to Hawaii and met their wives there, as I did. But the R and R, that was the only liberty we had and it was for all hands, and was a tremendous morale buster, tremendous morale buster. People lived for R and R. They used to try and pace themselves--you see, they were eligible for it at the end of six months. And there was always a big dialogue about whether to take R and R at six months or whether to stretch it out towards the end so that you didn't have quite so long when you came back before you went home. Big debates about that particular way of doing things. But R and R was great, yes, it was a fine thing, a fine thing.

Anderson: Now, of course, not only Americans are fighting, also there were some Koreans and Australians. Would you like to touch on that?

Simpson: We didn't have any Australians with us. We did have a Korean brigade. These were Korean marines, extremely well trained, in splendid physical condition; but their commanders were afraid to fight because apparently the Korean government gave them hell if they took any casualties. Now, they weren't personally afraid, nor were the troops afraid. But, they were very chary, very, very chary of getting involved in any situation in which they might taken any significant casualties. You knew about the Tiger Division down south of us, type of thing. That was the Korea Army. I understand they fought very, very well, indeed. When we got the Koreans into combat they did quite well. But it was very obvious to me, the Korean would never say so because the Asians don't work that way, but it was real clear to us that their commanders were under strict orders to take the fewest possible casualties. Well, of course, we were under the same orders. I mean, anybody is under orders to take the fewest possible casualties, but nevertheless, when you get into combat casualties are inevitable. So, they were very chary about what they'd get into. We never took them deep. They didn't want to go deep. I described to you that operation they went to in Go Noi Island. That we made this vertical envelopment and swept the tanks--we got a battalion in there and they did real well. The commander was delighted because he had only one WIA and no KIA. So, it was a great battle as far as he was concerned.

The thing about the Koreans, they were capable of doing a

great deal more than they did. But I'm not so sure but what they didn't play it pretty smart because I think they could see the way the thing was going and they didn't see much point in taking casualties if you weren't going to get anything out of it. So, maybe they were smarter than we were, Terry.

Anderson: Let's move to the civilians and especially I'm interested on the impact of some Americans. For example, did you have any entertainers come over and entertain the troops and you know, the Bob Hope type show and stuff like that?

Simpson: Yes, yes. We had Bob Hope.

Anderson: Did you really?

Simpson: He actually came and put on a great show. And he came through Da Nang and I guess that was one of the hairiest times that we've ever had. They first came in and told me that he was going to put on a night performance. I said, "In Da Nang and I am responsible for the security?" And I said, "We'll not do it. Do it in the daytime or get somebody else to be responsible for the security," knowing damned well that they couldn't get anybody else because I was the only guy there that had any troops to make them secure. So, we did it at noon on a bright sunny day and gathered 25,000 troops all in a bowl. They sat on the ground, of course. I went and had lunch with Hope before the show started. And he looked out over this mob of troops there and everything and he said, "Is this area

perfectly secured?" And I said, "No." He said, "Well, what could happen?" I said, "Well, they could lob rockets in here and blow the hill." I told him a few of the things we were doing, we did everything we could think of. Most of my troops couldn't come because I had them outside and up on the ridges and that sort of thing, had the whole damned air full of airplanes--attack airplanes and observation airplanes and that sort of thing. We had all of our artillery manned and I told him what we were doing. And he said, "Are you going to be here?" And I said, "Yes, I'm going to be sitting right down there." And he said, "I'm going to be watching you throughout this whole damned thing. If you leave, I'm leaving." He put on a great show, the kids loved it. He had the girls and all that sort of stuff, and the golf club, and he did the whole bit. The cue cards were up here and all that. The troops absolutely ate it up. Martha Raye came.

Anderson: Really?

Simpson: Yes, delightful person. Believe it or not, she was a little-bitty gal; I never thought about that. She is only about so high.

Anderson: I didn't know that either.

Simpson: I did not attend her performance. We didn't gather a whole gang together like that; she went around and did a few things here in Da Nang. None of them went over the hill, none

of the young entertainers went over the hill. Now, that's not to their detriment. I want to make it clear that they were perfectly willing to go anywhere we'd take them, but we did not want to expose them unnecessarily to enemy fire where they might get shot and so forth. That's been my experience in all three wars with the entertainers; they'd go as far forward as you let them. But we never let them out of Da Nang, which was kind of too bad because the troops that should have been seeing them were the ones over the hill. The fat cats that were living back in the rear areas where the ones that got to see the entertainers. But they were living pretty high off the hog anyway, relatively speaking, to the guy out there in the bush. But, we couldn't bring this guy in the bush in. Oh, we could bring in a few, like out of each company of 200 people for the Bob Hope thing, we let them send 10. But what we should have done, theoretically, what we should have done is flip-flop the whole thing and take your rear area guys and put them out there and bring all the combat troops back here to enjoy it. But, combat troops wouldn't have come under those conditions with the rear area guys on the outside. Neither would I, neither would I. So, I've forgotten, there was not a big string of them. I remember those two in particular because I met them and talked to them at that time.

Anderson: But your general opinion was that they were beneficial?

Simpson: Oh, yes, sure, sure, they're beneficial.

Anderson: Okay, now let's turn to the anti-war protest at home. In what way did they, if any, have an impact on your troops and on yourself?

Simpson: Well, I related that one instance, which I think, is probably symptomatic of--the one of the youngster from the middle west. I have a feeling, however Terry, that as the year wore on, the letters that people received from their girl friends and families and what not, most have not done much for their morale if it reflected the kind of spirit that I found when I returned in 1970.

Anderson: Yes, yes.

Simpson: I didn't see any outward manifestation of it, and didn't hear anybody talk about it and of course, my wife being the wife of a professional person, she never really relayed any of that sort of stuff. We didn't have any newspapers. We had the air mail edition of Time, which came in. Of course, we had Stars and Stripes, but the Stars and Stripes was the Far East edition and printed in Tokyo and it didn't have any of that sort of jazz in it. But I wouldn't think that our people were totally immune to it, but it was not a topic of conversation. Vietnam day-to-day was a matter of survival and we weren't really all hell that interested in what was happening back in the States. When we were in Vietnam we were interested in whether we were going to see the sun the next day or not.

Anderson: Well, a lot of people, a lot of military men that I've talked to say that this had an impact and that people like Jane Fonda were traitors and stuff like that. And I was wondering just what impact that those types of action back home, anti-war protests--in your opinion, it didn't seem to have much impact to the men at all because they weren't aware of it. Is that true, is that....

Simpson: They weren't aware of it, and besides, the danger to them was immediate and present, it was right there. Oh, you'd hear somebody every now and then say, "Oh, those bastards," and so forth and so on. But, as an adverse impact it was not measurable by any standard that I know anything about, at least, in the 1st Division.

Anderson: Okay. Now, in Vietnam you won six medals; four from the Vietnamese, one from the United States, and one from the Koreans. And I'd like to know about that. Why did you receive those?

Simpson: Well, I think it's better to phrase it that I was awarded six medals.

Anderson: Okay, okay.

Simpson: I think for a general officer in nine out of ten cases award rather than win is more accurate.

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: I was given those medals by three nations simply because I think they thought I did a good job, not for any particular heroics. They were not medals of valour. For example, the award I won from the United States was the Distinguished Service Medal, and the citation there covers the 12 months that I commanded the division in Vietnam. (Interruption)

Anderson: Let's talk a little bit about the chain of command in Vietnam. Who was your immediate superior?

Simpson: My immediate superior headquarters was what we called III MAF.

Anderson: How do you spell that?

Simpson: That three is Roman numeral III, it's equivalent of an Army corps and MAF stands for Marine--used to be called MAF Marine Expeditionary Force, Marine Amphibious Force. And that essentially, was the I Corps area, which was I Corps under the South Vietnam. Their headquarters was also in Da Nang. XXIV Army Corps was under them as was the 3d Division, the Americal Division, and my division. XXIV Corps was composed of the 1st Vietnamese Division and the 101st Airborne; they were immediately to my north over the Hai Van Pass. The 101 was commanded by--I've forgotten what that name was--the Americal was south of me. The 101 was a very fine outfit, they had 400 helicopters, they could go anywhere, they were very generous in

helping me out with helicopters when I didn't have enough. But my command was directly to III MAF, from III MAF directly to the Commander of American Forces in Vietnam in Saigon, who was originally Westmoreland, and then Abrams by the time I got there.

Anderson: Yes, yes. Did you ever have an opportunity to meet Westmoreland before you went to Vietnam?

Simpson: Sure, I knew him when he was a major general.

End Side 1, Tape 10

Begin Side 2, Tape 10

Simpson: I saw Abrams eight, nine times while I was in Vietnam. It was always a pleasure to have him, pleasure to take him in the field. He knew what to say to generals, he knew what to say to privates and very few of our visitors made that distinction. But he did, he inspired confidence, he was a very strong leader, fearless leader, inspired the respect who had anything to do with him. Abrams I rate high on my list of great American captains. I think he was real fine, his death was very untimely. Yes, I think I have very high regard for him.

Anderson: What about his leadership attention.

Simpson: Unlimited, unlimited. Oh, yes, he was good, just as good as you've heard people say he was.

Anderson: How did he get along with his senior officers?

Simpson: Splendidly, they loved him.

Anderson: Why, why did they hold him in such regard?

Simpson: They respected him. They knew he was good enough to hold four stars and command the whole damned area. And they thought he was that good and he was. I had high regard for him.

I'm trying to think of his deputy, bachelor, four stars, Army. Interesting note about him. He was another guy I loved to have.

Anderson: His deputy?

Simpson: Yes, deputy commander, Deputy MACV.

Anderson: MACV?

Simpson: MACV, M-A-C-V, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. That's what Abrams headquarters were called.

Anderson: Oh, okay, absolutely.

Simpson: See, Abrams was MACV and this was Deputy MACV.

Anderson: But you don't remember his deputy's name?

Simpson: Oh, I know him real well, my God, he ended up down at Panama, four stars, I just can't think....

Anderson: Well, we'll get it.

Simpson: But one amusing story about him. He loved to be in the field with the troops. And he would get in his helicopter or maybe take a fixed wing up part of the way and then he'd come by helicopter the rest of the way and he'd sort of work his way up through I Corps starting with the Americal which was south of me. So, on his first visit, I had known him before, and on his first visit, the Americal commander--well, the III MAF sent out the blanket order, "Okay, here's his schedule here, he's going to be here," and so forth and so on. So, I get on the radio and talk to my friend who is commanding the Americal Division and I said, "What are you going to do with him?" He said, "Well, I've got a briefing for him that is going to last 45 minutes and then we're going to take him to the field." And I said, "What time are you sending him to me?" Well, we got all our times coordinated and what not and I think he came fixed wing from Saigon to Chu Lai, which was the headquarters of the Americal. And so, we got word he was on the ground at Chu Lai, so we figured we had about two hours. I got a frantic radio call from this commander about 15 minutes later and he said, "He's on the way to you by helicopter." And I said," Jesus Christ, what happened?" And he said, "Whatever you do, don't brief him." And I said, "What did you do?" He said, "Well, I just had the standard briefing, I took him into the combat command center there and I had the G-1, 2, 3 lined up and the G-1 got up and said, General, as you know and

this guy got up and said, "If I know there's no reason for me being here. Goodby." And he got up and got on his helicopter and he flew off. We had not planned any briefing for him so I met him on the helo pad and I said, "You've got a better helicopter than I have, you want to ride with me?" He said, "Sure, I want to ride with you." So, away we went. And we spent all of our time visiting battalions. He was just great with the troops. He was not at all interested in talking with anybody in the rear area, he didn't, he didn't even meet the division staff. We had lunch in the field, and came back to the helo and got in his big fancy one and away he went to the 101 Airborne. That's the kind of guy I like to have. I love to have people that like to get out with the troops. We had too many visitors from the States, particularly, civilians of high rank in the government and others, that did not want to go over the hill and wouldn't go over the hill. They had to get their ticket punched, they had to say they went to Da Nang, they wanted to mostly hold a press conference in Da Nang and have dinner with the Corps commander. However, Admiral McCain, whom I'd known since he was a commander, was one of our great favorites. He was CinCPac and he was another Abrams. He wanted to be with the troops and one of the scariest moments of my life was--I was going to take him all the way out into...we had this far outpost at the time McCain came, west of An Hoi and I was determined to take him out there because I knew he wanted to go. I didn't know whether it was all that safe or not. But

we went and I knew Jack would want to go and we had set it up that--the artillery was firing live missions and I knew that Jack would like to shoot. So, we made arrangements with the--I had it all set up that we were going to take him there and into this artillery pit in the fire base and that this sergeant--we'd have the piece loaded and everything and we'd let him pull the lanyard and then, as we eventually did, we were going to take the brass case and make an ashtray out of it for him, which we did. But anyway, this mission turned out to be a little more complex than we had originally anticipated, but it was dictated by what they were firing out there. And they were running a combined artillery and attack aircraft mission, and the attack aircraft were going in and we knew how many there were and when we could count four in the air--there were four in this section that we were attacking--and when there were four in the air, then we'd fire the artillery. But once they started to dive, then the artillery would hold off until the guy came up the other side. So, I told this gun commander, this sergeant, "You hold on to the goddamned lanyard and don't give it to the Admiral until I say go." So, we go down there and here's the powder bags and all the rest of the stuff all around. Jack's got this long cigar out here, you know, Jack is about so high, he's got a cigar about this long and he's waving this cigar around, laughs, cigar lighted with the powder bags and all the rest of the stuff. But God, he'd go over to these troops and they'd just absolutely eat it up. And he went around and spoke to everyone

of them. He wanted to know where they were from, what they were doing. "Kill those any of those goddamned....," he was colorfully profane, colorfully profane. I mean, not offensively profane, but very profane but very colorful. And he got all the way around to the sergeant and I'm looking and the plane goes down like that. Old McCain says, "Let me shoot that goddamned thing. I'm going to kill some of those bastards." And he took it and pulled it. And I thought, "Goddamned, there goes my career. Just managed to have CinCPac shoot down one of his own airplanes." Well, up the other side came this plane and I said, "Thank God, here it was." I never told McCain what had happened. But he fired a live round.

Anderson: He fired a live round?

Simpson: He fired a live. He said, "How many do you think I got?" I said, "I don't know, but you got some of them because we hit it right on." "That's right, that's right, we got to kill the bastards."

Anderson: What about the plane?

Simpson: Oh, it was fine, fine. They passed in the air. It wasn't planned, I can assure you.

Anderson: No.

Simpson: But we took the shell and made an ashtray like that out of it for him. But, people like that were enjoyable.

Anderson: Yes, it boosted morale.

Simpson: Oh, tremendously. Oh, you get a guy with four stars on him and get him out there at the end of the line, the troops know that. And particularly, when you get a guy like McCain or Abrams or this other guy whose name I can't recall at the moment, that could talk to the enlisted men and would talk directly to them and talk to them in their own language, you know, rather than just saying, "How are you getting along, son," type of thing like that. Now that's a hell of a lot better than a USO show. If you can get senior commanders or even senior civilian executives of the government, if they've got the guts--or maybe it's silly--but if they'd go out there to where the troops are and share their danger with them even for a few minutes, than that's excellent. That's a tremendous morale booster. The guys get big kick out of that. Sit down and eat C rations with them. You know. Then this guy says, "Well at least, by God, somebody back in Washington knows how I'm living.

Anderson: Sure, yes.

Simpson: You know, ask such questions as, "When did you get a bath? When did you have a hot meal last?" "Well, we think it was two weeks ago." I never interfered one way, shape, or the other. As a matter of fact, I usually stood a little away so the enlisted men could talk to them. That kind of visitor. Now, you get some other kind of visitors, I stayed pretty close

to them because I didn't know what the hell they were doing.

Anderson: Like who?

Simpson: Well, like Senator Kennedy.

Anderson: Oh, he came out?

Simpson: Yes.

Anderson: Tell me about that.

Simpson: Well, alright.

He said he was interested in the refugee problem. And he came out with his mind made up that we were screwing it all up and he was not about to see or listen to anything that told him anything different. A man of tremendous bias, insulting, talked down to us, got off the airplane telling us we're doing a bad job, got back on the airplane saying the same thing. All of our efforts to show him what we were doing about refugees, what we were doing about rice, the refugee shelters we built, he was not interested in seeing those or hearing anything about it. I'm convinced that his report to the Senate was written before he came out and I tell you, if nobody else would run for President and he was the single guy who was running, I would vote against him. Then and now. That's the kind of guy I didn't like.

Anderson: Yes, yes.

Simpson: Nor did I like the civilian or any visitor who pro-

fessed to wanting to visit the troops but his idea of visiting the troops was to have dinner with the commanding general in Da Nang.

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: I had nothing but contempt for those people. They didn't harm morale because the troops never knew they were there, the troops that counted never knew they were there. They did something to my morale because they disgusted me and they took time away from things that I thought were more important than taking care of them. They came to Da Nang only to be able to go home and say they came to Da Nang.

Anderson: Yes. Were there other Senators or Congressmen that did come out?

Simpson: Yes, not very many. I would suppose that during the course of the year we must have had about a dozen.

Anderson: Any besides Kennedy that were especially difficult?

Simpson: Most of the rest of them were rather indifferent. I remember John Warner, and I've forgotten what John was doing at that time, he was now Senator from Virginia, later Secretary of the Navy. I've forgotten whether John was Assistant Secretary of the Navy or what capacity he was. He was splendid, he was splendid. He had been in World War II as a Marine, he was the guy that wanted to go over the hill and did. John Warner was

one of the better civilians that we got out there.

I measured those people, Terry, all of them--I guess I was pretty cynical about the whole thing, but you became that way after awhile. I found it very simple after awhile to determine their degree of interest in what we were doing. And if I sensed that they were genuinely interested in what we were doing, that they did indeed want to see what we were doing both good and bad, then I was willing to spend as much time as they wanted to spend. But in all too many cases, it was apparent that they had come to Da Nang simply to complete their tour. What they really wanted to do was to get back to Saigon, where it was air conditioned and where they could get a martini. Well, you could get both in Da Nang, but they weren't genuinely interested in what was happening in our war and they didn't particularly want to see it. And that kind I had very little patience for; and we did have too many of those.

Anderson: Okay. Let's move on. One general of the United States Army, brigadier general of the United States Army, was in Vietnam and did a survey of the 168, I think, generals that served. His name was Douglas Kinnard. Now he is a political science professor at the University of Vermont and Kinnard sent a survey to all the generals who ever served in Vietnam and I was wondering if you remember receiving it and if you did, if you filled it out?

Simpson: Negative, I never did.

Anderson: You never remember?

Simpson: Never received it as far as I know, no. I have filled out, I've forgotten who they were from, I filled out some surveys from some, but this was not a survey that was supposed to encompass all the generals that served in Vietnam. Were there 168, was that the number?

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: I didn't know that.

Anderson: And about 100 of them filled out this survey.

Simpson: I would have filled it. Well, depending on how it was worded.

Anderson: Well, it was asking major problems that you had. Most of them same questions I asked.

Simpson: In other words, if I sensed it was an objective survey instrument, I would have been glad to fill one out, then or now, but I don't ever recall getting one like that.

Anderson: Okay. Now, let's get to the big question. We've covered most of the smaller points. What were the lessons of the war?

Simpson: The one big lesson of the war, the one that this country must burn into its soul is, do not enter a war unless you plan to win it. And by winning it, I mean doing the things

that are necessary to win that war. Our country, or at least our national leaders, never made the conscious decision--they said they wanted to win the war--but they never made the conscious decision to do the things that had to be done to win that war. By the time I arrived in Vietnam in 1969, knowing the temper of the country and the thinking of the national leaders, in retrospect, it was obvious to me that the war was not winable in 1969. Now, it was winable before that and I'm going to give you two examples of how it could have been won in my judgement.

Anderson: Fine.

Simpson: You know, first you've got to hit the enemy and hurt him. We could not hurt him very badly in South Vietnam because we couldn't find the son-of-a-bitch. We knew he was there. I don't have a chart here, but you know, North Vietnam goes along like this and it's got sort of a narrow neck that goes down here and here is South Vietnam. And Vinh sits right in here. The 1st Marine Division, before it was taken to Vietnam, was a superbly trained amphibious division. The only really truly trained amphibious division that we had in the United States. Well, the 3d Division, but the 3d Division was already there. They were incremented in. Now, the 1st Division was also incremented in here to South Vietnam. But the 1st Division, if they'd have assembled all the amphibious shipping that they had and at the time they started to go in with the 1st Division, if

they had landed at Vinh in North Vietnam and cut this neck through here...At that time the supplies were coming down this way. They later went around this way. If they had done this and then turned north, they wouldn't have to go all the way, they'd scare the hell out of these people, I think they would have quit. Second, and perhaps associated with this; initially North Vietnam was off limits as far as bombing was concerned, as you recall. Okay, then we started on the very limited thing. At the time they started bombing North Vietnam, the dikes were off-limits. You were only going to hit military targets and do it in very limited numbers. There were no air defenses of any consequence up here at all.

(Interruption)

One of the great tragedies of the war was the way in which we introduced aerial bombing into North Vietnam. We went in there in increments at a time when they had no usuable anti-aircraft; all of it was second rate World War II stuff. But we went in there very carefully limiting ourselves to just bombing specific military installations. We were not going to hurt the civilians. That's totally wrong. Once a decision has been made to bomb North Vietnam, we should have gone with everything; carrier task forces, all the B-52s, every goddamned thing we had and bombed everything in sight including the rice paddies, At the same time, at that time, we should have mined Haiphong Harbor.

Anderson: Yes, yes. Early in the war.

Simpson: Early in the war, early in the war, 1967. If you want to win it, do it.

Anderson: Sure.

Simpson: And that's what it took, and that would have won the war. That and possibly a combination of this movement here that I'm talking about here. If those two things had been done together, these people would have quit. Now, people say, "Oh, what about the Chinese, wouldn't they have come?" Yes, maybe so, I don't think so. I never did think they'd come in. All war is a risk, sure, and that's a risk that you have to take, but we decided to go into this damned place out here.

Now, what happened, this superbly trained amphibiously trained division was fed over a period of nine months one battalion at a time into South Vietnam. Its amphibious capability totally wasted, its cohesiveness totally wasted. The division never fought as a division, nor did any other division fight as a division. They fought in battalion--the largest size units are regimental size. Now, you might have a regiment fighting and everybody else is doing a little shooting, but there was not a division size operation as such in which an entire division was moving. This was the chance to do it, they didn't do it that way. Now, by the time they decided to go balls-out on the bombing of North Vietnam, by this time, the Russians and the Chinese had brought in anti-aircraft to where they had a tremendously sophisticated anti-aircraft system and we took

horrible losses. Those two, there are probably other instances, but in my opinion those two actions either separately or in concert would have won the war by 1967. But, they weren't taken because people were afraid and there was this theory that if you just turn that petcock open a little bit more and a little bit more that somehow we'll win.

Anderson: Oh, of course, I can see what a politician will say about this and I'd like your opinion. He'd say, "Well, if you're going to attack North Vietnam and bomb it, you will have to declare war."

Simpson: Why not? What they hell were we doing? We were fighting a war, we might as well have declared it. If you don't want to declare war, come home or don't go! Now, you see, what we tried to do was we tried to fight a limited war against an enemy that was going flat out to win the war. Now, you can't ever win a limited war unless the other side agrees to make it limited. So, I think a limited war is almost a contradiction in terms. You either have war or you have limits. But I could see, theoretically, if both sides decided to limit the conflict to a tiny area and to certain weapons, then you might have some sort of engagment and the best man might win. But here we decided to fight a limited war and did, we limited it ourselves, we put the limits on it ourselves. But the other side knew no limits. They called on everybody they could get, Russians, North Vietnam--I mean, Russians, Chinese. They

didn't give a damn who they got help from. They'd take anything they could get. They were fighting out a flat-out war and they won it because they were willing to do the things that were necessary including wait us out.

Anderson: Yes, yes.

Simpson: If they were not willing to do those things, we never should have gone to Vietnam, or if when it became established that they were unwilling to ask for a declaration of war and do those kinds of things, then we should have pulled out then and kissed it off. Instead of 56,000 casualties, we would have had a third or maybe a quarter of that. The results would have been the same. We put a half of a million men in Vietnam and for what? (50,000+) The country is totally gone now, down the tube. But those--I feel very strongly about that, that don't go, don't get youself involved in it; in retrospect, in was a very serious mistake for us to go into Vietnam at all with armed troops because we weren't willing to do those kind of things that were necessary to win the war. And if you're going to fight a war, the only reason for fighting a war is to win it and if you're not willing to do that, if the country is not willing to do that, the leadership doesn't believe that they can convince the country to do those certain things, then they should never go. Or when it becomes apparent it can't be done and they can't be convinced of it, then take your losses and get out. And tell everybody why. The country won't like

it, but my God, they didn't like what happened anyway.

Anderson: True. Do you think that it was the military's responsibility, on the Joint Chiefs of Staff level, to inform the civilian politicians that we should declare war, should the military have pushed for this type of--of course, this is all Monday morning quarterback--but should the military have pushed for such measures?

Simpson: They did.

Anderson: A declaration of war?

Simpson: No, it's not the military's--the military's responsibility is to tell the civilian authority what needs to be done.

Anderson: Yes, I understand that, oh, sure.

Simpson: And if out of that comes a declaration of war, so be it. But, as far as I know, the military leadership did try to pursuade the civilian leadership that these kinds of steps needed to be taken.

Anderson: Yes, okay.

Simpson: But McNamara and his people were convinced that that was unnecessary, if you gradually increased that pressure at some place the other side would break. That's the theoretical approach to limited war. You gradually increase the pressure and somewhere this guy will break. Now, that might be true if

you're fighting Chad in Central Africa and nobody is helping them, you probably can get away with it. I don't think you can today because whoever you try to put that sort of pressure on the Soviets will be there either in person or with the Cubans. So, you've got to be damned careful about where you go and what you do unless you're willing to back it up and if you're not willing to back it up, stay home.

Anderson: Yes. That brings me to the other question. This sounds like the lessons of the war sound like why we lost the war. That's solves the question I'd like to ask, why did we lose?

Simpson: Because we didn't make up our mind to win it. It's that simple.

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: We lost the war because we incremented our force against all the principles of war, we incremented our force in giving the enemy time to build up in opposition to our buildup. We did it over too long, prolonged period of time. We were too timid. We did not have the courage nor the will to actually invade North Vietnam which was the seat of the enemy that we were facing. The Viet Cong were not our problem, the NVA was our problem. The NVA denied up until 1972 that they were ever there, but of course, everybody in the world knew they were there. So, we should have gone where we could have fought them

on their home ground. And with our superior fire power we could have won against the NVA.

Now, I did not suggest that in 1969 with the buildup that they had then; the interior lines of communication, the help that they were getting from the Chinese and the Russians, that we should have withdrawn the 1st Division from South Vietnam, put them aboard ship, and landed then, I don't think that would have worked. It would have worked in 1967.

We didn't lose the war because of the infantrymen that fought it or the weapons that we had or anything else. We lost it because of people, for whatever reason...Now, understand, I give them full credit for the leadership. They acted in good faith as they saw it. In other words, they really thought they were doing what was serving the country's interest. I didn't then and I don't now, I'm more convinced of it now than I was even then, they were trying to accomplish something with the least possible loss of life. And it back-fired on them disasterously because the course of action they took was tremendously dear in the cost of human life and accomplished absolutely nothing. That's the only war we really lost in a very, very long time. But make no mistake about it, we lost that.

Anderson: Were you frustrated when you left Vietnam?

Simpson: Yes, terribly so.

Anderson: Were you eager to leave?

Simpson: No. It was a good thing I left when I did because I was emotionally as well as physically exhausted and probably a good thing for me not to stay and command that division much longer because I was tired and I didn't realize how tired I was til I got out. It was better to have somebody else take over. I was glad, glad in the sense that I was glad to come home, glad to get out of the danger like anybody else would be. But, Vietnam was, my God, the adrenalin was pumping by a magnitude of ten every hour of the day that we were there. I think now, as I told you before, I think I slept an average of four hours a night, never more than two hours at any one stretch. I was 56 years old, good God, if I tried to do that now, I'd be dead in 90 days.

Well here, here's a picture for example. That's the way I looked in Vietnam. I'd like to feel as good today as I'm certain I felt then. But that was--the guy I'm talking to there is Major General Bill Jones, he commanded the 3d Division. If you recall, the 3d Division came out before my division did. And they were embarking, we were down, he didn't embark in ships, but we were down seeing some of his troops embark in ships to go up to Okinawa. That's when that picture was taken.

Anderson: That's a good picture.

Simpson: That's a typical, other than the background, that's the garb we wore, except when we were over the hill; we had helmets on and flak jackets, and that sort of thing. But general

utilities was our day-to-day wear.

Anderson: What type of job were you eager to have after assignment in Vietnam? Did you request a job?

Simpson: General officers in the Marine Corps don't....

Anderson: Well, I know, but did you let it be known through your friends that....

Simpson: I really didn't know what I wanted to do. I sort of thought that commanding a division in combat for a year was probably the high water mark of my time as a Marine; and it turned out that it was. I wanted to be a lieutenant general, and I eventually became.

Anderson: Yes, a year later.

Simpson: Yes, a year later. I wanted to do that, really, for my personal satisfaction. I can't say that I was eager to go back to Washington for the forth time, but that's what getting promoted to three stars meant; so I was willing to do that. My wife was not all that enthusiastic about it. She was getting tired by that time. I'd been gone an awful long time. You see, I was separated from her for 11 years and three wars and attending a few deployments in between. She never had a accompanied tour overseas; she'd never been out of the United States.

Anderson: No kidding.

Simpson: And she was a Marine Corps wife now for 35 years and never out of the United States.

Anderson: Well, your job was the commanding general of the Marine Corps Supply Center.

Simpson: That was a holding pattern.

Anderson: Is that what that was?

Simpson: That was a holding pattern, but it was a kind of interesting one.

Anderson: Then it wasn't typical for the types of jobs that you had. I mean, to take a line officer and now make him a supply officer.

Simpson: That's what they told me when I got to Albany. I had a very interesting year there because I knew that it shook the hell out of them to have a line officer, basic infantryman, to come in and command a huge supply depot and it is huge--6,000 civilians serving, only 400 Marines. It's a major repair depot as well as a supply depot. And I knew that they were contemptuous of me because I had not come up through the supply line and I didn't understand the buzz words and the vernacular and that sort of thing. So, I decided to capitalize on that. And although I spent the year saying, "Why do you do it this way?"--and it was a very interesting group of responses I got. And I said, "I know why you do it this way because the guy you

relieved was doing it this way and he said it would work." And they said, "That's right." And I said, "That's not good enough." I said, "We do too damned many things in the military," and we do at Texas A & M and you do in any bureaucracy, you keep doing things by rote. You do it because there may have been a very good reason for doing it at the time that this particular procedure was established, but very often the reason for doing it is long since disappeared but you keep on doing it. Example, the senior civilian, not the senior civilian but one of the GS-16s that we had, came in to my office one night at six o'clock or 5:30 in Albany and he had his big computer print out about yeah-so and about this high. And he said, "General, I've got a plane waiting to take this to Washington, you haven't got time to read it, just take my word for it, it's accurate, sign it, and I'll have it flown to Washington tonight." I said, "Wait a minute. What is it?" He said, "This is an inventory of every vehicle that we have", which was 6,000 in number. Now that's trucks, trailers, tractors, the whole damned inventory--the serial number of everyone of them and the condition code. The condition code was about six or seven digits that gave the condition of the paint, the carburetor, the engine, all the rest of this sort of stuff. Very impressive. And he said, "Just sign it." I said, "What the hell happens to it when it gets to Washington?" He said, "Oh, it goes into the quartermaster department, code so and so." I said, "What do they do with it?" "I don't know." I said, "Well, I would

suppose that the purpose of this report is to...." I said, "How often do we do this?" He got to me because the chief of staff was away and the chief of staff had been signing these, so I was going to do it. The chief of staff was deputized to sign routine reports, which is what this was supposed to be. I said, "How long have you been doing this?" "Oh, we always do this." "I suppose the reason you do this is so that Washington has an up-to-date condition inventory of our vehicles." "Right, right." I said, "Okay." See, Vietnam is still going on. And I said, "Okay, now let's say that tomorrow--he gets this report there tomorrow, and they get a "crash" requisition. Something happens that they need 50 2 1/2 ton trucks in Vietnam from us." I said, "Now, do they go into this thing and do they pick out the 50 vehicles that are in the best condition and send us a dispatch and say, 'Send vehicle so and so.'" "No, no." I said, "What the hell do they do?" He said, "They'd call us up and say, 'Send the 50 best you got.'" I said, "That makes sense. What do you do, do you send them with this thing?" "Oh, no. Hell, we know which ones they are." I said, "Okay, then why do we send them this." "Oh, we've got to." I said, "Cancel the airplane. Take this back, put it in your desk drawer." "Oh," he said, "We'll get a hell of a nasty letter." I said, "Not we, friend, I." He said, "Well, I'll have to call them and tell them about it." I said, "No, don't do a damned thing." I said, "When they call you and tell you, 'Where's that report?' tell them I wouldn't sign it and to call me." "Do you mean

that." I said, "That's right. Tell them you took it to me and I refused to sign it, refused to send it. But let me know when they call because I'm waiting for them." And I said, "Furthermore, don't print anymore." I said, "How much does it cost to print this damned thing?" You know, all this computer print-out type thing. Somebody has got to punch all this stuff into cards and tapes and all that. He said, "I don't know." I said, "Several hundred dollars wouldn't be...." "Oh," he said, "more than that." I said, "Okay, don't print anymore until you hear from me. Let me know when Washington gets on you." About two weeks went by and he didn't show up with the thing, also, he was avoiding me. So, I sent for him one day about three weeks after this thing came up. I said, "Did you ever hear from them?" He said, "NO." I said, "Do you talk to them." "Yes." "Did anybody ever say anything about the report?" "NO." "Have you said anything about the report?" "No." I said, "Forget it, strike it off the list, we won't do it any more." He said, "How do you know this?" I said, "Friend, I've served in Washington, have you?" "No." I said, "Computer print-outs come in there by the millions of pages with data that nobody reads and they get stacked up in rooms full of them like that." I said, "We're not going to do it." So, then we started going through a lot of other things. We did it to the shipping line. And I finally learned to read this shipping code. They had a very fancy shipping code that showed when the requisition came in, when it was filled, when

it was shipped, how much the item cost. And I learned how to do this, to read this. And I'd go along this big automated line, you know, conveyor belts and all that sort of stuff, that pulled it, guys would pull the stuff out of the bins and they'd come over in baskets and whatnot and so forth, and big deal, big hurry to get--these were small items I'm talking about, nuts and bolts and that sort of thing. So, I'd go over to this one basket there and there is a garden hoe, plain old variety True Value Hardware garden hoe, the kind you can buy down Central Texas or Gibson's or whatnot. And I'd look at this damned thing--it's now September--and I looked at the shipment ticket and I find out that some Marine outfit in Hawaii had requisitioned this, what's known in the fraternity as "one hoe garden." They had requisitioned one hoe, garden, in February. We didn't have it, so the computer back ordered it and when finally when we got in some hose, garden, we decided to ship this guy one. At the total price of $1.35. So, I pulled the damned thing out and I went over to this guy and I said, "How much is it going to cost us to ship this damned garden hoe from here to Hawaii?" And he said, "I don't know, about four bucks, I guess." I said, "You see the date that that guy asked for that garden hoe?" "February." I said, "Hell, he was getting ready to hoe his flowers around the command post. It's now September. When he didn't need the damned garden hoe, he probably went down to the hardware store and bought himself one if he needed it at all." I said, "Put

it back on the shelf," and I took the requisition and tore it up. "Oh, God, you can't do that." I said, "What do you mean I can't do that." He said, "That will just screw up the computer, it will be hell." I said, "I'll enjoy screwing up the computer." And he said, "We won't come out even." I said, "The government is going to come out about six bucks ahead because we're not going to ship a garden hoe from here to Hawaii even if this guy needs it right now. I'll tell him to go out and buy one, but we're not going to do that."

Another example. I go down there one day--see, I just walked around, just walked around and asked all sorts of stupid questions, they think they're stupid but I don't because I'm getting the guys to finally think. You know, does this make any sense or not, and if it doesn't make any sense, hold up your hand and ask me. Maybe we still got to do it, still may not make any sense, but for Christ sake, hold up your hand and ask. Down there they've got 12 women lined up at the table and they're doing something at the board like this and I can't tell what they're doing. So, I walk over there and they got boxes of thumbtacks. The boxes hold 100 thumbtacks. And they're counting them out into tens and they're putting these in a little plastic bag and they labeling now as ten thumbtacks. And they've got 12-14 women lined up at a big long table doing this. I asked these ladies, you know, "What are you doing?" And they told me what they were doing. Don't fuss at them, it's not their problem, get the supervisor. "What the hell

are you doing?" He said, "Well, the unit of issue on thumbtacks has been 100." But, he said, "Various studies have shown that 100 is too many, most people don't need 100 thumbtacks, so now the unit of issue is ten because ten takes care of most of what people need. So, we decided to ship them in increments of ten." And I said, "And what are you paying these women?" And he said, "Four and a quarter an hour or something like that." I said, "How many of these boxes of 100 have you got?" He said, "A couple thousand." But, he said, "The next shipment that we get will be in units of 10," the kind of thing like you and I buy down at the drugstore you know, just a little piece of cardboard with ten thumbtacks in it--which makes sense. They should have had that all the time. And I said, "Okay, friend, just stop this now. Put these women to doing something useful. When somebody orders one thumbtack, ten thumbtacks, 30 thumbtacks, ship them 100 until all that supply is gone, and then when you get them in packaged 10 to a unit, great, then give them what they want." He said, "We've got to comply with this," you know, he's coming out referencing me. Forget it! He said, "Well, we'll have to write a letter to Washington." "You're not going to send any letter to Washington, do what I tell you. Put your people to doing something useful." He said, "Suppose we get a requisition in for ten thumbtacks?" I said, "Did you hear me? You get a requisition in for any thumbtacks, I don't care how many you get, ship them in increments of 100 as long as this stock lasts. And when you get your

stock in in units of ten, why then ship them as close as you can." That sort of stuff didn't endear me to them, but I got a tremendous satisfaction out of it, Terry. I got a tremendous satisfaction out of it. See, these guys had come up through the supply chain all their life, you know.

Anderson: Sure.

Simpson: You know, that book, by God, that's their Bible and you don't question that. Well, I was absolutely irreverent as far as the book was concerned. I could care less.

Anderson: Did you ever get any heat from Washington on any of these?

Simpson: Never, never. Not on a damned thing. But they decided that we would have to go on the shift work. I learned a lot in Albany, not about military business. My first exposure to a large number of civilians, had 6,000 civilians. They had been working 8 to 5, five days a week. They decided the response time was not fast enough....

End Side 2, Tape 10

Session VI, Begin Tape 11, Side 1, November 5, 1981

Anderson: So, let's start. Thank you very much for this book, which I finished this morning and it is an excellent book. And

I'll be there tonight.

Simpson: BGen Kosmirr is not a great writer, but he's a good storyteller. Tonight will be, if he follows the pattern of last spring, it will be sort of an inspirational, patriotic type thing, with the full flavor of the horrors of prison camp. But his message is how love of country and that sort of thing can pull you through.

Anderson: Okay, so, let's start at Marine Corps....

Simpson: What I was talking about, yes, the first time I ever dealt with the civilian workforce of any magnitude and this was quite large--5 to 6 thousand. And the problem that I was addressing at the time that we closed that out was the requirement that was imposed on us to go on to a shift basis.

Anderson: 24 hours.

Simpson: 24 hours, seven days a week. Whereas, all these people had been accustomed to working a standard work week of 8 to 5, five days a week. And being very naive to this situation, I thought that I could personally adjudicate personal problems that people had. I recognized right away the impact on certain groups of individuals such as, divorced mothers with small children that would find it extremely difficult to work at night and so forth and so on. But, the more we delved into it though, the more it became apparent that everybody would have an excuse that didn't want to work shift work, though, interesting enough,

there were some people, single, who chose night by preference. We decided to change shifts every six weeks, moving it around by leaving the two undesirable shifts which were four to midnight and midnight to eight. Anyone who wanted to stay on those shifts could. And we did have some volunteers, but then we had to put other people into it mandatorally, and where I got into the religious aspect was--I finally decided, as we worked into this problem, I decided that I would have to reserve to myself the making of any exceptions. I couldn't let the supervisor do that because we wouldn't have an even-handed policy across the organization. And I was very hard-nosed about it. I was sympathetic with the working mothers and that kind of thing, but I had to explain to them that we just had to do it, and by and large, they took it in good spirit. Except one man who called upon me, who was black, and he was a minister of a rather unusual and very small sect or, as I recall, the Baptist Church. And he explained that he couldn't work at all on Sunday, that he had to preach. And I wondered, you know, why he couldn't work maybe the four through midnight shift or something like that. No, they went to church all day and had to preach in he morning, afternoon, and evening. Well, I told him again that I was sympathetic to it, but that we had to sort of hold the line. He was every bit the gentleman. He had what he called a very valid point and until I had gotten into this experience, I would have thought so too. What you have to watch, of course, is the matter of precedent. What you do for

one you have to do for another and you must realize that each person's individual problem seems as important to them as any other problem in their life. They suppose that their hardship is as great as anybody else's. So he went away and then about two weeks later, I was approached by another person on religious grounds. This one was quite unusual. And I've forgotten the faith that he was a part of; I've never heard of it before or since. But, in any event, it was a religious faith that required to observe Saturday as the Sabbath and to--Friday night and Saturday--and that group of people, by their religious convictions, are supposed to be in their homes from 5 o'clock on Friday afternoon until 5 o'clock on Saturday afternoon fasting and they cannot visit or eat or do anything but presumably, I suppose, meditate. And he told me about this and I was rather intrigued with it. They have no ordained ministers as such, they have sort of lay leaders and he gave me the name of the man--I asked him if his church made no special dispensation for the Armed Forces such as the Catholic Church did during World War II and he said they made no exceptions and he gave me the name of their lay leader in the local community there. They only had a congregation or membership of about 15 or 20. And I recognized the name of a highly respected man in the Albany business community. And I called him and told him my problem and he, of course, knew this man immediately, and I said, "Can you make no exemption, these are the circumstances?" He said, "We have no way of making any exemptions." And he

pointed out an incident that happened a few weeks before in which two of their members, not of that particular congregation there but of the overall faith, on their way back from Paris and New York and the plane had plane trouble--the plane would have gotten in about 1 o'clock which was plenty of time, and had to return to Paris. They were so persuasive that the airline official bumped somebody else off the next flight and put them aboard so that they arrived in New York at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, were able to be home--maybe four, in other words, one hour before the deadline and they were able to get home and so forth. Well, that impressed me and again, without thinking of precedents, I decided to grant him an exception and did. And about four days later, my original friend came back and when he walked through the door I had a very sinking spell. And I realized that I had made a very serious error. And he was very nice and he said, "General, I understand that you've granted an exemption to Mr. So and So on religious grounds." And I said, "Yes, I have." And he started to say and I said, "You don't need to bring it up, Mr. Smith, I recognize that I've made a mistake and I'll cancel the exemption." Because you see, Terry, he had me on the grounds of religious discrimination and race discrimination, yet, had he chosen to sue. I knew I was dead in the water. So, I called in the guy of this very peculiar sect and explained to him my predicament and I said, "I have no option but to cancel it and so he accepted that and then what he did was to at such time as he would

be working during that 24 hour period on Friday nights or Saturday afternoon, he took annual leave for which we were very flexible in that. In other words, we let him work half shift, he could work 12 to 4 and then take annual leave for the next portion of it and so on around the line. But that's the way he worked that out. That I gave as an example of my youth and inexperience in working with large groups of civilians. I learned that in dealing with any groups of people regarding things that were going to be difficult, the first and foremost thing that you've got to do is to be even-handed and consistent because your inconsistency will come back to haunt you.

Anderson: Okay. Now, let's move on to your finale. And that as the Director of Personnel, Deputy Chief of Staff at Manpower at Headquarters.

Simpson: It is more a finale than it is a climax. Climax only in the sense that I was finally and at long last wearing three stars. One of the least satisfying tours that I had, which is not at all unlike many Pentagon tours, tours in the seat of the government in national defense are, by and large, not really very rewarding personally in terms of your personal satisfaction. The reason being that you are dealing with a vast bureaucracy. You see very little, if any, direct results of your work and that is long term in coming. That's as opposed to being in the field with troops where the results of what you

do are almost immediately apparent--your mistakes and you victories in dealing with individuals in the field. That's not true in Washington particularly in the military or in the military because I can't speak for any other sector. But, working within the context of DOD, as I was, you're constantly on many committees associated with your sphere of responsibilities, committees that include representation of the all four services and using four services, I apply the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps with the officials of DOD, primarily civilians sort of overseeing your work and trying in all cases to get a common answer. And in a great many cases, Terry, the four services differ so greatly that there's seldom a common answer that is satisfactory to all the services. A uniform pay scale is an exception to that. But, when you get into personnel policy or, indeed, weapons policy, tactics, doctrine, and other things, the services differ in their missions, in their capabilities. The people in DOD were continually pressing for a common answer, one that they could present as a DOD front. So, I spent countless hours, I worked probably as long hours on that tour...Well, first of all, in my four tours in Washington, I worked in all cases longer working day than at any time other than in combat in Vietnam, which was essentially a 24 hour day. But, I left my home at 6 o'clock in the morning or a quarter to six, I got back normally between 7:30 and 8 o'clock at night, five days a week. I went in on Saturday and on a good day, I would be home by mid afternoon on Saturday and if it were a particularly good

weekend, I would not have to go in on Sunday. But, being there at least a portion of all the weekend was more common than not. Now, that didn't hold for everybody else. That was only a few people that were involved in these kinds of things. So, we were in session, as I think I explained on one of the earlier tours, Headquarters, Marine Corps is in the Navy Annex, which is above the Pentagon, but I spent at least half my time in the Pentagon in these joint meetings with representatives of the other four services and the Department of Defense officials. And you were constantly preparing position papers, jockeying for an advantage; all of us, of course, and reasonably so, espousing our own cause. Trying to do what...We weren't antagonists of DOD, we accepted civilian rule, as all I think military people that think about it must and do, but we were trying, if you will, to sort of educate them and we had special problems, and that common format was not by any means satisfactory for all of our problems. And trying to strive for solutions that would be reasonably satisfactory, if not uniform, would be reasonably satisfactory to all the services.

This was at a time, also, not only at that time but earlier, when it was very fashionable in the services to--many of the services were having race problems and this was a time in which the services really not knowing how to handle this thing, began to call in a great many civilian consultants, psychologist, psychiatrists, and other kinds of people. Very expensive consultant rates to tell us what to do. My observation was that

these consultants were not selected as carefully as they might have been because however competent they might have been in their own fields of discipline, the ones that I encountered knew nothing about the military. And a great many of the solutions they proposed where, in my judgement, entirely infeasible in its application to the military regardless of what application they may have had on a college campus.

And human relations training, as they called it, was the big forte and everybody was establishing schools to teach people how to ensure quality of races and that kind of thing. The DOD put together in this regard and the Marine Corps was resisting this. We did not pride ourselves on knowing anymore about the subject than any of the other services. But we had a kind of a gut feeling, Terry, that it lay in basic leadership principles, whatever the solution is--was or is or would be--lay at least as far as the military was concerned primarily in strong, effective leadership committed to racial equality. We did not believe then nor do we believe now that--well, I can't speak for the Marine Corps now--but we didn't believe then that it was a subject that you could effectively teach in a classroom. I don't know why we believed that, but we just didn't think it lent itself to that sort of thing, at least as far as the military was concerned. But everybody else was hepped on the idea of organizing a school and a training course which would train officers and non-commissioned officers in case histories, of theories of attaining racial equality and that sort of thing.

The Department of Defense established an experimental school and they put it at Patrick Air Force Base, and they assigned quotas of students and quotas of instructors to each of the services. On behalf of the Marine Corps, I objected violently and asked for an exemption. Told them that we would much prefer to plow our own furrow, attacking the problem as best we could see how to do it using what strengths we had, which we thought were primarily in leadership. And that if the school turned out to be a success, we would like to reserve the right to join at a later time. But in the meantime, we asked for a two year moratorium.

We weren't granted that totally. We were told to put one instructor and two students in this pilot class down there. They assembled the pilot class at Patrick while they were still writing the syllabi for the course. So I recall that it was to be about ten weeks in length. The students were to live together in barracks provided by the Air Force at Patrick Air Force Base and classroom space and so forth and so on--all being paid for by DOD, but hosted locally by the Air Force.

Our views were well known. The Navy seemed to be highly in favor of the thing. The Army, at least the uniform Army shared somewhat of my views. The Air Force was of the belief that you could solve any problem by establishing schools. The Air Force, you understand, and the Navy are technically oriented by their very nature. They are services of machines, whether it be war planes or ships or submarines or whatnot.

The Marine Corps and to almost the same extent the Army, are people oriented. And the Air Force, if they've got a problem in servicing the F-15, can establish a school for mechanics to learn how to service the F-15; it worked out very well. The Navy, if they're having trouble with the sonar, they can send people to sonar school and they learn how to work the sonar. So, it would follow that those services would have as a part of their belief the fact that problems that arouse lent themselves to school training for solution. By the same token, the Marine Corps and, as I say, to a considerable extent the Army, while we believe in formal school training, we have never believed that all the problems of our services could be solved by people going to school. The Air Force and the Navy are not as strong in their belief on leadership as we are and have to be.

So, the pattern of support or lack thereof of the four services of this effort was predictable. So, I was known as the sort of the outcast on this thing. But, Roger--I've been trying to think of his name ever since we last met. He was Assistant Secretary of Defense for Personnel. I don't have his name except he had been a Vice-President of Caterpillar Tractor and is again the Vice-President of Caterpillar Tractor. He came in with other very fine public servants to take this task. He and I got along splendidly, a great deal of mutual respect. And in any event, he decided to take the group of people who were the Deputy Chiefs of Staff for Personnel, me for the Marine Corps, and the three stars for the Army, three stars for the Navy,

three stars for the Air Force--we were all opposite numbers and this was in our sphere of things. And he decided that we should go down and inspect this school. They were sort of midway or two-thirds of the way through their first pilot course, which everybody, including themselves, knew was a guinea pig. I told him I didn't want to go. I didn't really believe in it, I didn't think I could be objective nor could I be useful in my contribbution. He said, "I particularly want you to go since I know you don't really believe in it." He said, "I think you will look upon it more skeptically than anybody else." And I can assure you that that's true.

So, he wheeled out an airplane and we flew down to Patrick Air Force Base. And I think we were all suprised and I was shocked what I saw. The officers and enlisted in the same class. They had everybody take off their rank distinction. And everybody called everybody else by their first name; officers, colonels, corporals, whatnot. I was aghast. I had never seen that before nor have I seen it since. The handshake--I can't even do it now myself, you know, where you grab....the one that the blacks have of greeting. It's not like that--you know what I mean. Well, that was the greeting from all those people with us when we came down. Well, we listened to two or three of their lectures--and they were all living in the same barracks and not--I mean, they were just intermingled. There would be a corporal in one room and a lieutenant colonel in the next and so forth and so on. And everybody was John and Joe and

Terry and whatnot. I thought, "My God." This strikes at the very structure of military discipline and if this is what they are teaching, then good God, what's going to happen when these people go back to the fleet or go back to the Air Force or back to the Army? The purpose of the school was to train trainers, they were supposed to train cadres and then these people were to fan out at their own ships and stations wherever they came from --they came on temporary duty--and at their own ships and stattions and they were supposed to organize groups and other people would come in. They would take the course syllabi and they became instructors in ten weeks. This was the theory of the school.

Well, I absolutely, as I say, was absolutely aghast. I think the others were pretty much surprised but not clearly as shocked as I was. We got down there one day about noon time, listened that afternoon, talked that night with the staff. The staff was headed by a counseling psychologist from Stanford. There were some military in it, but it was run by--if you pardon me about PhDs--I didn't ask any questions, I listened. The others were giving sort of minor suggestions about change this, change that. I didn't enter that. Finally, in early afternoon of the second day, we got back on the aiplane to go back to Washington. The Secretary had not given them any particular guidance. He said he'd be in touch with them. As soon as we were in the airplane and in the air he got us all together back in the back of the airplane. No, first he came to me and sat down along side of me and he said, "What do you

think?" And I said, "Boy, that's a disaster in the making." He said, "I kind of thought so, why? Well, I'm really rather inclined to agree with you." And they were going to bring in another class--well, let me back up. I think what we saw and what was there when we got there, I think was the instructional staff. I don't believe there were any pure students in this group. I think what they had done was this cadre of people had put together this syllabi, then they brought in these instructors who had no particular competence, you see, but they were designated to be learn how to be instructors and they were going to be instructors on the staff of this human relations group at Patrick. But in any event, what they were doing was giving a trial run and trying to bring these guys up to speed. And the first class was supposed to come in about ten days hence. So the Secretary asked me on the airplane what I thought he should do. I said, "Well, the first thing you do is cancel that first class. Then you turn the whole damned thing around and I agree with the idea of using officers and enlisted, but I think they should have on their uniforms and I think they should have on their rank insignia, and I think they should observe normal military amenities, whatever they may be. Because, I can assure you that the procedures that they are learning at Patrick, they're not going to be allowed to practice that when they go back to Fort Hood, or to the USS Nimitz or whatever. They're not going to be able to do that. So, you're teaching them wrong. And then I'd revise this syllabus and give it

another shot." Most of the others agreed once I had spoken out. I was a known opponent. I think the rest of them were sort of under wraps from their boss to go along with this thing, of which I was not. The Commandant clearly understood my position on the matter and was willing to support me. I never knew what....

Anderson: What did the Secretary say?

Simpson: He did what I asked him to. He cancelled the class, told them to rework it, start all over again, put it back into a military context. I think the school ran for a year or two. I never visited it again.

Anderson: Did the Marines take part?

Simpson: No. As far as I know they didn't.

Anderson: Did you set up your own program?

Simpson: Yes, we did. We set up one on the East Coast and one on the West Coast, strictly along military lines.

Anderson: And how did that work?

Simpson: I think with rather indifferent success. I still don't think it is acceptable to school book solution--classroom solution. I still think--I certainly agree with equality, with equal opportunity and equality of races--I thoroughly agree with that. But I think you do that over a period of time by

insisting on it and demanding it and by leading in such a way that people really realize that this is the order of the day, this is what you're going to do. It's not--well, the analogy is not a good one, but one of the problems that I've fought since I've been here is to gain acceptance for women in the Corps of cadets. Now, you don't do that by getting everybody together and saying, "Now look guys, this is it. The women are here and they're going to be treated equally," and that solves the problem. It doesn't solve it, and so we don't do that. But we are making a hell of a lot of progress, a great deal. We made more progress in seven years on that thing in the Corps of cadets than the services made in 25. But its an evolutionary not a revolutionary process.

I give you simply that one example. There were other kinds of things. We were engaged in something that is now become the law called DOPMA. Everything has an acronym, as you know in the military and, I guess, in the federal government. DOPMA stands for Defense Officer Personnel--I've forgotten, but it really was a program....

Anderson: DOPO?

Simpson: DOMPO. [Editors note: DOPMA]

Anderson: What was the M for? Defense officer M--Manpower Personnel?

Simpson: It's DOPMO, Defense Officer Personnel Management

Organization. And what it was was a plan to put all officers of all services on the same basis for promotion, selection, and that sort of thing. And everybody had a different program. And the Army, for example, have reserve officers that can go to 20 years. Now, they have some that can go further than that and remain as reserve officers. Nobody else does that sort of thing. Everything is different. I'm not familiar with how it finally came up, but it was an enormously complex piece of legislation.

Anderson: Sounds like it.

Simpson: And its been enacted, but I'm sure in a greatly modified form now. But we spent countless hours arguing over how we were going to get there, how--we could all see down the line 20 years hence that it might be a good idea to have one, but the transition period almost defeated us, particularly for the Army. It was going to be the same program of same promotion points, the same promotion system, same selection up and out system for everybody. What they really were proposing, Terry, was closer to what the Marine Corps has been doing for the last 30 years than it was to what anybody else was doing. I know a portion of it that has amused me that was enacted, that amused me greatly and pleased me greatly as it has the Army and the Air Force and has disappointed the Navy because they had gained this advantage in the general officer flight rank for many years. You know, until now a captain in the Navy selected for

admiral has been made a rear admiral and given two stars.

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: Even though he is what the Navy calls lower half, he draws the pay of a brigadier general, but he wears two stars. And they don't stand for selection from one to two stars, they simply live long enough to get from the lower half to the upper half and by the time they cross that magic barrier, when they cross that magic barrier, then they start drawing major general's pay rather than brigadier general's pay. Nobody else did that, everybody else had a weeding out process at the one star level, Marine Corps included. And we didn't feel that that was quite fair and, also, we didn't see why a guy who had been a rear admiral lower half for two years for two weeks should be wearing two stars while we had a brigadier that had been a brigadier for two and a half years and he's still wearing one star. We all argued, the three of us against the Navy, had argued for a change and that was incorporated into DOPMA and starting in 1982, when the Navy selected people for flag rank, they'll give them one star and call them a commodore.

Anderson: Oh, because that was only wartime rank.

Simpson: That's right, only been a wartime rank in the past, but in the future it will be a peacetime rank and they'll wear one star and they'll be called commodore and then they'll stand for selection as all of the rest did for selection to rear

admiral or two stars and some will be weeded out. They've got equity in that across the board in all the services.

Anderson: And were there other examples of change like that?

Simpson: Well, there were countless ones, but knowing that you were going to ask about it, I frankly have been searching my mind. You see, at no time were you able to take one project, you see, and work it through. You handled dozens of projects going at any one time and when you looked at your schedule for the day, you would have to find out what meetings you go to and my whole wall of the office was lined with briefing books which were continually updated by my staff and depending on what I had to do that day, I would take down those briefing books, all of which I had read, but I would see the latest entries into it and then that briefing book is what I would take with me to the....And so, I can't in my memory--now it's been almost ten years--I can't isolate any other particular examples. And that's because of the confusion in my mind of so many things working at one time that we were concurrently working on at least 10 or 12 projects. And that again, that's attitude of frustration. And also, the fact that we didn't see very much in fruition.

For example, I worked on DOPMA for the two years that I was there and it was enacted into law last year. And I didn't read the final text. No particular point in it because I'm not familiar with all the gyrations that went on in the six years

between the time I worked on it and the time I was inactive. I guess I would be critical of it if I read it, but I shouldn't be because knowing how the system works, and the fact that you have to give and take in order to get anything that you want, I wouldn't be critical of my successors that negotiated it.

Anderson: Okay, now another issue at this time besides those two that we're talking about, the racial problem and DOPMA, was the lottery. The lottery under the Nixon administration....

Simpson: Are you talking about the draft?

Anderson: Yes, the draft lottery, and instead of the formal system, Nixon changed it over to the lottery system. And I was wondering if the lottery had any impact on the Marines?

Simpson: I'm trying to reconstruct what changed. I thought we had done the draft and the lottery.

Anderson: About '71.

Simpson: I don't think it had any particular impact on the Marine Corps as such. There was a feeling, of course, all the draftees--all the draftees, I might say, were reluctant to serve because if they had been willing or anxious to serve, they would have volunteered. We had both options at that time. We were trying to cut down the draft and did. We preferred volunteers as anyone does and so you start with the idea that the draftee is there against his will in varying degrees. Some accepted it as

inevitable, some fought it to the bitter end. The brighter side of the coin was that the draftees were bright and they were usually of a higher mental group, quick to learn, many had some college training, most all were high school graduates. So, they were the better tool to work with except for attitude. The vast majority stayed their allotted time and left for the very reason that they were draftees rather than volunteers in the first place.

Anderson: Sure. Did the quality of the draftees change in any way toward the last few years of Vietnam?

Simpson: I would say not. I would say that towards the last few years of Vietnam that the draftees were considerably more belligerent than they had been in the early part of the war because they were reflecting the mood of the country.

Anderson: Sure. And did the anti-war mood of the country, which was prevalent by 1971 and certainly from '71 to '73, was probably a couple of the most anti-war years that we've had in a long time in this country. Did that seem to have any impact on the Marines?

Simpson: Oh, yes. For those that are stationed in this country within the continental U.S. reading the newspapers and seeing the burning of the draft cards and throwing of the Purple Hearts over the White House gate and that sort of thing, it's bound to have an effect and it does. It makes people uneasy and upset and unhappy, and yes, it was reflected in the Marine

Corps and indeed in all the services. Yes, the mood of the country, the anti-war sentiment had an enormous impact and the people reasonably reflecting the sentiment of the country could not understand why since the country was so violently against the war, did they have to go out and run the risk of dying for a lost cause. Yes, that was tough.

Anderson: And how did it impact, what was the impact? Morale was down?

Simpson: Yes, it had an impact on morale. It made leadership more difficult, more challenging and more demanding, but again, I'll come back to leadership as the only answer to that kind of problem. I think the Marine Corps dealt with it well.

The Marine Corps is not a tolerant organization and it's high on discipline and comes down hard on offenders. And so, by virtue of that it is in a little bit better position to deal with those kinds of problems and perhaps some of the services are a little more laid back about things like that.

Anderson: Was there ever any pickets or protests outside of your headquarters?

Simpson: No, no. There were some at the Pentagon, but never outside of ours.

Anderson: Now, was it different working under the Nixon administration with the Department of Defense than it had been with McNamara and LBJ?

Simpson: Yes, there were. The higher ranking civilians in this final tour that I had in Washington, with whom I was associated with, Terry, were not the arrogant, young, whiz kids. And I regret Roger--I know him real well, I've heard from him for years. Doesn't make any difference. But I'll give you an example. Here's a man who is a highly successful businessman, as one of the senior Vice-Presidents of Caterpillar Tractor, who comes to Washington...And I had no idea but I suppose....

Anderson: It wasn't Hillsman, was it?

Simpson: No. I would suppose that this man's income before he came to Washington was probably, you know, on the order of 250 or $200,000 a year, that sort of bracket, lifestyle, and whatnot. He comes to Washington for the magnificent sum of $50,000 a year, perhaps even less, but about $50,000, worked probably longer hours than he ever worked at Caterpillar. But a proven business executive--much, much easier to deal with because he was a man of experience in business and give and take of business than were the purely theoretical or theoreticians that I had dealt with before. They were still there, but I was not associated with them and their numbers were far less. And also their influence was far less.

Clements was there as....

Anderson: Yes, how did you get along with him?

Simpson: Oh, fine.

Anderson: He was Assistant Secretary of Defense.

Simpson: Under Secretary.

Anderson: Under Secretary.

Simpson: Oh, I got along fine with him. He's hard-nosed as he is now. But he would listen, he would listen to your point of view. I think he was quite impartial as far as service orientation was concerned, which is necessary at the top levels of the Secretary of Defense. I thought he was a good Under Secretary of Defense. I think he would have been a good Secretary. Very strong man. Some of the people feared him because he had a terrible bark and pretty good bite, too. But that's alright, I think that's good. I mean, he did not look down the military. He would just as soon bite a civilian as he would a military man. He didn't assume any air of superiority. I didn't know the guy socially at all. But yes, I think he did a good job, I think he made a good Under Secretary. Maybe they called him deputy at that time, I don't know, but he was the number two guy.

Anderson: Now, you retired after two years of that job. Was that the normal tour of duty or was--why did you retire?

Simpson: Two reasons. One; you see, there were only seven of us.

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: There were only two opportunities to move forward, two slots for four stars. There were a lot of major generals. Those of us that were lieutenant generals at that time had a sort of common bond and a sort of common agreement....

End Side 1, Tape 11

Begin Side 2, Tape 11

Simpson: The Army had an agreement too. Upon being promoted to 3 or 4 stars, the individual signed an undated letter requesting retirement...in this case, they reduced it to writing. And the chief had it in his desk and he did that for three and four stars.

Anderson: My goodness.

Simpson: He had undated letters of retirements which he could fill in the date anytime he wanted to and that guy would go. Now whether they still do that--but they were doing it at that time. We didn't do that because we didn't have that big a deal.

Anderson: So, that was one reason.

Simpson: Now, the other was, I was the last of the Mohicans.

Anderson: What do you mean by that?

Simpson: I mean that at the time I retired I had more active duty service than anybody else in the service, other than the Commandant and the only reason the Commandant had more time in service than I did, he was one year ahead of me and he was Robert Cushman who had been aide to Nixon when Nixon was Vice-President and Nixon brought him back from Vietnam to make him Deputy Director of CIA and then Nixon made him the Commandant of the Marine Corps. He would also have retired with three stars if it hadn't been for Nixon saying, "You're going to be the Commandant of the Marine Corps," and he was Commandant of the Marine Corps. So, of all my classmates, people that I entered with, 156 entered with me in 1936...I was the sole survivor. And I sort of had a feeling that I wanted to go voluntarily before somebody asked me to go. I knew that all the people below me were saying--not all, but many of them--were probably already saying, "When's that old, grey-haired man going to get out of the way and let us show him how to run this thing." I wanted to go while people were still asking me to stay rather than saying, "I'm glad you're going." So, I made that decision to retire voluntarily.

Anderson: How much more time could you have stayed?

Simpson: Well, in the Marine Corps beyond 35 years of service, you stay on a year-to-year basis. There is a law that says when you have had five years as a major general and a total of 35 years of service, then you must retire unless selected for

retention for one year. And every year, a board is convened to select those that they want to continue. Now, they have to weed out some of them. They can't play the old boy game and keep all of them on.

Anderson: Sure.

Simpson: So, every year there's certain people that are not selected for retention and they have to retire. You see, I stayed 37 years, so I went through that process twice. In other words, two selection boards convened and selected me to be retained on active duty for one year--one year being all they could do. I had been through that twice. If I had stayed, I would have gone through that same process again, and may or may not have been selected. I didn't want to fail a selection. All those factors compounded, told me it was probably in the best interest of all concerned for me to--and also I was tired. I was very tired.

Anderson: Did you make the right decision?

Simpson: Yes, sure, absolutely. Oh, after 37 years, Terry, you have sinking spells. But that solved by making sure that your last tour of duty is in Washington. I retired from Washington, we came back here to live, not to take this job because the job didn't exist. But we were independent, our children were grown, both had their graduate degrees by that time, they were off the payroll in other words. We didn't have

a lot of money but we had enough that it was not obligatory for me to work and we could go just about anywhere we wanted to. And we chose to come back to College Station. Not, I say not, at the invitation of the university to work here. But we selected it because first of all, Marge was a Bryan girl, as I think I told you. She'd retained some contacts here. We did not want to live in the great city. And we thought being next to a university like this there would be activities that we'd be interested in, which there are. And we have access to Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, Austin, whatnot, if we want to go. But, we were sick and tired of living in the great city with the traffic jams and that sort of thing. And so, we came back here and during that year when I did not work at all, why, I did have some--there would be occasions when my wife would find me with what we used to call the "thousand yard stare" in the Marine Corps and she said, "I know you miss being in the Marine Corps." She said, "Remember, you can still be on active duty but also remember you'd still be in Washington." And that was the immediate cure for that.

I have never truly missed the Marine Corps, I've missed my friends.

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: But you see, most of my friends were gone from the active list. I missed the comradeship.

Anderson: Yes, you were the senior man, yes. Can you tell me

about your day of retirement?

Simpson: Oh, it was done up with all the fanfare that the Marine Corps could muster, and that's quite a lot. The retirement cermemony was conducted down at the Marine Barracks, which I have described to you before, a beautiful little compound down there, a full parade of the ceremonial troops that served as the White House guards and that sort of thing, a battalion of them all dressed in uniform, dress uniforms with medals and all the rest of it. I was in whites with all of my medals and whatnot, which by that time, numbered 26-27. The Commandant awarded me my second Distinguished Service Medal, they had a reception in the band hall. I was tremendously impressed with the fact that the Secretary of the Navy came, several officials in the Department of Defense, and of course, the Marine Corps turned out en mass for it. A very touching thing to me, one that I'll remember always, the receiving line with the Commandant and his lady and me and mine. My daughter came from Chapel Hill, my son was in Washington at the time, so he came. A great many of our friends were there. It was a highly emotional day, but done with the kind of pageantry that only the Marine Corps can muster, second only to the British in those sort of things. So, it was done very, very well. It was beautiful.

Anderson: Now, let's move to Benis Frank's questions. I still haven't received from him a list of those questions. But you had those. Do you have them?

Simpson: What did I do with them? Staff, we've covered.

Anderson: Yes, we've covered MacArthur's staff.

Simpson: He wants my review of the Pate Commandancy.

Anderson: P-A-T-E.

Simpson: Yes. Pate. Major events occurring during your tour as Military Secretary and Secretary of General Staff, which I think I've done. Decisions during the period of Ribbon Creek and how it was perceived and handled at Headquarters. Roles of Twining and Shaw and others with respect to Marine Corps' response to this event.

General Pate was a man that I had known for a very long time. I knew him first in Quantico. Pate was a very, very pleasant southern gentleman, graduate of VMI, a real fine person as an individual. Not an overly strong one. I had not been with him in World War II, but he was in Quantico when I came back there as a lieutenant colonel, he was colonel, he was eventually promoted to brigadier. When I went from Headquarters--he was in Washington for awhile, then he went down to command the 2d Division. And when I went to the 2d Division...No, no, he wasn't there. When I first went there, General Pollock was the division commander and he was the one that made me regimental commander. General Pollock left and General Pate came in to command the division. I continued on as the regimental commander and eventually as the G-4. Then

Pate went to Korea. And he requested that I be sent to Korea and I was. And when I arrived in Korea, he immediately made me regimental commander again, as I mentioned to you that I was fortunate to command two regiments. So, I was regimental commander for six months in Korea under his tenure as a division commander. Now, this started right at the end of the fighting and then carried on during the early defensive phases of the truce as we built the defensive line along the Han River, Freedom Bridge and so forth and so on. Pate came back, was promoted to three stars and made Chief of Staff of Headquarters Marine Corps. I have made earlier, the distinction between the Chief of Staff of Headquarters Marine Corps and the Chief of Staff of the Army. That Chief of Staff of the Army being the equivalent of our Commandant. Chief of Staff of Headquarters Marine Corps is chief of that staff, not of the entire Marine Corps.

I came back from there and went to the Army War College. From the Army War College, he saw to it that I was ordered to Washington and made me Secretary of the General Staff, which was his immediate--I was his guy. He was the Chief of Staff and I was the Secretary of the General Staff, a rather powerful position. He was made Commandant and he wanted me to do for him as Commandant the same things that I had done as Secretary of the General Staff, which was complicated a little bit because we weren't really set up that way, but he insisted that I move up to the front office with him. I told General Pate that I was

not the aide type, that he could hire as many aides as he wanted to, but that I was not one. He said, "I want you to come with me, in any event, you don't have to be an aide, you don't have to wear an aiguillette, but I want you to run my day and run my office. You can assume any title you want to." See, I was a colonel, he was four stars. So back in the history books I found out that at one time they had what they called the Military Secretary to the Commandant and I proposed that title to him and he accepted. What I did for him then was to run his outer office. He had four aides, he had an appointment secretary, he had a confidential secretary, he had a whole retinue--stewards, servants, all the rest of it. The aides did that, they handled the servants and the stewarts. But I supervised the things, I saw all the papers that he saw, all the mail that was addressed to him by name was delivered to me and I read it. Essentially, I was his confidante and I was very close to him, he trusted me.

He took office on the first of January. In February, we had the first blow. I'll never forget it because we were at the Gridiron Dinner, he on the platform and I down below. The Gridiron at that time was a very big event in Washington, as you recall, white tie and the rest of the business. I happened to be looking at this three tier head table of the Gridiron dinner and I saw a messanger come in and speak to General Pate and he looked startled and he got up and walked out. I had not come with him, but I knew there was trouble, so I left and

joined him outside and I said, "What's the matter, General?" He said, "Well, there's been a terrible catastrophe," he said, "We lost a transport plane on the West Coast taking the recruits from southern California up to San Francisco to be flown overseas and the plane crashed, and there is 72 dead." And I said, "Well, what do you want me to do? Is there anything that we can really do?" And about that time, another messenger arrived from Headquarters with another blow. And this was to the effect that they had switched the manifest of the plane and that the casualty section had notified 72 of the wrong families. There were two planes airborne, each had 72 people aboard. The manifest had become switched and when one plane crashed, they got the reversed tail numbers, and so, they had gone through the process of notifying 72 families or next of kin that their sons had died in a crash. This was a no survivors crash. Whereas in fact, their sons were alive and well. But, there were 72 others that thought they were alright. So, with that, we immediately left and went to Headquarters where some of the staff had assembled. And then he gave me one of the most difficult tasks I've ever had. He gave me the task of calling all 144 families. I had to call those 72 families that had been told that their sons-- I had to tell those whose sons were dead and tell them that their sons were alive. They ranged from frantic relief to indignation as to how we could be so stupid. But then, the onerous task was to call the other 72, many of whom had called in and found out that their sons were alright, and to tell them

in fact their sons were dead. That was about 10:30 Saturday night and I stayed at my desk dressed in full dress uniform--I took off my jacket--dress uniform--took off my jacket--but I was still at the telephone 12 hours later. It took me from 10:30 at night until 11 o'clock on Sunday morning to make all these telephone calls and I was emotionally exhausted by the time that was over. And I took a terrible lot of abuse from the people, which we deserved. That's the kind of stupid mistake that--I didn't particularly deserve it as an individual because I had nothing to do with it, but the Marine Corps deserved it. You just don't make those kind of errors.

Anyway, that was the first blow. That was followed shortly by an even worse one, which was the Ribbon Creek tragedy, that you're familiar with, in which the drill instructor misguided as he led these recruits out into this so-called Ribbon Creek which is really a slue, not a creek at all, as what he thought was a disciplinary measure and six of them drowned. This was a terrible catastrophe for the Marine Corps. You will remember the press at that time and all that sort of thing. Now Frank, in his letter, comments on General Twining and Shaw and their roles in this sort of thing. Shaw didn't play too much role in the thing, some, but the real guy that conceived of a way to--we had no good alternatives facing us, but we had to do something. We had to make some sort of overt changes in our operation to let the public know that we didn't accept this and that we're doing something about it. Twining was the guy

that conceived of those steps, which I'll outline to you in a minute. And he was the guy that wrote the speech that Pate read to the Armed Services Committee of the House which outlined all these various things that they were going to do and was a beautifully worded thing and essentially got them off of our back. And they were on our back, and properly so. That was Merrill B. Twining that I referred to before, that was his role. He conceived this.

He suggested a type of organization which was impractical, but which had a great deal of public appeal. And this was to separate recruit training from the duties of the base commander and to establish the office of Director of Recruit Training under a major general in Headquarters Marine Corps. To put a brigadier at each one of the two recruit depots that answered to Washington for recruit training, and to leave the base commander as the house keeper. That's not a good arrangement from the military standpoint and it's no longer in effect. But that's what was done at that time, and that's what was ballyhooed. We had to do something rather dramatic and so that's what we did. And David M. Shoup, who later became Commandant of the Marine Corps, was selected as this Director of Recruit Training. And very strong brigadiers were sent to the two recruit training depots, one in Parris Island, one in San Diego. (Editors note: Greene to Parris Island, who to San Diego?)-- Buddy Snell.

Anderson: There must have been a lot of pressure on the commander of the base, though.

Simpson: Well, it relegated him to the housekeeping role. But they understood this, they didn't like it, but they understood that this had to be done we public appearance type of thing. We established what we called Recruit Training Commands within the structure of that. The base commander then was the housekeeper. He provided the facilities, the uniforms, the mess, and all that sort of things. But the guy that was directly in charge of it was this brigadier who was responsibile to the major general in Headquarters who in turn was responsible directly to the Commandant. He had carte blanche to select any officers that he wanted to. And boy, did they load them with the very finest. They had carte blanche to take anybody they wanted to regardless of what the guy was doing and they did. It was healthy from that standpoint.

Anderson: So, they got the best officers possible in the Marine Corps and had those people work directly with the recruits.

Simpson: That's exactly right, that's exactly right. They could have any officer or staff NCO they wanted to regardless of what his duty was. They brought back people from overseas, they brought people out of State Department Security guards, they took them out of Washington, they took them out of Headquarters Marine Corps, they took them out of Marine Barracks, 8th and Eye. This director, Shoup, as Director of Recruit Training, I believe he was called, had the authority from the Commandant in writing to take any officer to and include one of

the Commandant's aides. Nobody was protected, even the people on the Joint staff, that were supposed to be there on fixed tour. That's what we did. Twining is the guy that conceived all of this, he's the guy that wrote it up, he's the guy that wrote the speech that the Commandant made public.

Now, to get back to Pate. He never really recovered from this. Pate, as I said, a very dear friend of mine and one to whom I am indebted for several very useful, interesting, and challenging assignments, a very dear friend, but I have to in all candor admit, not a particularly strong man. It was surprising to me that he was made Commandant in the first place. There was a widespread belief in the Marine Corps that the "old boy net" worked on that. He was selected for the position of Commandant by General Shepherd, who had been his predecessor, Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr. Shepherd was, in turn, was quite the opposite. He was a very strong man. But Shepherd was a VMI graduate and the conventional wisdom was that he selected one of his own to be his successor. And whether that is true or not, I frankly don't know. You see, he had selected Pate to be his Chief of Staff here at Headquarters Marine Corps and it was he then that recommended Pate to be his successor and Pate was thereby appointed. I was never that close to General Shepherd, though I recognize General Shepherd as a very strong Commandant. He's one of the great elder statesman of the Marine Corps today. He's still alive, Pate's dead. But in any event, I was devoted to General Pate and determined to serve him as best I could,

and I did for two and a half years. But after the Ribbon Creek thing, he pulled back, he pulled away from me and from other advisors whose advice he had trusted. He even did it during the course of the Ribbon Creek trial. Several organizations got together and financed McKeon's defense.

Anderson: Who was McKeon?

Simpson: McKeon was the sergeant who led the troops in there.

Anderson: Oh, yes.

Simpson: He received a general court-martial and they hired this--in any event--a nationally known defense attorney. Today would be somebody on the order of E. Bennett Williams, "Racehorse" Haynes, that type of guy, a national name.

Anderson: Yes, F. Lee Bailey or someone, Kunstler.

Simpson: F. Lee Bailey, yes, that kind of guy, you see, a very flamboyant type of fellow. McKeon didn't have any money, but people like--now, I say, like ACLU, I don't know if ACLU had anything to do with it, but there were organizations that financed this sort of thing. They were determined to get McKeon acquited. The defense attorney attempted to communicate with the Commandant. And I barricaded his way. (Editor's Note: Emile Zola Berman).

Anderson: Why?

Simpson: Well, hell, I figured I knew what he was after, it was to play on Pate's sympathies and to get him to make some sort of statement that would aid the defense in this instance. Now, I was determined that the Commandant would stay above the fray, I felt that he should, by all means. This guy was from New York and he came to Washington and went to the Commandant's house on Sunday, unbeknownst to me, and told him that he had been trying to reach him and that I would not let him talk with him. Anyway, he convinced the Commandant....

Anderson: What did the Commandant have to say about that?

Simpson: A lot.

Anderson: To you?

Simpson: Yes. And to demonstrate the fact that he was going to be his own man, he agreed with this guy that he would go to Parris Island and testify as a sort of amicus curiae, and did. One of the greatest mistakes he ever made in his life--against my violent, violent protest and that of his senior advisors, his own chief of staff and others. He went down there and testified, sort of in mitigation, if you will, Terry. He was a defense witness, but what he was trying to say, "After all, McKeon was trying to the job the best he could. He made a mistake, and it had tragic consequences but let's don't be too harsh on the guy." No Commandant of the Marine Corps has ever got any business saying that in a court-martial. Now, he could

do that in mitigation, in his review of the court, he could take less than the sentance and do whatever he wanted to.

Anderson: Sure. Yes. To actually testify.

Simspon: To actually get on the trial...That's one of the worst times I ever spent. I sent one of our own attorneys, Marine Corps attorney, to Parris Island for this trial and I sat there with an open phone line to him for two hours when Pate was on the stand taking down what he actually said. It wasn't necessary, because it was all on the evening news and in The Washington Post the next day verbatim type of thing.

I think later he realized that he had made a mistake.

Anderson: What about your relationship with Pate?

Simpson: He remained my good friend until his death and I his. But, he--well, Terry, he was the only male I've ever seen go through a change of life. He was a different guy from there on. By and large, his judgement prior to that time, I thought, had been pretty sound. I think thereafter, which was from the arduousness of his tour, I think his judgement was less sound. He was less amenable to listening to advice from his advisors and more tempted to shoot from the hip. And he wasn't very good at that. And I can't enumerate them, but I think he made some mistakes that we could--by we, I mean all of us on his immediate staff and advisors, could have saved him some embarrassment had he been willing to listen to us. But he sort of

pulled away, he was more distant, harder to get to. Essentially a very sad man. I don't think his Commandancy would be rated as outstanding by any means. Perhaps average would be about as generous as could be given to him. He made no great innovations, he was more of a stand-pat, status-quo kind of guy, not a very deep thinker. Couldn't have been a nicer guy, real pleasant type of guy, but not real strong, not innovative in his thinking. Prior to that time, I think he had the benefit of good advice and the wisdom to follow it. After Ribbon Creek, he was less willing to listen and even less willing to follow. It seemed to us sometimes that he listened to what our advice on certain actions would be and then deliberately went the other way just to demonstrate his independence.

Anderson: No kidding.

Simpson: Even though, maybe his own instincts told him we were right and he was wrong, but he was going to show us that by God, he was the Commandant and he did. I think to the detriment of his tenure in office and to the detriment of his reputation. I'm not talking down on the guy, I'm simply trying to say how I perceived his Commandancy. But I think that covers Benis' question. I think we got the rest of them pretty well.

Anderson: Okay, I'd like to shift gears then and ask you some questions about advancing in the military and how one goes about advancing in the military.

As far as you know, are you the highest ranking Marine

that Texas A & M has ever produced?

Simpson: Marine?

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: Marine, yes. Now, there's one other now. John Miller is three stars now, but he was behind me. I was the first three star from A & M and he's the second.

Anderson: I wonder what class he was?

Simpson: He was the class of 1946, John was here the other day. That's his picture up there in whites; he was the reviewing officer for our first game. As a matter of fact, he's been here three times. John was born in San Angelo, graduated from San Angelo High School in June of 1942. He came to Texas A & M as a freshman in the fall of 1942, this during the war. He stayed one academic year and the following May, John at the completion of school--he finished that academic year--but at the completion of school in May, in enlisted in the Marine Corps, left school and enlisted in the Marine Corps, which was very common in those days. They went out of here in droves and did just that.

Anderson: Sure.

Simpson: Those that were further along at the time of the outbreak of the war went to OCS. John never did that. He went through World War II, the Okinawa campaign and two or three

others as an enlisted man and in 1946...See, having come in in '42, he associates himself with the class of 1946. You know, the way things are done here, you pick up the class number of whatever class you entered with regardless of whenever you get your degree. So, he went through the war and three campaigns in the war, was discharged as a staff sergeant, came back here, and took his degree in electrical engineering in 1949. Then he went into the Marine Corps as a commissioned officer, went to Officer Candidate Class and came out as an officer, and has come along and now he's a lieutenant general in Headquarters, Marine Corps.

Anderson: Good for him. His he going to eventually beat you, is he going to be a four star?

Simpson: I don't think he is, I thought for awhile he was going to, but I don't think so now. Great guy.

Anderson: Yes. Thinking back on your military career, did you leave advancement...Well, let me put it this way, did you think of yourself as ambitious?

Simpson: Certainly, absolutely! And I think you must be.

Anderson: Did you think of advancement in terms of what you did, the type of job that you accomplishment or did you leave it more to circumstances, fate, or luck, or whatever?

Simpson: Oh, I think if you leave it to fate or luck, I don't

think that's going to carry you very far.

Anderson: Okay.

Simpson: You've got to have some of both along the way, Terry, but you've got to do your very best job on whatever you've got and then hope that fate and luck will help you along somewhere. Hard work alone won't do it because you've got to have a certain amount of luck and you've got to have a certain amount of sponsorship, if you will. But I think you earn that. In other words, I think in a lot of ways you can make your own luck. Luck and fate will not get you advanced very far unless you're doing your job extraordinarily well. So that what you can do as an individual, I think, based on my own experiences, do the best possible job you can in whatever assignment you've got. Now, it doesn't hurt at all to ask for assignments that will enhance your career, meaning command assignments, primarily.

For example, my wife was with me in the Marine Corps for 35 years and she's never been out of the country. We've never had an overseas accompanied tour, and that's a source of some bitterness yet. And that's because I never asked for it. The overseas accompanied tour were very comfortable places in Paris and London and Tokyo, but they were not what I would call career enhancing. They might be very pleasant places to live and were indeed in those days, the value of the dollar being what it was. Shopping was great in the Orient, it was also great in Europe. Something very pleasant to do. I have never asked for one of

those. She never got to the Silver Vaults in London or the bazaars of the Far East.

Anderson: Well, do you think that getting ahead and rising to the top in the military is similiar or different from doing that in the business world or a university such as this, in the civilian world?

Simpson: I don't feel that I'm really qualified to answer that because I've never come up through the ranks in the business world or in the academic world. I would like to believe that they are rather similar, Terry. I think that perhaps in business, particularly in smaller businesses, other factors enter into it. For example, being the bosses son doesn't help you in the Marine Corps, it's a hindrance to you in the Marine Corps; whereas, if you're in the valley mills of a manufacturing company and your old man owns it, you've probably got a "bird nest on the ground." In the Marine Corps, my observation was that what we call "service juniors" they had a tougher road to hoe than the rest of us if their fathers' were prominent. General Shepherd had a son who retired as a colonel.

Anderson: No kidding.

Simpson: General Twining has a son who is a lieutenant colonel now. Of course, Twining's been retired a long time and this guy is very much on his own, but he's very, very bright. I don't know whether he will ever be a general officer or not.

It's harder for those guys to get along than it is for anybody else because if they get a good assignment it is always thought that it is through their father's influence.

Now, I think that in smaller business, my guess would be, that in smaller businesses family connections and that sort of thing are probably important. I don't think they are in Exxon or Mobil Oil. I think in a big corporation it would be more like the military is concerned.

The academic world, I don't know. I have only been here eight years and I still don't know how things work in the academic world. I hear the constant talk about the teaching versus research.

Anderson: Well, let's not talk about that, let's talk about the academic world as far as the bureaucracy and the administration is concerned. Do you get ahead in administration here, for example, at Texas A & M as you do in administration in the Marine Corps?

Simpson: In administration?

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: Yes, I think so. To a large extent, if you rise up. The administrative side of this university is an unusual thing. It's pretty static, Terry. People like to live in this community. People who work in the administration side of Texas A & M University for less money than they can get elsewhere because they

like to work here. But on the other hand, a real bright guy can rise to the top and I give you the case in point, Eddie Joe Davis, who graduated from here as cadet colonel, went to the Harvard Business School, came back here for a rather mundane job in Business Affairs, rose to be Assistant Vice President for Business Affairs, is now Vice President for Business Affairs at North Texas State. While he was here, he was wise enough to get his PhD and has it now. A very, very bright young man. My guess would be that when and if Howard Vestile retires as Vice President for Business Affairs, if it's not in the real immediate future, my guess would be that Eddie Joe Davis would probably come back here in that capacity. Also I think, he has the kinds of academic credentials that might, if he chose to want to do such a thing, I think he probably would be acceptable, if he wanted to do it, as the presidency of a medium size university. I would doubt that his academic credentials would commend him to a large university presidency such as this, even though he holds a PhD. He's not had classroom experience and my feeling here that this institution needs a scholar as its president, hopefully, a scholar with administrative ability. But, I think the man should be a scholar and I think that because I believe that he has to have those kinds of true academic credentials to gain the respect of the faculty. And without the respect of the faculty, I think he's dead in the water. When Earl Rudder died, I was approached by Tiger Tiege as to whether I would be interested in becoming President of Texas A & M.

Anderson: No kidding.

Simpson: And I told him that I thought any graduate that didn't aspire to be the president of his alma mater would have to have something wrong with him, but I was the wrong guy.

Anderson: Why did you tell him you were the wrong guy?

Simpson: Well, I didn't think, after--now this is not to disparage Rudder--Rudder was a man of his time. He did two things which were absolutely essential into making Texas A & M College into Texas A & M University. That was to make ROTC and the Corps voluntary. He could do that and get away with it because no one could accuse him, an authentic war hero, of being anti-military. So, he could ride that storm out. His very strength also let him ride out the hullabaloo about the admission of women. Now, those two steps were, in my judgement, absolutely essential.

Anderson: I was going to ask about those.

Simpson: Oh, hell, yes. Long overdue, should have been done long before. But, if those had not been done, I would doubt if either you or I would be here now because A & M was stagnant, wasn't going anywhere, wasn't attracting or retaining high grade faculty, wasn't a challenge to the faculty, not was it to students, except in certain disciplines, fields. So those steps were the turning point in making way for this place to be a great university. But, I felt that when Rudder died, what

the institution needed was a recognized scholar that would have the charisma to attract other scholars to the faculty of this institution and would have built into his reputation when he arrived the built-in respect of the faculty. And I very well knew that my credentials as then Major General, United States Marine Corps, Bachelor of Science, Texas A & M, I would have an uphill fight as far as any acceptance by the faculty of this institution. I had, to be real immodest about it, I had no lack of confidence in my ability to run the institution as far as running it was concerned. But, my brief tenure at Duke as Professor of Military Science had taught me that that faculty, and I suspect our own, didn't have a very high regard for the scholarship qualifications of one who had existed solely within the military. This is not to say that they looked down on the military. I think for what those that had been successful in the military, I think the faculty by and large is willing to credit those people with having a good job in their profession. But, I don't think the faculty thinks that necessarily qualifies one to be the president of an institution. And you see people like Bryan Cole over here, who is a graduate of the Military Academy, but Bryan now has gone ahead and gotten his PhD and done the rest of the things and he's gaining, or if he does not already have, the academic credentials as a scholar. So, I told--now don't misunderstand me--Tiegue was not offering me the position, he was....

Anderson: No, he was just asking you if you would be interested.

Simpson: Tiegue at that time was in his prime and they were talking to him about it, who it ought to be and Tiegue was a very close friend of mine and I was in Washington at the time and he asked me to come talk to him and I did and he asked for my resume, which I gave him, and asked me if I'd be interested in it. And I told him I was certainly interested in it, but I talked against my own interest. I told him I really did not want it because I didn't think it was the proper thing for the university and I don't think so now. I think it would have been a grave mistake to replace Dr. Miller with a military man and I understand they considered some. They didn't talk to me, but if they had, I would have told them not to take a military man.

End Tape 11, Side 2

Begin Tape 12, Side 1

Anderson: ...those questions about the recent trends at A & M and General Rudder and you stated that you were in favor of these changes and you think that they are beneficial.

Simpson: I want to say that I think the smartest move that any board of regents has made in many, many recent years was the selection of Jack Kenny Williams as Rudder's successor. Williams did a lot of things--here again, my personal opinion...

Anderson: Fine, I like your opinions.

Simpson: Here again, Williams did a lot of things that I don't think General Rudder could have done. By the same token, Rudder did some things that Williams couldn't do. See, Williams for all his charisma and all his abilities, would have been hard pressed to survive the trauma of making the Corps voluntary, and ROTC voluntary. Rudder was a very strong man, an A&M graduate, he rode that storm through, he laid the ground work, then, for what really happened. And both were men of their times. And Williams came in with a nationally accepted scholarly reputation and was a splendid administrator; the best speaker that I have ever heard since I've been on this campus. And he then, opened the way for the thing to grow as a great university because he had the national accreditation with the learned societies and that sort of thing. The faculty realized that and I would suppose that the faculty by and large accepted him as one of their own, which he was--the credentials of having been a Vice-President for Academic Affairs, and Dean, and all the rest of the kinds of things a successful university president goes through. So, he's the brightest light I've ever seen since I've been on this campus

Anderson: Okay, let's talk about the very last topic that I'd like to talk about and that's leadership.

Of course, the Marine Corps prides itself on leadeship. You've stated that a number of times and I'm sure that you must have given a lot of talks on leadership.

Simpson: Thousands.

Anderson: This is old hat for you.

Simpson: Still doing it.

Anderson: You're still doing it. Well, when you were asked about leadership or when you're asked to give a talk in front of some members of the Corps cadets, what do you tell them? How do you define leadership?

Simpson: I don't.

Anderson: Okay. Well, how do you go about your talk. Now, you're weaseling out of this, maybe.

Simpson: No, hell, no.

Anderson: Okay, okay.

Simpson: By no means, by no means.

Anderson: What do you tell them?

Simpson: I've got four or five definitions of leadership, none of which fully encompass the thing. Truman said that, "Leadership was getting a guy to do something he didn't want to do and like it." That's typical, plain talking Harry Truman.

The one that comes closest, not my own, but remember now, I am not a scholar, but I've really read widely on this subject. Leadership is the sum of those qualities of intellect, human under-

standing, and moral character that enables a person to inspire and control a group of people successfully."

Now, I have literally read hundreds of definitions of leadership and look at that tome, and that's very, very difficult to get to. That's heavy going, you can see how far I've got to. Most of the other books I've read.

I tell the people that there's no formula for leadership and that in this day and time you can buy a "how-to-do" book on anything. You can buy a how-to-do book on how to get payments from the Social Security without paying the dues. You can buy one on how to make antique Indian jewelry. You can buy one on how to be a leader. I tell them to read everything they can find in the field, but let's take it with a grain of salt because there is no formula by which you...I can a tell anybody to go out and do these things, this, ergo, will make you a successful leader. And if anyone who searches for a magic formula for leadership--is following the a will of the wisp. They will never find it.

Now, there are certain characteristics and traits that have been found to be present in successful leaders in various forms of things.

Anderson: I was going to ask you about the traits, what kind of values leaders have and what kind you had?

Simpson: Okay. Let me tell you the ones that--I've seen lots of lists. I saw one that had 37 traits on it. I thought that

guy was carrying it a little far. General Mathew Ridgway said there were three, he called them "the three Cs; character, competence, courage." I think that's a little oversimplification. But I tell these people, and I'm going to make one speech next week and two the week after, on this same subject; "The Traits of Leadership." When I say I don't want to define leadership, I want to make sure that it's not viewed in simplistic form because it's not simple, it's an art form. It's not a science, it's an art form.

Now, these traits are the ones that I feel are most common to leaders. Now, the leaders do not have them present in the same degree and in some cases, the leaderships have none--successful leaders have none. I mean, some of these traits they don't have at all. But, and these are not in order of priority but I'll give you my number one after I get through reading off these.

Anderson: Okay.

Simpson: The traits that I give them that are most common are; courage, decisiveness, knowledge, dependability, initiative, justice, concern for the individual, integrity, judgement, loyalty, bearing, endurance, enthusiasm, and tact. And then I use a lot of examples, and I take Patton. I have to give Patton on high marks on courage, decisiveness, knowledge, dependability, initiative. Justice, not quite so high; concern for the individual, higher than you would think; integrity, good; judgement,

in some cases questionable; loyalty, without question; bearing, outstanding; endurance, outstanding; enthusiasm, outstanding; but tact, Patton had no tact. But he was a successful leader. Patton with his lacquered helmet, his three stars, his ivory handled pistol, great. How would they have looked on Bradley? You see. Bradley is the old straw in the teeth sort of guy, sucking on the straw type of guy. Bradley was a successful leader, Patton was a successful leader, but they all capitalized on their own strength. They all had these, in varying degrees, tact of being one--Patton had none of, he had most of these others in various degrees.

I've carried on countless arguments...Arleigh Burke, who was Chief of Naval Operations--was a great friend of mine, very close friend of mine--we argued one night for four hours through a whole bottle of scotch about this very subject. Because of all these, I pick, if I had to take one, I'd take integrity. I feel--and in talking to people about leadership, I point out that not all leaders lead for good causes. Think whatever you will about Fidel Castro. He has lead Cuba into a Marxist revolution that we don't approve of, but no one can deny that he has charisma, and that up to date he is an effective leader. In the early 1930s, Hitler was an effective leader, but he led the Third Reich to catastrophe, of course.

In my sense of values, if I had to pick one and I hate to pick one, but I think integrity encompasses some of the rest of them, such as; moral courage, which I insist is always there.

Physical courage, strangely enough, even for a military leader, is far down the list. Only 1 in 200 people in the military are ever actually expected to demonstrate physical courage. Now, you're all expected to have it if the time comes. But to actually demonstrate it, it doesn't happen as often as most people think. You know, you don't draw your sword and go into battle. Many people go all the way through it and never have the occasion. But moral courage, you've got to have it. So, I say that integrity viewed in its broad sense embraces moral courage, dependability, judgement, loyalty, justice, honesty--possible others; evenhandedness. But integrity is a priceless word to me and I feel that a lead without integrity is a leader of very short tenure. He is probably not a leader but a dictator. And he's probably driving rather than leading. Stalin, a case in point. I don't think Stalin was a great leader. I think he was a tyrant, and he led through fear. And if you lead through fear, that's not leadership at all.

Anderson: I have one last question for you.

Simpson: Sure.

Anderson: Would you go back to that first list and tell me which one--how would you rate yourself? Would you mind doing that? How would you rate yourself on those?

Simpson: Well, I have to start with integrity, because I like to believe I've got that by a ton. Courage, I think I'm very

high in moral courage. I believe, in the instances that I've been involved in, I have adequate physical courage. But as I've said earlier on in our talks, I've been frightened to death.

Anderson: Yes.

Simpson: But I've been able to conquer that. I don't have many medals for valor, but I think placed in a situation where valor was required I could have demonstrated in sufficient quantity to get by. I don't count myself as a hero. Decisiveness, I can be quite decisive. I think my knowledge is adequate, I know I am dependable, I believe I have adequate initiative, I certainly attempt to be just. And one thing that I think has helped me considerably is that I have great concern for the individual and I preach this ad infinitum, ad nauseam to the Corps of Cadets because they used to have it, they lost it, somehow they've got to regain it--absolute concern for the individual welfare of the people as individual and not as numbers--not as serial numbers, not as social security numbers or anything else but as individuals with individual problems, hopes, fears, aspirations. And that the same motivation keys that work for one individual does not necessarily work for another. Judgement I think is adequate; loyalty, absolutely. Bearing, I think is quite adequate; endurance at the time it was required of me I had plenty of it, not as much at age 66 as I used to have. Enthusiasm, yes, I can muster that and I think I have a reasonable

amount of tact. So, yes, I have never rated myself, but I have to give my...I don't have a ten on all of those but I think I have them all in some, at least in adequate degrees.

Anderson: Well, I'm done. I've asked you every question that I know to ask you. For the present, when you see the transcript, maybe you will want to add some things and maybe you will want to delete some things. But before I leave, is there anything that you think I've missed?

Simpson: No, I have thoroughly enjoyed our time together.

Anderson: So have I.

Simpson: As I have said, you caused me by your astute questioning to remember some things that I have forgotten. I have put things in your tape recorder that I have not put into others simply because it somehow seems somewhat important that it be recorded somewhere. I have said things to you in this tape that I would not be particularly happy to have incorporated--in other words, I've told you things I wouldn't tell the press, which I thought was part of oral history that I don't mind that being in the your archives if some person wants to seek it out and discuss it further, but if I were to write a book, I would temper some of the things that I have said.

Anderson: Sure. Well, you'll see the transcript.

Simpson: No, I don't have anything to add, Terry, except to

say it's been a most pleasant experience for me. I've enjoyed every bit of it.

Anderson: The same with me.

End of Interview.

No Page 617

MARINE CORPS ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Interviewee: Lieutenant General Ormond R. Simpson, USMC

Interviewer: Mr. Benis M. Frank, Head, Oral History Section, History and Museums Division

Date and Place of Interview: 25 May 1973, Headquarters Marine Corps

Simpson: What lengths do you want me to go, Ben? I mean, I could talk forever...

Frank: Open end.

Simpson: Open end.

Frank: Open end, General. The first part deals, Sir, with your tour as CG.... Well, the whole thing is your year as CG of the 1st Division, which was a pretty interesting period of time historically. That's December '68 to December '69. We'll start at the beginning and that is when you took over the division in December of '68 from General Youngdale.

Did you receive or solicit any particular advice from him?

Simpson: Not in a specific sense. At that time, it was the SOP of CG FMFPac--and CG III MAF--that there be a five-day overlap of commanding generals. Of course, we did an awful lot of talking. I did not solicit specific advice. I did, of course, ask questions. On the amusing side, I think one of the things I remember he told me, which was prophetic, was that the biggest concern I was going to have when the rockets hit Da Nang was answering the telephone from III MAF about, "What the hell are you doing about it?" We

conjured up a scheme which, of course, we never did carry out... His prediction proved true. As soon as the rockets hit, III MAF was on the horn saying, "What are you doing about it?" Well, of course, they knew what we were doing about it because we had an SOP which they clearly understood, and we always mounted an operation...

But, we thought about having a recording made that said, "Yes, we got your call. We know the rockets are falling and we're firing artillery and we're moving in. This is a recording." type thing. Every time, they'd call us; we expected the call and we were prepared for it because we were the primary operatives in the anti-rocket business. We had the only tools that could do anything about it. I think, a very, very successful plan.

Frank: What was your plan, if I might ask?

Simpson: Well, the counterbattery was the fascinating part. You see, at one time we had as many as 178 tubes of artillery in the 1st Division. You see, the VC and the NVA who fired these rockets, as we know from many other things, were creatures of habit. We based our initial counterbattery on the supposition that they would shoot from sites that they had previously fired from. First, we had nine "dedicated" OPs, Ben. Of course, they could observe other things and did observe and record other things, but these OPs, nine of them in number, were manned by artillerymen and their specific purpose was to get a line on where the rockets were fired from.

And when rockets were fired, the OPs called and we plotted these

radials to find the intersection. We had carefully plotted the firing sites of all known rockets, ever since the division had been there, and in the fire control command center, these were all known. In the artillery CP they had a special rocket board and any tube of artillery that was not engaged in a mission was laid on one of these sites. Now, this took an awful lot of doing because it took a continual liaison between the artillery CP and my own CP as to see whether these sites were clear; whether any friendly troops were in the area. Then, of course, the tubes were laid only on a site that was clear. When the rockets came in, in the artillery CP, the cry went up of "Rockets, Rockets, Rockets!" And this was over special network that hooked in all the artillery pieces and everybody fired. And you see, they did not know where the hell the rockets were coming from at that time, but they fired on known sites that were clear. In the meantime, the OPs were calling in. You see, they could--at night particularly, and, of course, 98 percent of the rocket firings were at night--they could catch the flash of it. It was a very distinctive flash. And all they did was call in with the number of the OP and their bearing. Of course, when we got two, this was pretty good and when we got three, that was it. And, as soon as the fire support coordinator had any feel for where the firing came from, he ceased the other rocket fires and then he brought all available pieces to bear on the known site.

Frank: What time frame would you say this would be in? From the time of the sighting; they must have had a box of some sort they could crank it into.

Simpson: We frequently were on it in under 50 seconds.

Frank: Oh, that's good timing.

Simpson: And one of the stories that happened before my time there, but as a result of this counterbattery SOP, and to prove its validity of siting on previously used sites, the 8-inch fired on the first signal of "rockets, rockets, rockets." It appears that the routes must have crossed in the air because when the site was determined by the visual sightings, it was the one that the 8-inch was on. When we got on the ground there, particularly our patrols, which was another part of the SOP--patrols started moving immediately to the area--they found eight unfired rockets. And the 8-inch, with its incredible accuracy, had hit right in the midst of the firing site and all the crews were dead.

It was not at all unusual for the patrols to find unfired rockets, but it was very, very seldom that we ever got anybody. But in this particular instance, the 8-inch fired on this known site, hit right into the firing site, killed, I guess, everybody that was connected with the damned thing. And one of the things that this accomplished, you see, was that they abandoned their rocket launchers and the launcher for the 122 is a very good piece of ordnance. It has a good sight on it and I'm told by the artillerymen that if they had survey using this sight, and if they had time to adjust, that they could put the 122 in any bay down at Da Nang airfield that they wanted to. It was that accurate.

But this counterbattery fire that went out so quickly, they

had to abandon the sights and mounts. They fired the 122s from crossed bamboo sticks. They'd line up the rockets toward Da Nang and put the wires back about 50 meters. As best we could determine, everybody left the area except one guy that was left to fire it. Everybody else shoved off, the bearers and everybody else. And this one guy got in hole and pushed the button and then hauled ass and got out of there, too.

So, frequently when the counterbattery came in, there wasn't anybody there. They knew it was going to come eventually, whether it was on the first sighting or not. But, we could do it under a minute. We could have controlled artillery fire on that. And then we fired, and they kept firing in this area until the ground patrol was close enough that we had to suspend fire. This was day or night. We moved into the area day or night.

Of course, one of our problems was getting clearance from the ARVN and this was a terribly difficult kind of thing. I'll touch on that a little bit later, but...

Frank: One further question, the "rocket, rocket, rocket" business was a response to a rocket attack. What about a preventive maintenance type of thing? Constant patrolling?

Simpson: Yes. You see, what we did, we had a ring around Da Nang and, of course, Da Nang got more rockets than anybody in all of I Corps, combined, for the obvious reason that all you had to do... all he had to do--the enemy--was to get the rocket over the hill and something was going to get hurt in that sprawl of that Da Nang

complex. So, all he had to do was to boost it over there.

And one of our primary missions, of course, our primary mission, was really the defense of Da Nang and this included the rocket defense. So, we swung an arc, using the center Da Nang, and we took as the outer limits of this, the maximum range of the 122. And then we moved it back into what we had determined would be the minimum range that they would fire because their ranges were, unlike artillery, they couldn't change the propellants and powder tubes, so they did have a minimum range. And this gave us an arc really from coast to coast around Da Nang like this. This we called the "rocket belt."

And we had, in some instances, we actually had over 1,000 patrols in this area and most days we had 500 or more. These were many small patrols moving through this area. Also, we swept it twice a day from the air. We used the little LOH helicopters we borrowed from the Army. They were flown by Army warrant officers who stayed down at the artillery CP. And they covered that rocket belt at first light and again at last light in the evening, and they covered it at about 20 feet, right down on the ground. This was the area we knew they would fire from.

So, there was a combination of, in the preventive side, these patrols. Of course, we had other air observers that gave particular attention to his, but the infantry patrols were the main thing. And as you noted, as the infantry strength around Da Nang, after withdrawal, went down, the rockets came out. We never eliminated the problem, but when the 1st Division was at full strength, and

indeed when we had four infantry regiments, we didn't get very many rockets in the latter part of '69. It was very, very rare that they came in.

Frank: Was this patrolling and so on done at any bleeding down of division in other areas? I mean, this was something you had to crank in...

Simpson: No, it did of course...

Frank: Constrain.

Simpson: ...constrain the disposition of our infantry battalions because it was the infantry that had to make them, but it was in the area; the patrolling that they were doing was, of course, to combat the rocket attacks, but it was also essential to, even if the enemy hadn't had rockets, we would have done some of this patrolling because we were covering the approaches to Da Nang. This was a very proper thing for the infantry to be doing so we didn't count this as a burden to us. But, the defense of Da Nang will impact on some of these other things because it did constrain the division commander and his subordinate commanders in what they could do. The approaches to Da Nang were always of our most vital concern.

Frank: Okay, fine. Well, this, of course, grew out of the original question about advice or recommendations from General Youngdale and that was your primary concern, the maintenance of the Rocket Belt, security of the Rocket Belt.

General Buse was now CG of FMFPac, which meant that you had a different type of individual out there than, say, General Krulak was. And, I have a feeling, knowing General Buse and knowing General Krulak, that General Buse was not as tight, was not as concerned, played it a lot looser than General Krulak as far as his Marines and Vietnam were concerned. Were you briefed at FMFPac when you went out?

Simpson: Yes.

Frank: Did General Buse say any such thing to the effect that, if you have any problem call me on the phone and keep me informed or keep me going or was there none of the specat or back-channel business with him?

Simpson: Not at all, not at all. And I had no communication with him direct. I dealt entirely through III MAF and my only communications with General Buse were on his periodic visits. And he came out, I would reckon, about every six weeks. Now, that was not hard and fast, but he came with that frequency. I'm certain that during the year I was there that he must have been out there at least eight times.

And during the time he would spend as much as a day with me. In my conferences with him going out, he had no specific guidance. He said, "You've got a tough job." He mentioned the rockets. He mentioned the booby-traps. He offered no solutions but he mentioned those. And those two things, in response to your second question: the greatest areas of concern to me as CG of the division during this

period, I would have to say if I were to select two, it would be that.

The rockets, in the sense of the damage that the rockets could do to the Da Nang complex, now not to the division as such, because the division was deployed and other than my own CP and some of the other supporting CPs, all of which were tucked back on the inside of the mountain, we didn't have casualties from rockets in the division very much, except at An Hoa. But, the big logistical complex, the III MAF headquarters, the ARVN ammunition dump which they eventually hit, as you know, and the damned thing blew. This meant that I had to be concerned with rockets and had to, even though I was not--my own division was not--being seriously hurt by the rockets, the complex was and that's where our task stood.

But, along with this, and one that was really of great personal concern to me was the mine and booby-trap problem. Those two I have to put right at the top of my areas of concern. Of course, there were a lot of other concerns, but those would have to be the areas of...

Frank: I have a question later, as you recall, on mining and booby-traps.

Simpson: Yes, I do want to get into that.

Frank: I think you've answered the second question. The constant expectancy that there would be a rocket attack, did this keep them nervous and jumpy, keep the troops nervous and jumpy or was it something you learn to live with?

Simpson: You learn to live with it but it kept III MAF jumpy as hell, I can you that. The rocket attacks were, and this stand to reason, were much more likely in the dark of the moon. This is because the NVA or VC could move without visual detection at night. On the night when there was a full moon and a clear sky, I could almost bet, I would make a bet 100 to 1 there'd be no rockets.

Even during the time when there were lots of rockets coming in, we didn't have them in the full moon, on clear nights. But, with either a dark of the moon or a drizzly, rainy, murky night, such as during the monsoon, the chances were pretty good because they could move up and dig up the rockets and mount them on sticks and let them fly. People used to talk about that, the watch officers in the CP and that sort of thing, used to watch the phases of the moon and they could almost predict rocket attacks. And, by the same token, on bright nights you could be fairly certain that they weren't going to come. They usually didn't.

Frank: I think General Nickerson had III MAF at this time?

Simpson: Right.

Frank: For the whole period of time you had...

Simpson: No. General Cushman was there initially. See, General Cushman was III MAF when I became the division commander and the, in the following March, he came home and General Nickerson relieved him. And General Nickerson was there at the time that I left. His tenure went on beyond my time.

Frank: Our next question, again, may have been partially answered, and this is: In what ways were 1st Division problems and operations--well, we didn't deal with operational end--different from those of the 3d Division? I think there was a difference there.

Simpson: Yes, yes. And a very understandable one. The 1st Division was anchored on Da Nang and, of course, Da Nang being the second largest city and a huge logistical complex, and a port and supplies and everthing else was there. The 1st Division had as its primary purpose the defense of Da Nang. Then, also, in Quang Nam, we had 1.8 million people.

Now, the 3d Division had an entirely different situation. That had a--particularly, just south of the DMZ, as you know--a wide open area, not many civilians, not many concentrations. "North of the Pass," of course, was the Citadel at Hue, a great national shrine. It had to be protected. But in terms of the war, Hue, though symbolically perhaps greater than Da Nang, in terms of its logistical aim, it didn't compare. I mean, the whole I Corps area would have dried up had Da Nang been destroyed.

That, and the enormous number of civilians that we had in our area, not only in Da Nang but also in the coastal strip line and back down the valley towards An Hoa and then later when we got down south and took over the area from the Army down there, again, a huge number of civilians, many refugees, all made for a different kind of problem. The 3d Division had, I think, more freedom of movement.

They had a lot of fire areas that they could shoot into at any

time if they knew were--unpopulated or if they were populated--that the population was all enemy. They had lots and lots of areas like that, we didn't have any, except back into the mountains. Base Area 112 was that kind of an area, but it was tough to get to. I found the operations to be significantly different but dictated by the mission and the terrain. Another thing that I know was a great advantage to the 3d Division and one of which I was very envious was the very fine NVA division that was there, the 1st Division.

Frank: ARVN or NVA?

Simpson: ARVN Division. I didn't mean NVA, I meant the ARVN Division. It was a crackerjack outfit, as you know, and General Giai was the commander of it.

Frank: G-I-A-I, I believe?

Simpson: Yes. He's now the corps commander, you know. He relieved Lam.

In Quang Nam, one of my great problems was out coordination and cooperation with the ARVN because, you see, while there was a division up north, an ARVN division there and a second ARVN division south of us, there was no divisional organization for the ARVN in Quang Nam. There was the 51st Special Regiment and it was a good organization, but there was no effective intervening link between Lam and his corps staff and this separate regiment. They did organize an oufit called the Quang Dah Special Zone, which was supposed to be an intermediate organization, but it was never

effective during my time. This gave me some problems and touches on another one of your questions about the pacification efforts.

But, to address your question specifically, the 1st Division and the 3d Division had different missions, different terrain, and different circumstances as they relate to the ARVN and to the number of civilians that they had to take care of.... Refugees, I'd almost two million in Quang Nam. And I don't know the numbers that were up north, but I know they were only a small fraction of that number. So, we really had two different tasks.

Frank: And I think 3d Division had much the better of it.

Simpson: Well, they had a much more satisfying thing to do. They could get out and roll and go places, and they did a fine job. They did a great job.

Frank: We now get to the mine and booby-trap problem in the 1st Division TAOR and you have commented in part, but I think we can go a little bit fuller on that.

Simpson: Yes, I'd like to. And the question give me was: Did you come up with any satisfactory means of combatting it and the answer is, no. We never solved it. And on nothing in the year that I was in Vietnam did we work harder on. We did improve, we got better in detecting and.... One of the interesting things, well, I won't get to that first. Let me just tell you the problem.

The VC and the NVA were incredibly ingenious in making mines

and booby-traps. Initially they had started out with very crude instruments. Before I left the States to go out there, word that I had in the Vietnam training exercises was that they'd have wooden boxes and this sort of thing. Well, they later refined this, to our disadvantage. And, when the problem became most acute for me was when they were taking our own ordnance, which they had stolen, and rigging it.

They often had daisy chains of 81 millimeter shells, in some cases 155 shells, so when a guy would trip a wire--see, if a patrol came through the area and htis man tripped it, there may be as many as six 155 shells blow up. Some in trees, but mostly in tall grass. Where they got it, I don't know, but they even had mono-filament fishing line for trip wires. Now, if you know mono-filament line, it's hard as hell to see when you just lay it across your hand. When you stretch it across a jungle path, it's impossible!

There was none of the business that I had heard about, you know, about them booby-trapping vines and that sort of thing. They didn't have to do it that way. They could capture the ammunition from dumps; steal it. We often thought they got a lot of it from the ARVN. I don't think they got very much from us, but they seemed to have quite a supply of munitions, mortar shells, artillery shells, and they were ingenious in rigging these things. Of course, they were terribly lethal. There's no real defense for it. And the aggravating thing, then, about it is, of course, is to take losses when the enemy takes none. If you get in a fire fight with the enemy and you have ten casualties and inflict 200, the ten hurt you

can, in one way of saying, you can say, "Well, we won this battle."

The casualties in the mine and booby-trap warfare were alwasy X to O because the enemy was not around. We suffered casualties, he suffered none at all. We did know, from time to time, when some ofthem ran into their own mines and booby-traps which they had set for us and that gave us a great deal of satisfaction, of course. But, I worried about this problem night and day.

You would think that a new man in Vietnam was more likely to trigger a bobby-trap than an old hand. Curiously, this is not so. I remember a Gunnery Sergeant Laveque, who had been a drill instructor when I was CG at Parris Island. He hit a booby-trap on his last patrol. He'd been out there 360 days and went on the last patrol and he hit one and lost the sight in both eyes. I just don't know. The newcomers were, of course, terrified. They were also very cautious. The old hands never really got overconfident. Of course, we tried many ways, but never really solved the problem.

We offered a bounty, you know, to anyone that would turn in ammunition. And I'm sure we bought some shells many times. But this, I think was useful. Any munitions that we could keep away from them, was something that was not going to come back at us as a booby-trap. They used to set these things in chains and sometimes it would happen that several booby-traps would be triggered. I can remember one incident in which this happened. One booby-trap was triggered, injuring one man. Two other men ran to him, a very natural thing to do. "My buddy's down, he's hurt." They triggered another booby-trap, wounding both of them. The radio operator

called for a medevac helicopter. The helicopter landed. As they were carrying the three men to the helicopter, they triggered another booby-trap. In that single incident, we lost two dead, and five seriously wounded.

One of the things that we did that was constructive was developed in the 1st Marines when that regiment was commanded by now Brigadier General Robertson, who's upstairs in Fiscal. He and his people worked out ans SOP for what you do when the booby-trap goes off. They tried it and were successful in limiting casualties from the booby-trap. What it did essentially was that, the first thing you do is "freeze." Everybody "freeze" right where you are. The hardest thing to teach the people was not to go to the aid of the wounded man. But all it was was a simple device, first you freeze, and then the patrol attempts to back out of the area. Having done this, and when they get to where they think they're safely out of the area, one man goes back to get the wounded man, or two men. But, at least you try to protect the main body of the patrol.

This is essentially what Robby did. We then wrote a division SOP and sent teams around to teach it. This did diminish the casualties. But I'm sorry to say, we never solved the problem and I don't know now. But we did use dogs with some effectiveness. Curiously enough, they could be trained to spot these things or smell them. I guess both. But they weren't infallible. It did help.

Frank: You said that by the time you got there, of course, they

were doing a lot more refined things; so the days of the "tiger traps" and "punji sticks" were gone?

Simpson: Just about gone.

Frank: The more exotic type thing...

Simpson: Yes, the kind that you used to put in there that would swing down from the trees and...

Frank: Looked great on TV news, but...

Simpson: They looked fine, but they were all gone. I don't believe that in Quang Nam, during the year that I was division commander, I saw any new "punji sticks." The ones that I saw in areas that we uncovered and over-ran had obviously been in place a long time. They weren't doing that. That was sort of old hat by that time and not realy as effective as.... And you know, we'd worry about everybody having to have steel plates in their shoes. We didn't have any. I had a few injuries from "punji sticks" but, upon investigation, they were ones that had been in the ground for a long, long time and the enemy was not setting new ones when I was there.

But this was an area that remains unresolved. I was in constant informal communication with General Metzger who was here in R&D and he was stirring the hell out of the R&D committee, trying to find some sort of an answer to it, but our part in the war was over and that remains an unsolved thing. I hope to hell we never get involved with another enemy that tries this in that

kind of thing. We didn't solve it, we were able to reduce our casualties, but those kinds of things hurt me more than anything else.

I think it is clear that when you face an enemy such as we did in Vietnam, you will never solve the mine and booby-trap problem until you win the war. To solve it in any given circumstance, it is necessary to "sanitize" the area--that is, clear out all the NVA, the VC and all of their sympathizers. Not until this is done can you really control the booby-trap problem. This is the ultimate solution, but we were able to do it in only a few areas.

And, of course, the wounds from the booby-traps were painful and often crippling. We had many amputees; lower extremities type of thing. For example, we would occasionally hit one of the "bouncing Betties," but these were not frequent. And, of course, with the "bouncing Betties" you got head wounds and that sort of thing. But, most of them were wounds of the lower extremities and very often resulted in amputation. We had a very, very fine arterial surgeon assigned to us. Other surgeons told me that day after day and night after night, by his skill as an arterial surgeon, he was saving legs and arms that would have been amputated in the Korean War; simply by the skill and the development of the science of arterial surgery.

Frank: Fascinating. Of course, the nature of the mines hitting the lower extremities brings up the point that one of the greatest fears a man in combat has is castration.

Simpson: That's right.

Frank: And, of course, this must have really been a morale problem as well.

Simpson: That's right. And you see, the flak jackets were not much help in the mine business because it hit low where the flak jackets didn't...

Frank: Wasn't there a diaper-like thing developed?

Simspon Yes, there was. They developed that and we had it. But, God! It was...

Frank: Inhibiting thing.

Simpson: Very awkward thing to wear. And, for long marches and heavy climbing, it was almost impossible.

The flak jacket we learned to live with and the people had confidence in it. Almost no one who went through Vietnam, particularly in the infantry, but who saw or maybe in some cases had his own life saved by a flak jacket. I didn't have a big problem in getting people to wear the flak jactet. They wore it where it was indicated and where it was needed. Sometimes they'd take it off to work, but they would wear the jacket and it did a fine job. It was a good jacket.

Frank: Our next question here, General, is how did you view the SLF and the effectiveness of its operations?

River mouth may have been a different story, I don't know.

Frank: Do you see any higher political purpose for the existence of the SLF then?

Simpson: Sure, sure. And I think that probably it overrides.... I speak as the CG of the 1st Mar Div; I would have preferred to have that SLF ashore, assigned to me, integrated into the 1st Marine DIvision. But, as a Marine general officer, I do not quarrel with the decision to keep the SLF. They did keep alive the idea of the threat of amphibious assault. They did keep up some of the techniques; they did employ them...

So, I don't quarrel with the idea, Ben. I think that probably from the standpoint of overall Marine policy, it was a good idea. Had I been CG FMFPac, I probably would have done the same thing that General Krulak did and General Buse did. So, my remark would have to be taken in the context of my parochial interest in the 1st Division.

Frank: How would you view or assess the effectiveness of the Korean Marines in the Vietnam environment?

Simpson: The Korean Marines.... We had the 1st Brigade in our area. I saw a lot of the Korean Marines. Their brigade area constituted an enclave. The water was there, and our division was all around them. They had an immaculate camp. They had an honor guard that was incredible. They had fine, well-trained troops. Great physical condition. But, they were under restraints, the

nature of which I do not know, but can only suppose. But, it was clear to me.... Of course, the brigade commander never talked about it. He answered directly to III MAF, not to me and that's understandable. But, it was pretty clear to me that he was under very rigid direction from his own higher authority...

Frank: The Korean Army in Saigon?

Simpson: ...not to take any casualties. And, as a consequence, they tended to sit in this perimeter that they had. It was extremely difficult for me to persuade them to move out of there, terribly frustrating because they had three good battalions. One time I did entice them out and they joined in the last big operation that I had anything to do with--the one called Pipestone Canyon, which was as sweep of Go Noi Island--and they came out on that occasion and they did well.

Their demands for support, when they came out, were prohibitive--how many tanks they'd have to have and this sort of thing. They could have been far more effective than they were, but here again, we get into the politics of it; and I can only assume that the brigade commander felt that his tenure or his future depended on not taking casualties and he didn't take very many. Now, nobody ran through his area, but.... My God! He had 35 hundred or so odd in there and I could have covered that area with an infantry battalion.

So, they had the potential of being very effective, but that brigade was not particularly effective from my standpoint. They,

apparently, hated the South Vietnamese and refused to.... They had very little communication with them and refused to cooperate with the--the 51st Regiment, for example. Apparently, the Koreans and the South Vietamese distrusted each other wholeheartedly. The province capital Hoi An was just outside the Korean perimeter, but the province chief did not rely on the Koreans. You would have to say this was very illogical. I couldn't understand as to why the protection of the capital of the province of Quang Nam ws not a responsibility of the Korean brigade, since they were right next door.

Youngdale said he'd tried to get that changed, but he couldn't. I tried to get it again, and I found out that the province chief wouldn't hold still for it because he did not believe when chips were down, that the Koreans would come out of their little fortress to help them. So, we had as a part of our contingency plans, a "Fly-away" company. If the capital were attacked, we were going to helicopter a U.S. Marine infantry company in there to aid in the RFs and the PFs in the defense of that little capital, though it was only a thousand meters from the Korean Marines' CP.

Frank: Were they of any use, then, at all?

Simpson: Not much, not much.

Frank: So, it appears as though our government, more or less, dragooned the Seoul government to give a token representation and Seoul said, "Yes," but within these limits.

Simpson: ...and then, they extracted an enormous price for them.

Frank: I guess we were supporting them financially, as well.

Simpson: Yes. I don't know what the dollar thing was, but these guys were.... Gosh, they were wonderfully set up over there, and we had the last of the armored amphibs we had over there with, of course, U.S. Marine crews.... I think I had 78 U.S. Marines that were assigned to do various things. I have a high regard for the Koreans, based on my experience in Korea, and for the Korean Marine Corps. I've been on operations with them before--training operations--and have seen them do a very fine job.

And it is, I think, regrettable that they weren't allowed--I think they would have liked to, the individuals that were there, both the officers that I knew and saw, some of which I had known before, some of whom I taught in the Schools in Quantico--I htink they would have liked to have fought an entirely different war, but we never talked about it because it was pretty apparent to me that they were under wraps and just couldn't do it.

We could have employed them, as a brigade, very effectively, very effectively. And they would have done well because when they came out in the Pipestone Canyon, they went with us to Go Noi--boy, that was great! They did well. That time, of course, we gave them a secor of their own and they really moved, and they did a fine job. This is only indicative of what they could do. I never really.... I reflected on it later and I wondered why the hell they joined in that thing because they never would join us in other

mutual endeavors.

So, to summarize, I think the Korean brigade was a good fighting outfit. I think it could have been very, very effective. It could have been far more effective than it was had it not been under some sort of political wraps.

Frank: There were ROK Army troops in Vietnam also, were there not?

Simpson: Yes, yes.

Frank: And they probably were under the same constraints.

Simpson: As far as I know, this is true. They had a division well to the south of us. I never saw them. They called them the Tiger Division, or some damned thing. I think they did essentially the same thing. They took a piece of real estate and said, "We'll sit on that." And they sat on it real well. But, they did move out of it.

Frank: When you assumed command of the division, General, did you see any requirement for immediate changes in the tactical posture of the division?

Simpson: Well, when I assumed command, there was a major operation under way--Task Force Yankee--which was headed by Brigadier General Dwyer, who was the ADC of the 1st Division. He had his CP in An Hoa and he had four battalions, two regimental headquarters, four battalions--two of which came from the 3d Division--the 3d

Marines, Colonel Sparks, who was killed in this particular operation, shot down.... And they went into Base Area 112. So, my immediate task was to continue this operationon on to its conclusion, which we did.

I took command in December; we finished this operation and came out of Base Area 112 in early February. This was an operation that, in some measure, resembled the operations up north in that it was fought from fire bases and jungles back deep in the mountains. It was a very expensive operation logistically. So, when this operation was concluded and the 3d Marines, the headquarters and the two battalions, returned north, we resumed what had been considered the conventional posture of the division. And then I did--as I studied this, I became concerned. I had become concerned before this.

We had, in the division, what I called a "blue line" syndrome and--blue meaning only our own boundaries--every battalion had an area and every battalion was committed. There was no division reserve other than, you know, the catch-all--the cooks, bakers, and clerks--but no tactical units. Nor did the regiments have a reserve. Each regiment had a regimental area and this was divided into three battalion areas. And so, it was. The whole damned thing was covered by this thing. This is all right for small unit patrolling, but it didn't give much flexibility.

So, my concern then, was to erase the syndrome. Now, the "blue line" syndrome was that a battalion would begin to think that their piece of ground was the whole war as far as they were concerned.

If the enemy was in that area, they were engaged, but if he was in somebody else's area, that wasn't any of their business. So, we started working on this type of thinking.

Once again, we used the 1st Marines as guinea pig. The first move was to take a regimental area and divide it into two parts. This, then, immediately freed one battalion and that battalion was available to the regimental commander for operation in his area. But, I put a string on it in that he couldn't commit that battalion without my knowledge. And I also was then free to move this battalion from one regimental area to another. And then we did it with all the regiments. And eventually, we became considerably more fluid and the boundaries didn't make that much difference. And be began to move much more.

Frank: Were the TAORs assigned to the regiments as such that dividing them in two instead of three would not impose that much greater a hardship on the regiment? In other words, the battalions had maybe, I would assume, had two small TAORs...

Simpson: Yes, yes. And, of course, they all said.... Their initial reaction was, "My God, you know, too much area..." And so forth and so on. But, after we started doing this, then the battalion commanders and their company commanders began to realize it was a great advantage to them because while they were patrolling, on a day to day basis, they were patrolling in a larger area.

If they got in trouble, there was somebody free to come help them, where before, when they got into trouble, there wasn't anybody

to come help them because everybody else had their own area of responsibility. This also allowed us to bring the battalion back--not back, but bring them in, let's say, to An Hoa, the regimental headquarters. We did bring them here for a day or two of refitting and that type of thing.

And, of course, there was a continual shift of the battalions. We kept moving them around, in other words. Nobody sat there indefinitely. He may stay there for six weeks and then somebody else would take over. For example, in the 1st Marines' area, there was down by the beach just north of the Koreans an area that was perhaps the worst booby-trap area that we had. We had to move those guys at least every month--every six weeks at the most.

Frank: Was there any relation to, when you changed this tactical structure--the deployment--any proportionate relationship to the number of casualties from booby-traps and mines? Did you notice any changes?

Simpson: Well, it had begun to go down, I think, by our concentration on it. I don't know whether.... I don't believe there was any direct relationship, Ben, between those things. I think some of the measures that we had been working on were beginning to take effect and perhaps the number did go down. And it went down at about the time we were making this change, but I don't think that had any direct bearing.

Frank: My thinking is, that if the battalions had enough land to take care of, their responsibilities were such that they could

handle it offhand, they were getting kind of bored and...

Simpson: Yes, and I think, as I reflect on it now, there may have been a relationship because--and I think this is what you're touching on--the battalion has an area of operation, its own TAOR, and it stays there a long time, they become rather complacent. But, the big thing is that, all too often, their patrols begin to fall into a pattern. And, this guy says, "God, I've made this patrol a hundred times, I know what we do. We go to the lone pine tree and turn left." (You know, and so forth...) Well, this is fatal, of course, because then the enemy knows you. But, a new guy doesn't know the routine, so he may not go to the lone pine tree, he goes somewhere else. Patrol routes were different, and this, of course, makes it more difficult for the enemy to line up the mines and booby-traps in the area that he knows you're going to hit. There could be a relationship to it.

Frank: The second part of this question is: What were your immediate concerns? And I think we've discussed that.

Simpson: But, of course, I will add to that (thinking of the time, and it does relate to the question down here, number 11). My immediate concern when I got there was to terminate Task Force Yankee. First, in relation to the operation in Base Area 112, was to determine its effectiveness. We'd gone to Base Area 112 with the idea that we would find sizable enemy (NVA) base camps. This, of course, being the name of the game, why we called it Base Area 112. From that standpoint we didn't succeed; we didn't find

evidence of major installations. We thought we could, but we did not. So, my immediate concern was to bring this to a reasonable termination; to accomplish what the operation was designed to do if we could, but if not, then get out of there because we were heavily extended at that time, and were putting an enormous drain on our logistic systems, helicopters and LSAs and all that sort of thing. But, when we got out, then, of course, we had to face the preparations for Tet 1969. Tet '68 was a real tough one. So, the first thing to do was to get ready for that type of an operation. That was my immediate concern, to prevent a repetition of Tet '68.

Frank: How much of a role did visual reconnaissance play in your intelligence collection effort overall?

Simpson: Quite a lot, quite a lot. The recon patrols that we inserted were extremely effective; far better than I had had any thought that they would be.

Frank: Sparrow Hawk?

Simpson: Sparrow Hawks, the aerial observation, the fixed OPs that we had did a great deal. Visual observation was most significant to us; was most effective. We had good observers; people learned. I was well pleased with what we had got in terms of reconnaissance in our intelligence collection from visual observation; quite well pleased with it.

Frank: A lot of helicopter...

Simpson: Yes.

Frank: Were you satisfied that you were getting valid up-to-date intelligence from internal as well as external sources?

Simpson: Well, you're never satisfied, Ben. You always want more, but I think we had good intelligence; the best that I've seen in the three wars that I'd attended. It is, and I, for obvious reasons, wouldn't dwell on it on this tape, but I can tell you that it's the only time that I've seen special intelligence put to very practical use, and we did use it efficiently and effectively.

Frank: You were able to get the intelligence and use it (to use General Nickerson's term) "while it was still fragile?"

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

Frank: Were you able to exploit contacts, native contacts you had within the division TAOR? Were they cooperative?

Simpson: Yes, that would sort of come and go. In general, I would say, they were cooperative. Of course, we had enemy spies in or area and we knew it. We did try to run down every one of them. And I think if you had a.... If you make something on 20 percent of them, you're doing pretty well. And that's the most that we'd ever get, batting average of one out of five would turn out to be suspicious in terms of reacting to reports from native informers.

Frank: Were you satisfied that the intelligence that you got from higher headquarters was as valid as you own, III MAF, or from Saigon?

Simpson: III MAF, yes. It was not as extensive as our own. In general, it was pretty good. Most of it, the tactical intelligence that we gained, was really our own plus, as I say, the radio battalion which was a III MAF organization, but was feeding directly to us. You see, from the radio battalion it was, in this instance, done in a fashion where the information from the radio battalion did not have to go to III MAF and back to me. It went direct to the regimental commander in his area and he could then act on it immediately and did. And sometimes, reacted to it before it would even get back to me, which was all right.

I mean, if it was that kind of a thing where he needed to move right then, he would move and tell me what he was doing and then, by back-channels, I was able to find out what it was he was reacting to. I thought we had pretty good information considering the kind of enemy we had. It was pretty damned difficult. Oh, we chased a lot of antennas, there's no question about that. Chased them all up and down the valley.

Frank: I was thinking primarily--General Krulak had made this criticism--that there was such a plethora of intelligence sources, intelligence agencies, IBM readouts and the whole business that the division commanders were almost inundated with this mass of intelligence information and none of it was really analyzed or sorted out.

Simpson: That's a valid criticism, Ben, and what I did, which I think most division commanders did, I simply had to trust my G-2

section to sort it out. I personally didn't get involved in the sorting. I had to assume that they would bring to my attention those things that they thought were significant for me to know, and I think they did. But, Christ, they did have reams of it, loads of it; printouts and all sorts of things.

End of Tape 1, Side 1

Begin Side 2, Tape 1

Frank: The next one, you may recognize the source, or who asked this question. Some people have criticized the 1st Division CP at Da Nang as leading to "bunkeritis" and that the duplication of this kind of CP at the regimental and battalion level caused the 1st Division to become a fortress division in its thinking and operations. Would you please comment on this?

Simpson: Oh, yes. I've heard that many times. I don't think that that massive CP bunker that they built there necessarily did this. I think, really, Ben, it goes back to what I'd indicated before, the fact that the 1st Division was anchored at Da Nang; as its primary purpose, the defense of Da Nang. The division headquarters bunker I found to be pretty effective. It was useful for our purposes, and, of course, the regiments didn't have anything near as elaborate nor did they need anything as elaborate. An Hoa was something else again.

At one time, we had four million sandbags in An Hoa--all filled. But it was necessary because, you see, where it was situated

in the valley, mountains behind belonged to the enemy and they fired rockets from there. That was an area where they frequently fired in daylight. Matter of fact, it was interesting.... A setup for me in the 1st Division, not true in the 3d Division because 3d Division commander used Army helicopters, but I used a Huey "Slick" and a chase plane CH-46, and I did this for quite some time without realizing that this was a peculiar configuration. But, the enemy spotted this and on three different occasions when I went to An Hoa, rockets landed, one occasion, simultaneously with me, and on the other two occasions, they came in within ten minutes after we landed.

I became a very unpopular visitor. I would land and jump out of the helicopter and literally run for the bunker because you could almost depend on the rockets coming.

It became apparent that the enemy had spotted this peculiar flight because, you see, most other logistical flights, for example, would be two 46s, a minimum. We always tried to move them in twos, at least, or more. But this configuration of a "Slick" and a chase plane CH-46 seemed to be peculiar to me as division commander. I was the only guy that moved with that kind of configuration, and apparently, they must have figured out that when I came, that here was a big honcho and they fired the rockets. So, and this was proved by the fact that I changed (I kept this for my other visits other than An Hoa), but when I went to An Hoa, I went in two 46s and no rockets came in. This could have been anything, a milk run, a logistic run, even an R&R run.

But, I don't think the 1st Division was.... I don't think it's valid criticism which I heard at the time, and ever since that time, that we were guilty of "bunkeritis."

Frank: Who was making it, by the way?

Simpson: Well, people that were not in the 1st Division thought we should be employing more mobile tactics, should be moving more. Well, as I pointed out to you, this goes back to the terrain that we operated, our mission of the defense of Da Nang, and the enormous number of civilians we had. I think there is some valid criticism. I think we had gotten into the habit of thinking in terms of our own little TAORs. And this is what I think we effectively broke up when we started dividing them differently and making sure that each regiment had a "swing" battalion, as we call it. And this turned out to be quite effective because we could then move that battalion, not only within the regimental area, but frequently did move it to other regimental areas.

A good example was down in the Arizona area where this was always great hunting in there because the enemy insisted in coming back to that area. When we would start a sweep there, then we could bring a battalion down from either 1st or 7th and turn it over to 5th Regiment commander. He could then have a very effective operation. He could then hold with one battalion and maneuver three.

He did this in the Arizona area and the one particular operation that he ran was almost a textbook solution. We gave them one

battalion from the 7th Marines. He held his vital areas with one of this own battalions. He maneuvered the three and he did it very, very well indeed. He ended up getting two NVA battalions pinned against the river. We moved the 7th Marines from the north down to keep them from crossing. And this was really one of the most exciting times that I've ever seen when he moved these people up in here and the river was here. We put the 7th Marines on the north. It was a real turkey shoot. And General Nickerson and I stood together on an OP north of the river and watched the close air support.

This was the biggest close air support show that I've ever seen in Vietnam. We had attack aircraft stacked up to 30 thousand feet waiting to come in. All pilots in the area were on the radio. It seemed that everybody in Vietnam was trying to get into the act; even Air Force planes were coming up, trying to get into the thing. We really put one of the NVA regiments out of business for about six months with that operation.

So, in essence, I think the division did, from time to time, become sort of fortress oriented because of their basic mission, but this was a temporary thing and they shook out of it and when the opportunity came to move, they did move, as the example of the seven battalions we put into Pipestone Canyon. This was big for us. One Korean, two ARVN and four of our own, and boy, we just obliterated all the lines when we started on that operation. We had Colonel Jimmy Ord then as the G-3 of the division.

Jimmy had as much tactical imagination as any Marine officer

I've ever seen. He worked out the plan for Pipestone Canyon. It was an ingenious one in the sense that we sent the ARVN battalions down through the populated area and we came down from the north to the riverline with Go Noi Island here. And then, rather that jump the river, as the enemy expected us to do, what Jim had conceived of, and what we did, was to brng the Koreans in from this side and then we leap-frogged two U.S. battalions and we took Go Noi from the south rather than from the north. And then went in with an armored column.

We had a tremendously ambitious idea that touches on the pacification thing that I was sorry never came off. I think it would have been a time thing if we could have done it. The idea was to build a dam or a dike, around Go Noi Island, and then to turn it into rice cultivating with the miracle rice, the 1R-8 rice. You see, Go Noi was normally flooded during the monsoon season and the idea was, with the dike, you could control this, but you always had the water from the two rivers that went around the side. You could have grown three crops of rice a year. We could have supported all of Quang Nam.

This was our grand scheme, but it never came into being. This was a reason we wanted to clear Go Noi Island. Also, the fact that we knew it was a staging point. We did clear it; there wasn't anything left. And we went in there with our own plows and actually plowed the whole damned thing up; every square foot of it.

Frank: Just leveled it.

actual rehearsals as such. Of course, the air people were in with us because it involved a very heavy helicopter lift and a lot of close air support. We did have the one air.... No, it wasn't in that one. No, we didn't have any problems in the air lift in that one. It was in a smaller operation we had a problem with the helicopters because of the sand ingestion problem, sand ingestion. But, it didn't happen in Pipestone Canyon.

You see, there weren't enough helicopters in III MAF for both the 1st Division and the 3d Division to simultaneously run big operations. So, III MAF had to coordinate that. For example, when the 3d Division went into Dewey Canyon, then they had the preponderence of helicopter effort, and should have had because they had a big show going. Same thing with us when we did Pipestone Canyon. They had to take the small end of the availability of helicopters because there weren't enough for both of us to operate as we would like to have done so.

Frank: On the two-month's planning phase, was there any fear of compromise?

Simpson: No, because we didn't bring the ARVN nor the Koreans into it until about ten days before, at the most--maybe less than that. We based our plan on the assumption that they would be available and I had secured General Nickerson's concurrence in both instances and his concurrence that I could make a plan based on this sort of thing. We had another plan which, if they didn't go, if for some reason the--particularly the Koreans--if they didn't go, we had

another way to do it. Not as well, but we could do it. In all of our combined operations, we were very, very careful not to bring the ARVN into it until the last minute. Whenever we brought them into it ahead of time, there was always some compromise.

Frank: Oh?

Simpson: Yes. Both with the Rangers and the 51st.

Frank: I think on this next question, you have answered it partially earlier, but I think perhaps you may want to go into it a little further, General. And that is: How do you explain the success of the 1st Division in blunting the Tet '69 attack against Da Nang?

Simpson: Well, of course, we worked very hard at it. And one thing we did, I recall on thinking this over (I read the question again this morning), one of the things we did in anticipation of this, and it turned out to be very profitable, we made the assumption that there would be sapper attacks against all the CPs and so there was a concentrated effort to drill, in terms of repelling a sapper attack, the reaction to it. And the Division Headquarters Battalion and the Headquarters Commandant did an awful lot of work on training his reaction platoons and anticipating sapper attacks across the ridge, right down on top of the division CP. It turned out he was exactly right. That's where they came from. And the ridge was defended by "cooks, bakers, and candlestick makers" and automobile mechanics and clerks and the rest of them, and they did a real

heroic job. Also, five other CPs were hit and hit very hard.

But again, their reaction planning for attacks against the CP which we had everybody down to the battalion level do, paid off. Now, here's where we did do a lot of rehearsing, and this paid us great dividends because they did hit hard at the CPs, including the division CP. They fired an enormous number of rockets. Of course, we had, in building this up, we had intensified all of our efforts.

We had a maximum number of patrols out when the thing did hit, infantry patrols. We had checked all of our signals as far as the counterbattery firing at the rockets were concerned. We made sure that all the artillery was--all of their ammunition stocks were up to maximum. We anticipated this attack; we knew it was going to come and we knew about when and we had a pretty good idea as to how. And it came off just about the way we thought it would.

Frank: That answers the second parto of this question: Preparations, you made to forestall a repeat of the '68 attacks onslaught.

Simpson: The major thing was the preparations for the sapper attacks against the CP. That was the principal thing we did, not the only thing, but the one thing that we worked hardest on.

Frank: And, of course, the rocket belt.

Simpson: Yes.

Frank: What were the reasons, do you think, for the relative success of pacification in Quang Tri and Thui Tinh provinces and its relative failure in Quang Nam, Quang Tinh, and Quang Ngai?

Simpson: ...were not as effective in their command and control apparatus. In the 1st ARVN Division where there were sectors assigned, then, of course, that communication with the people was great. The 51st was moved around all over the place all the time. And, the Rangers were the palace guard for Lam and we never knew where the hell they were going to be because he moved them at his own discretion. I think the 3d Division did enjoy more successful pacification than we did. It wasn't a question of not working on it. Circumstances, I think, permitted a better product to come out of their efforts.

Frank: The other think, I think, the other aspect is, it seems to me, that with as many ARVN government troops as you had in your division TAOR, the success of pacification, as their participation was involved, was directly proportional to the amount of interest Saigon placed on it. For a long time there, Saigon wasn't interested in pacification.

Simpson: That's right.

Frank: On 20 July '68, 5th Marines began Operation Durham Peak, a thrust into the Que Son mountains with three battalions. What recollection do you have of this operation? And, there's a question that we never seemed to have succeeded in prying the enemy completely out of the Que Son mountains. And, a request for comment on that.

Simpson: No, we didn't ever get them all out of there and the reason again was geography. The Que Son mountains came down, sort

of a thrust into the--towards the sea in this direction and back here all belonged to them. There was nothing we could do about that back country.

And this was the favorite way of getting into the approaches and they came out of there, down across Go Noi Island, up that sweep in towards Da Nang. This operation was a rather ambitious one. It included two battalions of the 5th and again, Glasgow with his battalion of 1/2--no, 2/1. It was a very useful operation and they did very well. Ben, it could have been far more effective if we had gotten the cooperation of the Army on the south.

But, unfortunately, the Army units at.... Now, the boundary was poorly drawn. The boundary was right at the base of the mountains. This was my southern boundary and from there on the Que Son plain belonged to the 196th Light Infantry Brigade. Even though we had made liaison with the division--I had with the division comcmander, then the regimental commanders--gotten together. We needed some appressiveness on Army's part. I think we lost a lot of the NVA that were in there. They went out to the south; went right straight through, I'm convinced of that. The Army didn't have to come up the mountain and there wasn't any need to change the boundary at that time. We eventually took over this area, but we wanted something aggressive on their part to bottle this thing up as we went through in this direction.

Well, we went through all right, and we found bigger base camps in there than we ever found in Base Area 112. We captured the largest enemy hospital in Que Son mountains that we had ever

seen, and including surgical equipment. I remember that. That's the one where you might remember the story about.... I had them bring all that surgical equipment back and when the intelligence types had done what they wanted to do with the equipment, we took the good part of the surgical instruments and things down to the hospital for the doctors to see. As we opened this bag, the doctors all crowded around. There was one instrument in here.... It was a chest thing, you know? To separate the...

Frank: Retractor?

Simpson: You know, it's the big gadget, when you're doing heart surgery or lung surgery, they have to get the ribs?

Frank: Ribs, right.

Simpson: The one thing that impressed us was that these instruments were made in Sweden and some cases, in Switzerland. But they all came from Europe, the finest steel. One of the doctors, one of the surgeons, reached in and took that thing out of there and he said, "I've had that on requisition through Navy channels for six months. This identical instrument. You can tell the supply officer to cancel the requisition; it's already been filled. This is the one that I asked for." And he took it and put it in the autoclave and sterilized it and used it, right then.

Frank: Great.

Simpson: That's the only one that we captured; overran numerous aid

stations where there were evidences that they were doing minor things. You know, lots of bloody bandages and that sort of stuff, but this was the first time, the only time, we ever got what was obviously an operating hospital.

Frank: Completely abandoned?

Simpson: Completely abandoned.

Frank: No patients?

Simpson: No patients, nobody in it, but they had been there within hours before. Some of the fires were still warm.

Frank: What a fantastic job that they must have done to be able to withdraw, to completely abandon a thing like that with patients and the whole business.

Simpson: This is the thing that made us sort of sick at heart, that we couldn't get to them. It was a great disappointment to us that we did not--weren't able to surround them and hold them. One of the things that it cost us, it sure did cost us a lot of malaria.

Frank: Oh, really?

Simpson: Oh, yes. Whenever we went into the mountains. As long as we stayed in the low areas we had almost no malaria. When we went into the high areas, and this particular group here that went into Que Son, we had an awful lot of malaria.

Frank: Well, I would think that the malaria would be in the

bottomlands and that the higher areas would be free of malaria.

Simpson: It didn't work out that way. The battalion that overran this hospital site made the mistake of staying there for two days and they had almost, eventually, had 50 percent malaria casualties. And the doctors tell us this is because the patients in the camp area had all been infected with malaria. And the mosquitoes were just carrying it back and forth.

Frank: Was it a particularly virulent of malaria? From what I've heard it was a strain that resisted treatment.

Simpson: Yes, it was. It was a strain.... I've forgotten the name that was called, but it was a very difficult one and made the troops very sick, indeed. The kind we got in the lowlands was the other kind, didn't bother our people very much. The pills that we had for them were pretty effective, and if they were carried in, if they had to be evacuated to the hospital, a stay of 36-48 hours would do it. But, on this other strain of malaria, this was much more difficult. The hospitalization was lengthier; many times we evacuated them to the ships and in a good many cases, they were finally evacuated out of the country and didn't come back.

Frank: Was the prognosis such that these people who came down with it would ever be cleared of it?

Simpson: Yes. The doctors said they would eventually get well.

Frank: No blackwater fever? No things you hear abour from Haiti?

Simpson: No, none of that.

Frank: In November, the.... I don't know why I have November here because.... Well, yes, Durham Peak must have been '69, not '68 because you weren't there in July '68.

Simpson: No.

Frank: Well, I'll check this out.

Simpson: '69 was the year.... Well, I came--I was there all of '69.

Frank: In November 1969, the 1st Division augmented the combined action program with an Infantry Company Intensive Pacification Program. Did this prove to be as successful as the CAP?

Simpson: No.

Frank: And would you please comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the two programs?

Simpson: Well, the CAP was a fine program. It was one of the most ingenious things that I had seen and I think it was very effective. Of course, if you put the right guys in it and, of course, General Walt had started it and it had been carried on by his successors. The CAP program, I thought, was a fine and effective thing.

Our program that you have alluded to here, was an attempt to expand on it. And, again, was an attempt on our part to aid in the pacification thing, and in this we were using regular infantry formations--squads, platoons, and even companies. It was not as effective

as the CAP program, nor did we ever thing it would be. The CAP guys were all volunteers for that kind of duty. They normally had been specially trained for it. And they frequently stayed on it for a full tour or even longer. We couldn't afford to do this with our troops. And, we did not keep them in that configuration too long because we thought their effectiveness as an infantry battalion would deteriorate--and it did--so we couldn't afford to keep them in it too long. So, as a consequence, they never gained the total confidence of their South Vietnamese counterparts of the RFs or PFs, whoever they were working with at this time. It was a good program, and it did some useful things, but it was not as successful as the CAP nor did we ever expect it would be.

But, you see, by that time, we didn't have any major NVA forces in the area. They had either been withdrawn or in some instances, we think, we had essentially destroyed them. So, we thought we could afford, by that time, to go into this other program and weaken our infantry maneuver elements, but aid overall in the pacification effort and.... We were very optimistic at that stage of the game; at that time, and at the time I left, we were very optimistic that the war was well in hand--as far as we were concerned--was well in hand. Indeed, I was to the point where I.... And the ARVN had improved a lot, the Rangers were showing a lot of spunk by this time, and I felt that, by the time I left that, if the NVA, if my assessment of the NVA in Quang Nam was right, if they didn't reenter the act, I thought that things were going to be in pretty good shape.

As a matter of fact, I felt that the ARVN, with the RFS and the PFs, if the NVA did not re-enter the arean, could handle it. They could handle the VC. And I think they could have.

Frank: I think, probably, the indications are that they could have. The CAP was not organic to the division, then?

Simpson: No.

Frank: That came under III MAF; the II MAF and CORDS control.

Simpson: III MAF. And III MAF, of course, worked with CORDS, but we cooperated with them, of course. There were CAPs in our area but not under my command. But, each place there was a CAP, the nearest division unit was assigned responsibility for liaison, fire support and that sort of thing, and often for resupply. And there was radio contact so that the CAP cold call on the nearest infantry organization. They had fire plans set down; if their little ville or wherever they were, was attacked, then we could fire either mortar and or artillery in their support, and then go up to their help, if they needed it.

Frank: Well, that sounds like it was all well-coordinated and well controlled; although, it seems to me that it was not as effective as perhaps had the CAP been organic to the division, where there would have been, for instance, a greater sort of parental responsibility.

Simpson: I think probably so, but I think the III MAF commander's

feeling was that he wanted to insure that the CAP program was not diluted and not.... He wanted an on-going, continuing program that didn't reflect the whim of the individual division commander at that particular time.

Frank: That could have been it. Also, it could have been the attitude of the CAP personnel that they were something special, they answer only to "big papa."

Simpson: Oh, yes. And you see, at that time, he had CAPs throughout all five provinces, whereas, he might have been willing--I don't know whether it's true, because he never discussed it, but--had he turned the command of the CAPs in Quang Nam over to the 1st Division, he would have been obliged to do the same thing for the Americal Division, and the 101 Airborne.

Frank: Of course, they never were so interested in the CAPs as the Marines.

Simpson: That's right, that's right. So, you can see, I think this sort of answers as to why he held the control in III MAF.

Frank: Were you involved, to any extent, in planning for and execution of Marine withdrawal from Vietnam?

Simpson: No. When I heard that withdrawal was coming.... We heard it from the newspapers first. Bill Jones was the division commander of the 3d Division, and we speculated who was going to go first. And I told him I thought he'd go...

Frank: I hope you didn't bet on it.

Simpson: We didn't. No, we didn't participate in the planning for withdrawal at all. We did react in the sense that we.... Our boundaries changed, we took more territory, we moved north of the Hai Van Pass and took part of that area up there. Then, we moved south to LZ Baldy and Ross and took that area down there which meant moving all the 7th Marines. We redrew the whole tactical picture of the 1st Division as a result of the withdrawal. But, in terms of withdrawal itself, during my tenure, we didn't do any planning.

Frank: I can see where--as I understand--that even those units which were involved in withdrawal were kept in the dark to a very large extent, to the point that it affected their planning.

Simpson: Yes. And this was deliberate. This was most deliberate. In the 1st Division, I set down hard on any speculation about withdrawal. I could see--we could all anticipate this, that once you started planning withdrawal, you weren't offensive minded any longer. And, you get into the "the last man" syndrome and the rest of that bit. So, I said, "We're just not even going to talk about withdrawal until somebody comes over and tells me, 'The 1st Division' going to be withdrawing,' and then we'll talk about it. Meantime, I don't even want to discuss how we're going to withdraw."

One of the final things that I did, and I turned this over to Ed Wheeler, was to develop a little scheme as to how I would withdraw: pulling your own tail in to get everybody out. This is

just a few ideas--just rough sketches. But, I never even turned it over to the staff, never even let them work on it. Now, they may have done the same thing themselves, but in my staff meetings I never discussed withdrawal. When Ed came down to take the division from me, I said, "If I were going to pull this division out, this is the way I think I'd do it--get out of An Hoa. Do this, and that, and the other.... Pull the regimental headquarters in, tuck it under here, and then finally get everybody out."

Frank: The single management of air resources. Did the imposition of single management cause you an particular hardship during any of the 1st Division operations?

Simpson: No. The single management of air was above me and did not involve me directly. They weren't involved, for example, in helicopters, only in fixed wing attacks. We got the missions that we asked for from the 1st Wing.

We, of course, were very close to them. Of course, they were in our DASC, and DASC operated right in this bunker that we talked about. No, it did not bother my operations. I got what I needed from the 1st Wing in terms of close air support.

Frank: When we had the brainstorming session--a couple of years ago, now I guess, when you were up from Albany that time--we discussed the McNamara "Barrier Plan" and you made some mention of how you benefitted from it.

Simpson: We did.

Frank: Did the imposition of the plan, first of all, touch your operation. That was strictly 3d Division.

Simpson: All 3d Division.

Frank: All 3d Division.

Simpson: No, we didn't get into it until some of the material that had been planned for its use then became available to us. Sensors; this is where we got our sensors, line sensors and that type of thing.

Frank: You used that for the rocket belt?

Simpson: Yes. Boy, it was great! And we had a hell of a lot of fortification material, more than we could ever use, tons of it. But, the barrier itself didn't involve us, but we were the beneficiaries in the fallout of it. Incidentally, the guy that was getting the stuff for us was no other than our friend Lavelle.

Frank: Oh, really?

Simpson: Yes. He headed this outfit back here called DSPG. I've forgotten what the organization was, but it had to do with the sensors. They were developing and manufacturing the sensors. And I think he was McNamara's man. I may be wrong, but I...

Frank: Starbird, I think was the guy who originally had it.

Simpson: But, but, any event, Lavelle came out there about three times during the time he was a three star general and he came to

talk to me about sensors. I told him that, boy, we could make use of any kind. And as a consequence, we got the pressure type sensors as well as the other kind. He made them available to us and they worked out fine.

Frank: Good.

We received some tapes of the de-briefings of senior officers conducted at FMFPac in which the conflict between air and ground officers looked upon the helicopters as trucks, and the helicopter pilot as truckdrivers. I don't think the reverse is true. The helicopter pilots flew in and out of enough of those combat situations that I think they had a very high regard for the role of the infantryman on the ground.

Frank: Did you insert one other thing there.... This is the attitude of ground officers vis a vis helicopters and helicopter officers. Then you have another element of aviation and their view of helicopters and helicopter pilots. Was this another consideration, another factor? It was at one time, if you recall.

Simpson: No, I don't think so.

Frank: They were fully accepted members of their trade?

Simpson: Oh, yes. Yes, I think so. They had a different kind of job, but, Jesus! They flew so damned many missions that.... I don't know the internal working of the aviation community enough, but I think they were fully accepted because many of the squadron and group commanders, almost all of those guys at that level were

cross-trained, you see. It was only at the lowest pilot level that we had helicopter pilots that had not flown fixed wing. All the field grade officers and above had flown fixed wing, probably in Korea, some even out there.

I think there's a lot of discussion, and there always will be, about the proper role of helicopters; how many to employ them. But, I think during the time that General Thrash was the Wing Commander, which was the last six months of my time, we didn't have any problems. There weren't enough helicopters for what we wanted to do. Enough good helicopters. You've got many tapes on that subject.

The AirCav had 365. Until we got the CH-53 Delta, we were in trouble in terms of heavy lift. We often borrowed helicopters. I did, from the Army. Some of my aviation friends thought this was a very bad thing for the record, but I didn't. I thought, when we needed helicopter resources, whoever had them, I'd be very happy to have them. They Army Hotel model helicopter was a very powerful bird. We used it frequently for the insert of reconnaissance teams where you had to go straight down and straight back up, the only one could do it. Their CH-47 was a real workhorse and helped us out very often in our logistics runs. The Hotel model was a lot better than our Echo model.

I think that, of course, given the fact that there were never enough helicopters, we did very well. The company commanders had a hard time understanding that. When they wanted a helicopter, they wanted it right now. We were at a disadvantage because we didn't

even have enough helicopters for our regimental commanders or battalion commanders. Now, we could make them available for a specific operation, but it was a source of some concern to them that their Army counterparts had a dedicated helicopter where they never did, of course. The young company commander couldn't understand why--again, looking at it as a truck--why the helicopter couldn't make repeated trips. And one of the interesting things we did was, we set up an arrangement whereby, at the end of a given day, helicopters working with a battalion, perhaps, on a logistics type thing, or maybe they'd moved them, that as they went home in the evening, they'd take some officers from this battalion. They'd come back to Marble Mountain, the guys would get a shower, maybe have a drink, something like that.

But, the point was, they went through the entire drill. They got up the next morning about five o'clock, they went through the briefing, they went through the checkout procedures with the helicopter crews--the whole bit that the pilot did was quite enlightening to these guys. They found out the damned thing wasn't a truck at all. And, they learned that a lot of work went into it to get it ready for one flight hour for them out there in the bush, and a lot of work had to be done back in Da Nang by a lot of people at Marble Mountain for this bird to be there when they needed it.

This was a very healthy thing, a very healthy thing. We worked this, for quite a long period of time. I worked it out with permission of the wing commander, went to the group commander and we just put the thing in gear. We didn't want to formalize it,

but we just let the group commander and regimental commanders work it out together and I just sort of kept tabs on them to make sure it was going. It was very effective.

Frank: For our last question, General, this is one of personalities. How would you assess the quality of your subordinate commanders and officers in comparison with those you knew in both World War II and Korea? For a time it seemed, and this was at the beginning of the Marine commitment in Vietnam, that unit commanders on the battalion level and below (maybe even higher, a regimental commander, too), were being relieved of their commands for cause at a rate more rapid than in previous wars. Was this a correct assessment.

Simpson: Not when I was there, but probably during the early days. But, I don't think it would apply to World War II. My memory of World War II was that they were relieving people left and right, starting from Guadalcanal right on, because we had a hell of a lot of incompetents going into World War II. Korea was a little different thing.

I didn't have much occasion to relieve for cause and I would answer you question, Ben, by saying that I feel that, at the level of regimental commander and battalion commander, they were far superior to those that I saw in either Korea or World War II. At the company commander level, they were, I would say, at least as good, at least as good. I would say that in terms of physical fitness, they were all better than they were in either of the other

two wars. They came to Vietnam in better physical condition. Of course, they needed to be. And by 1969, anybody that went knew goddamn well he'd better be in shape or he couldn't keep up. All of the Marines, not only the officers and commanders we're talking about, were as a general rule, in superior physical condition out there. The best I've ever seen.

So, I think the quality of leadership, of commanders, was high in the 1st Division in 1969. I was quite satisfied with it. Now, this is not to say that they were all paragons of virtue, that they were all superlative, though I did see five battalion commanders--I've gotten smart, Ben. I no longer say these were the best batalion commanders I've ever seen, but I saw at least five perform in combat in Vietnam that I can truthfully say that I've never seen any better, anywhere, in any other war.

As an overall rule, I would give the battalion commanders that I had a very high mark. Now, I had some lieutenant colonels that did not command a battalion, and I don't think they would have been very good battalion commanders and that's the reason they didn't get a chance at it.

I have never been one to believe in running a "commanders' school," the idea that you command for so long and then you should do staff for so long. The idea that it just gives more people a chance to command. I don't subscribe to that theory. I have always told--in the 2d Division when I was division commander and also in the 1st--I impressed upon my colonels that every regiment was far more important than any colonel; and I told the lieutenant colonels

that every battalion was for more important than any lieutenant colonel, or his career. And accordingly, I would never rotate for the sake of rotation.

But, it was rather interesting that after some experience, some three or four months experience, I came to the conclusion that in the environment of Vietnam, as I knew it in 1969, that the infantry battalion commander should be relieved at about the midpoint of their careers. Not because it was the midpoint, but if he had been doing his job properly, he was, literally, out of gas by that time. He was tired, and he was more prone to make a mistake that would cost somebody their life. Of course, if he hadn't been doing his job, maybe he wouldn't be worn out, but he should be relieved anyhow.

So, I generally planned the relief of battalion commanders, infantry battalion commanders. I'm not talking about the others, in terms of tank battalions, shore party; some of those I had to go all the way through. John Kinniburgh whom you probably know, he used to be CMC aide, he was a motor transport battalion commander the whole time. No reason to relieve these men, I mean, unless they didn't do well, or sometimes you needed them. Sometimes you'd move this guy because you needed him more for a particular staff job and there was somebody else that could take the battalion.

But, I never did relieve, change battalion commanders just to give somebody else a chance to command. I don't think that's right for the organization or the Marines. But, It did turn out that for the environment in which I operated that year, six months

was about as much as a guy could do because he never got any sleep. He probably never slept more than two consecutive hours at a time. And one of the things that I think we all need to remember about this war, the infantryman's war--and it's entirely different from any war that we've ever been in in the past--in the sense that the danger was not only clear and present, it was constant. Now, we never faced this before.

You see, we had peaks of violence in World War II and Korea that approached anything that we saw in Vietnam--Tet of '68--highpoints. We had points, Tarawa, of course. But, Tarawa was 96 hours and when it was over, it was all over. But, in the infantry in Vietnam, in the 1st Division, there was never a times when the guy, whether he was battalion commander or PFC, when he could go to sleep at night with the reasonable assumption that he could sleep peacefully through that night and go out the next morning. Now, of course, fortunately, as we all know, this turned out to be true, but the danger was there, all the time. We didn't have this in Korea, for example. We could bring a battalion off the line, bring them to the rear area, they were not under artillery fire, there were no rockets, there was no air, they could sleep, they could rest, they could let down--they couldn't do this [in Vietnam]. Now, I'm talking about the infantry and the people that accompanied the infantry. Well, I did something about this.

In the summer of '69, I built a rest camp called "Stack Arms" and it was built solely for the infantry companies and their accompanying FOs and combat engineers. This was a great labor of

love. We put it inside the compound over against the beach. The amtrac battalion had a nice compound there and we took an area of it. I think the statute of limitations has run out, but the manner in which we gained some of the material to go in there wasn't exactly "by the book." Everybody cooperated with us. We got Southeast Asia huts, we got beds, we got matresses, we got sheets, pillows, pillowcases. From Special Services, we got swimming trunks, not sweat shirts, but just a coverup shirt so the guy wouldn't get sunburned. We would select an infantry company in the field. They usually didn't have more than a few hours' notice, we didn't want them to anticipate this. We went in and picked them up with CH-53 helicopters.

We had a big pad right in the rest area, and they'd come with everything they had--rifle, ammunition, and so on. They were terribly suspicious about this whole thing. Their attitude was, "Somebody's going to screw us somewhere." To collapse the story, we took them there, we took their weapons, and had them TIed while they were there. We took the uniforms, had them laundered, had them replaced if they needed to be. We gave them the rope sandals, a pair of shorts with a shirt, a coolie hat. But, the first thing we did was to give them a beer. And for 48 hours, they had no duties. They slept on sheets. We ran in phone lines for phone patches home through the MARS system. We had one hut where they could write letters. We had showers.

After we got the thing built, I was down there before the first company came and I asked the engineer about the showers. He

said, "No sweat. I've got 10 thousand gallons of water." So, the company came in. They took so many showers that they ran out of water in the middle of the afternoon and had to go back to get some more.

When I went down the next day, there was a guy that was under the shower and they said he hadn't come out for anything except to eat a steak and drink a beer. The guy was in the shower then and he came out while I was there and he was laughing about it. He said, "I haven't had a bath in six months and by God, I'm going to make this one count!"

We set up charcoal grills by just taking fuel drums and just cutting them off lengthwise, for that one company of 215 people. We set this up on the beach and by darkness that night, they had cooked and these guys had eaten 1,086 steaks. And at nighttime, we had assembled all the movies we could give them. And we had as NOIC a wonderful gunnery sergeant who said, "How long do you want me to run the movies." I said, "Run it as long as they want to see it." You know how long that was? Til three o'clock in the morning those guys had him run the movies heel-and-toe.

They only had four movies, so they started them over and over again. And the troops stayed there watching and drinking beer. I thought the girlie movies would be the ones that they'd want. What they really loved was a war movie. Of course, they "critiqued" that one.

In 48 hours, "Cinderella, it's all over." They'd get their uniforms back and we'd fly them back to the field. And we had one

one day cleanup for this thing and we'd go get another infantry company. We called this place "Stack Arms" and that's what it was for.

If I can make these sort of concluding remarks because I want to say this is somebody--I've said it to many, many audiences--I think one of the many tragedies about this country's involvement in Vietnam, and God knows there are many, but one that hurts me very deeply is the fact that in the country's frustration and torment over national policy in Vietnam, it sometimes took the form against the man who fought the war. What I call the, "man-with-the-rifle." And I would like to be witness to the fact that the Young Americans --now, I'm speaking of the Marines that were with me, but I think it does apply in general to the others--certainly there were some guys that took dope or guys that had crooked slot machines, but I would just remind everyone that the people that fought in World War II and Korea were not all paragons of virtue. But, the average guy, the average Marines with me in Vietnam showed more dedication, more bravery, more sense of responsibility. He was in better physical shape, he was totally dedicated to his task, and he had a more difficult task than this country has ever asked anybody to do in any war.

Now, in all the other wars it turned out successfully. We'd bring them home, we'd give them a gold watch, we'd do all this and more. These guys didn't want that. But, it is so totally wrong for a certain segment of the American public to have blamed the war on the men who fought it. These guys had nothing to do with

national policy. They didn't make this thing. But, it's been a great tragedy. I am an advocate of this young Marine. I think he's great! I think he's just tremendous. I think he's superior to what I saw in World War II and Korea and I just think he's just the best!

Ben, I have one final thought that should be a part of this record. It has to do with logistical support. Of course, I have spoken about helicopters. With that one qualification as to numbers available, I must say that our logistical support was superb. We sometimes had temporary shortages of unimportant things, but none were operationally significant. At not time in 1969 was the 1st Marine Division tactically constrained by lack of logistical support. We always had what we needed to do the job. I never thought I would be able to say that about a Marine division in extended combat, but it was certainly true of the 1st MArine Division in 1969 in RVN...

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Frank: What are your perceptions of the Pate Commandancy and General Pate's personality, his reaction to the Ribbon Creek drowning and the plane crash in which the Quantico Advanced Base Presentation Team was completely lost?

Simpson: I think I have said in pages 583-595 about all I can say about General Pate and his tenure as Commandant, to include Ribbon Creek. I would have to assess his Commandancy as mediocre at best,

even though I was part of it for two and a half years. He probably would have done much better if Ribbon Creek had not happened. I have no memory of his reaction to the crash of the Quantico team other than extreme sadness. He was a particularly sensitive man. I do not recall any actions he took at that time such as, directing special investigations or taking any specific actions designed to prevent a recurrence. Of course, it may be there was nothing he could or should have done.

Frank: What about the Secretary of Defense Conference at Quantico?

Simpson: The local name for these was "SECON." I was Chief of Staff of Quantico for two of these, ('58 and '59 or maybe '59 and '60). From the Post standpoint, SECON was a real pain in the ---. As I outlined in my taped interview, Twining pretty well left the running of the post to me. Thus, the logistical aspects of SECON was my responsibility. We were told by CMC to do whatever SecDef representatives wanted--and they wanted plenty!

SECON was an enormous inconvenience to a lot of people living on the post. For example, all the bachelors were evacuated from Harry Lee Hall to make room for the SECON guests. All those living in quarters on the routes that the SECON people would move could have no laundry drying on clothes lines even in the back yard. No bicycles or children's toys were allowed in front yards. Garbage cans had to be out of sight. The golf course was pre-empted. The <u>fronts</u> of several quarters were freshly painted.

I am glad the statute of limitations has run out since some of

the expenditures cold not hold up under public scrutiny. We were told that money was no problem. In fact, SecDef's representatives came to Quantico periodically and gave me large sums of cash and did not ask for a receipt. (I have forgotten how I managed to get it into the system and accounted for, but it drove my fiscal people mad!)

We were directed to have one evening of elaborate entertaining for SECON. For this purpose, a Marine major reserve officer, Ernie Frankel, was brought on active duty for about six months during which time he wrote, directed, and produced a musical. If this was to be done, he was the logical choice since he was a professional. (I saw him last in Hollywood some years later where he was in television.) These indeed were elaborate productions. One year it involved a sequence of ice skating. Imagine ice skating outdoors in Quantico in July! We built the set (to include a reflecting pond and skating rink--about 30'x40') in a secluded area back of the 800 block of quarters. To make the ice, we rented an ice-making machine in Chicago and flew it to Quantico in a Marine Corps transport airplane. The cast for the musical was selected from Marines and their dependents. The meal served was a buffet the likes of which I had never seen before or since.

Of course, I did not attend any of the conference sessions, so I cannot judge its value. I doubt, however, that it was worth the money expended to say nothing of the enormous inconvenience to the people of Quantico.

Frank: What about General Twining's contretemps with Secretary of

Navy, Thomas Gates?

Simpson: I expounded at length about Bill Twining in the interview. He and Gates were opposites though both very able in their own fashion. Twining was apolitical. In fact, despised all politicians. Gates, though never holding elective office, was a consummate politician as well as a successful investment banker. To say they did not get along very well is a gross understatement. I thought Gates greatly admired Twining's mind, as well he should. Whether Twining admired anything about Gates, I do not know. He admired few people.

MR. SMITH'S QUESTIONS ON VIETNAM

Smith: What about the Da Nang Barrier" What about committing troops to the Barrier instead of stopping the enemy before he reached the Barrier area? What is your opinion regarding the construction of another "McNamara Line" around Da Nang? Did you consider it a waste of time, material, and troops?

Simpson: I do not recall ever hearing the term "Da Nang Barrier" in 1969. The primary mission of 1st Mar Div was the defense of Da Nang. The disposition of the division combatant elements (largely established by my predecessors) was dictated by that mission. As such, 1st Mar Div did indeed constitute a barrier anchored on the north at the Hai Van Pass. We had fortifications, i.e. bunkers, wire, etc., at a great many positions, but there was no continuous line as normally suggested by the term barrier. Recall that there

were over one million Vietnamese in Quang Nam province and they had to be allowed to farm and conduct such local commerce as was possible. There was nothing to prevent the NVA from moving southward to the west of our deepest fixed positions such as An Hoa, but they did not go south through our positions in 1969.

I talked about my views on the "McNamara Line" in the transcript. To my knowledge, it was of little use in 3d Mar Div area and would have been useless around Da Nang in 1969. We did get access to some of the material destined for the DMZ after being unloaded at Da Nang. What they offered us was never shipped north for some reason. We did use a lot of the "ribbon" wire. We had lots of barbed wire, but limited amounts of the vastly superior "ribbon" wire. Obviously, a defensive position is never complete until abandoned. There is always a need for more good wire and sandbags.

Maybe they put a "McNamara Line" around Da Nang after I left in December 1969. From what I know of the overall project, I would consider it a vast waste of money, material, and time. We experimented, unsuccessfully, with some of the pneumatic sensors. We never got an intercept, but had hundreds of false signals.

Smith: What were the repercussions on the 1st Mar Div of the withdrawal of the 3d Mar Div?

Simpson: Actually, very little as it turned out. 101st Airborne and 1st ARVN Div filled the gaps. We, of course, were apprehensive and stepped up patrolling, including deep recon team insertions,

but there were no changes in patterns of enemy activity. I believe the NVA had long since determined that it was far easier to come south by a route well to the west of I Corps. I think they were probably doing this in significant numbers in the second half of 1969.

Smith: What was your view on the shift of the 1st Mar Div southward with such operations as Durham Peak, etc., and the deployment of the 7th Marines into the Que Son area in late 1969?

Simpson: I welcomed it with enthusiasm. I did not like the static posture which the defense of Da Nang forced us into. We had been in that posture too long for our own good. Our people were unknowingly suffering what I called the "Blue-Line Syndrome." On our tactical maps, the battalion sectors were separated by blue lines. People were beginning to believe that the area within their blue lines was all the war there was. This move was very healthy for the 1st Mar Div. I had earlier moved units around as far as tactically possible. But, we needed to get out of the holes and get moving. I wish we could have done it sooner.

Smith: What about helicopter support?

Simpson: I think I commented on this in several places in the interview. Overall, I would say our helicopter support was adequate in light of our mission. Of course, we would like to have had more helos. I suppose everyone would. We were envious of the 101st where it seemed that a helo was available to every squad (not true

of course). However, because of our mission, ours was not a war of movement. We got the helos we actually needed to do what we could do under the circumstances. Had we been in a moving situation, we would desperately have needed more helos. Marine pilots were superb in skill and dedication.

The Army helicopters were newer and better than ours. Fortunately, the 101st was very generous in helping us when we needed it. Resupply of Task Force Yankee (west of An Hoa) was an example. The 101st helped tremendously in carrying external loads of needed supplies. I believer Army helicopters were involved in the retrograde when Yankee had run its course, but I am not sure.

Smith: What about counterbattery plans around Da Nang?

Simpson: I described that in some detail on pages 427-432 inc. in the transcript. Neither the VC nor NVA had tube artillery in Quang Nam province in 1969. They had mortars and rockets. The 122mm was an excellent weapon. Using the designed amount and sight from from a surveyed position, it was the equivalent of light to medium tube artillery. However, we never afforded them that luxury. By 1969, the NVA were firing the 122mm from crossed bamboo sticks. This was adequate for them since the density of the Da Nang complex was such that, for any rocket that got over the surrounding hill mask, a complete "miss" was next to impossible.

The counterbattery plan (developed by my predecessors and their staff) was effective in suppressing rocket fire. It--or anything else--could not eliminate it completely, but it was reduced

to relatively small numbers. The 9" rocket OPs were very effective in spotting and fixing the flash of the rocket launch. The FSCC could bring artillery to bear in seconds if the site was clear of friendlies.

ANSWER TO A QUESTION NOT ASKED
ANECDOTE

Question: You mentioned that your people were proud of the fact that in the areas they had cleared (or pacified), the Vietnamese could farm, vote, and reopen schools. Were there other ways in which the Marines tried to help the local Vietamese?

Simpson: They did as individuals and small groups. There was no organized division-wide effort organized and coordinated by my staff. I have mentioned the leper colony on the shores of Da Nang just below the Hai Van Pass. Small groups gave that activity substantial monetary help. This took some doing because we had only MPC and were not supposed to deal in Vietnamese money. But, it was worked out.

I am quite certain that there was also donations to Vietnamese families of real goods. This was prbably U.S. government property such as C-rations and the like. This, of course, was against regulations, but the amounts were small and they were going for a very good cause. I took care not to inquire too closely because I did not want to know officially.

One particular incident touched my heart. When I took command

of the 1st Mar Div, the 5th Marines were at An Hoa, a fire base some 14 kilometers west of Da Nang, and remained there throughout my tour. The intelligence section (about five or six people) had "adopted" an orphan called "Kim" (there were many Kims in Vietnam as in Korea). This youngster was about 11 or 12, bright and very pleasant. He lived in the fire base and did chores such as cleaning bunkers, etc. His family had been killed in fighting much earlier. After long association with the Marines, Kim spoke good English.

Kim had been to school, but since the area around the fire base was secure, there were no schools he could attend to further his education. In Da Nang, there was a small missionary school run, as I recall, by the Jesuits. These Marines found that Kim could go to school there for the equivalent of about $120 a year, to include room, board, etc., total. This small group of Marines got together enough money to sponsor Kim in this school for two years. We made the arrangements from the Da Nang end.

On the day before he was to enter the school, I brought Kim and his sponsoring sergeant to Da Nang in my helicopter and billetted them overnight in the division CP. Kim had never been to Da Nang. Indeed, Kim's world by this time was really the 5th Marines. Recall that I said the Marine Corps identified the regiments numerically. The 5th Marine Regiment becomes the "5th Marines." Unlike the Army, the Marine battalions within the Regiment are also numbered numerically: 1/5 meaning 1st Battalion of the 5th Marines. This is written "1/5" but pronounced "one-five"; 2d Battalion is "2/5" or "two-five," etc.

The day we brought Kim to Da Nang happened to be the day of the first U.S. "moon walk" (I believe in the summer of 1969). That afternoon, the sergeant took Kim to the recreation beach on the China Sea. It was one of those rare days when even in daylight, the moon was clearly visible in later afternoon just above the eastern horizon.

We had no TV, but the Armed Forces Radio was broadcasting the story. Transistor radios were in abundance and the sergeant had one. As they sat on the beach looking at the sea and the moon, he was listening to the radio. As mind-boggling as this was to the sergeant (as to all of us), consider the difficulty of explaining all this to Kim. He tried. Over and over again he said, "Kim, right now, there are Americans walking on the moon that we can see." Kim considered this for a long time and finally said, "Are they from 1/5, 2/5, or 3/5?"

I wonder whatever happened to Kim.

End of Interview

Index

Abrams, Gen Creighton W., USA 216, 239, 497, 530, 533, 536
Air America 300, 322
Ammunition restrictions 438
An Hoa 447, 451, 493, 533, 626, 642, 645, 650-51, 670
Annapolis, Maryland 31
Arizona Territory 447, 494, 652
Army War College 121-22, 250, 253-54, 257, 588
A Shau Valley 494

Bangkok, Thailand 299-300, 313, 321, 328, 330, 336, 388
Barrow, Gen Robert H. 494
Base Area 112 629, 638, 643, 646, 661
Basic School 30-1, 62, 79-80, 281
Berman, Emile Zola 595
Black Marine troops 515
Body count 485, 487, 489, 491
Booby-traps 436-37, 625-26, 630, 632, 635
Boxer Rebellion 77
Bradley, Gen Omar 270
Brown, BGen Dudley 139
Burke, Admiral Arleigh A. 612
Buse, LtGen Henry W., Jr. 625

Cam Ranh Bay 428
Camp Lejeune 195-96, 198, 202, 207, 212, 285, 363, 376-77, 379-80, 384, 393-94, 397, 408, 436, 470, 518
Camp Pendleton 363
Caribbean 377
Chain of command 529
Cherry Point 212, 391, 379-82, 606
Chosin Reservoir 98
Chu Lai 532
Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) 667
Clark Air Force Base 301, 335
Combined Action Platoon (CAP) 665-68
Command and General Staff School 120, 125, 130, 281
Commander in Chief, Pacific (CinCPac) 533
Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific (CG, FMFPac) 618, 638
Crawford, Charlie 66
Cronkite, Walter 475
Cua Viet 637
Cushman, Gen Robert E., Jr. 583, 627

Da Nang 99, 305, 427-29, 435, 440, 455, 471, 473, 476, 478, 484, 486, 489, 494, 499, 520, 524-26, 533, 538-39, 618, 612-24, 626, 628, 650, 652, 657, 659, 661
Davis, Eddie Joe 604
Demilitarized zone (DMZ) 428, 492, 494, 498, 500-01

Deputy Chief of Staff, Manpower 563
Director of Personnel, Headquarters, Marine Corps 563
Dominican Republic 351, 378ff, 382-83, 395
Don Maong Airfield 312
Drill Instructor's School 418-19
Drugs 484
Duke University 289
Dwyer, MajGen Ross T., Jr. 642
Eisenhower, Gen Dwight D. 263-64, 276, 278-79
Elkins, "Satch" 68
Emirau 110, 113
Enola Gay 158

Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic 382
Fleet Marine Force, Pacific 127, 296, 625
Fort Bragg 377, 387
Fort Leavenworth 121-22, 133, 140
Fort McNair 254
Forrestal, Secretary of the Navy James V. 271-72
Fragging 511
France 197
Freedom Bridge 215, 217, 235, 588

Gavin, Gen James 244
Geneva Accords 299, 333
Giai, General 629
Glasgow, MajGen Harold G. 661
Go Noi Island 444, 523, 641, 654-55, 661
Greene, Gen Wallace M., Jr. 373
Guadalcanal 98, 104, 107, 110, 115, 127-28, 140, 675
Guantanamo Bay 395
Gulf of Thailand 299

Hackmeyer, Ben 141
Haiphong Harbor 542
Haiti 97, 197, 389
Hai Van Pass 500, 529, 669
Halsey, Admiral William F., Jr. 111
Han River 240, 426, 588
Harriman, Ambassador Averell 299, 333
Harvard Business School 604
Headquarters, Marine Corps 192-93, 258, 348, 391, 563, 565, 587, 590, 592-93
Hiroshima 157, 161
Ho Chi Minh Trail 433, 444, 447, 494
Hochmuth, MajGen Bruno A. 391-92
Hollandia 129, 140
Hope, Bob 226
House Appropriations Committee 353
House Armed Services Committee 352-53
Hue 628

Imjin River 215
Inchon 240
Infantry Company Intensive Pacification 665
Iwo Jima 128, 137-38, 240

Japan 129, 146
Jaskilka, BGen Samuel 456
Joint Chiefs of Staff 368
Jones, MajGen William K. 226, 233, 549, 668
Johnson, President Lyndon Baines 24, 56

Kanehoe, Hawaii 347
Kennedy, President John F. 349
Kennedy, Senator Robert F. 537
Kennedy Ranch 3
Khe Sanh 492-93
Kier, Avery 297
King Ranch 3
Kinnard, BGen Douglas 539
Kinniburgh, John 677
Korea 98, 183, 194-95, 201, 215-19, 222, 234, 241, 246, 248, 258, 285, 371, 388, 469, 588, 641
Korean Marines 523, 638, 640, 645
Koza Four Corners 343
Krueger, Walter 139
Krulak, LtGen Victor H. 625, 638
Kyoto 162

La Jolla, California 77
Landing Zone (LZ) Baldy 669
Landing Zone (LZ) Ross 669
Laos 298, 302, 322-25, 447, 494
Lavelle, LtGen 671
Lebanon 376
Lessons of the war 540ff
Leyte 129, 130-31, 136, 141
Logistical support 682
Lovett, Robert 271-72

MacArthur, Gen Douglas 127-29, 133, 139-44, 148, 152, 155, 158-59, 161, 167, 170, 172, 179, 239-40, 242-45
Madrid 390-91
Malaria 663-64
"Manhattan Project" 157
Manila 134, 142, 155, 169-70
Marble Mountain 428, 674
Marianas 157
Marine Barracks, 8th & Eye 388, 593
Marine Corps Air Station, Beaufort 420
Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island 420
Marine Corps Schools 274, 281

Marine Corps Development Center 281
Marine Corps Educational Center 470
Marine Corps Supply Center, Albany 551, 558
Marshall, Gen George C. 52, 152
MARS system 679
Maui 128
McCain, Admiral John S. 533, 536
McNamara, Robert S. 358-59, 365ff, 367-68, 519, 546
McNamara "Barrier Plan" 498, 500, 670
Mediterranean 376-77, 390
Mekong River 302, 324-25, 329
Metzger, LtGen Louis. 634
Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) 531
Military Secretary, Headquarters, Marine Corps 261
Military Units and Commands
Sixth Army 139
Sixth Fleet 201, 376
Eighth Army 219
I Corps 216, 427-28, 495, 529, 532, 628
II MAF 667
III MAF 499, 529-30, 628-19, 625-27, 637, 649, 656, 667
XXIV Army Corps 483, 529
Americal Division 427-28, 529, 532, 668
1st ARVN Division 446, 440, 529, 660
1st Marine Aircraft Wing 670
1st Marine Division 98-9, 128, 193, 215, 426, 428-29 464, 484, 486, 491, 493, 497, 507, 510-11, 528, 541, 548, 628-30, 633, 637-38, 642, 644-45, 650-52, 656-57 665, 668-69, 676-78, 682
2d Marine Division 128, 192, 198, 258, 352, 363, 375-76, 390, 463, 676
3d Marine Division 110, 296, 428, 427, 434, 483, 492, 494, 529, 541, 549, 628-30, 642-43, 651, 656, 660, 668, 671
6th Marine Division 128
82nd Airborne Division 351, 380
101st Airborne Division 427, 482-83, 529, 533, 668
1st Brigade 193
Task Force Yankee 493, 642, 646
1st Marines 652
5th Marines 652, 660
6th Marines 196-00, 376, 652
7th Marines 652, 669
8th Marines 94
9th Infantry 29, 77-8
51st Independent ARVN Regiment 520, 439-40, 445, 629, 640, 660
2d Battalion, 6th Marines 469
196th Infantry Battalion 661

Miller, John LtGen 599
Mines 626, 630, 632
Mindanao 129
Mize, Col Charles Davis 465-66
Moore, Col George 61
Mt Fuji 340-41
My Lai 502-03

Nagasaki 161
Nankai 302
National War College 254, 257
Naval Air Station, Reykjavik 362
Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps (NROTC) 289
Navy League 390
New Guinea 242
Nicaragua 97, 197
Nickerson, LtGen Herman, Jr. 627, 653, 656
Nimitz, Admiral Chester W. 138
Nixon, Vice President Richard M. 278, 279, 583
Nong Khai Ferry 325
Norwich 31

Oahu 298
Okinawa 128-30, 138, 294-95, 297, 299-01, 321, 328, 331, 336, 338, 340, 342, 346-49
Operation Dewey Canyon 494, 656
Operation Durham Peak 660-665
Operation Pipestone Canyon 639, 641, 653-66
Ord, Col James B., Jr. 653-54

Panama 205-06, 208
Parris Island 287, 389, 393-94, 397, 399-00, 404, 408-10 412, 414, 416, 418-19, 425-26, 453, 455, 596-97, 632
Pate, General Randolph McCall 260, 283, 286, 587-89, 594
Patrick Air Force Base 569, 571
Pearl Harbor 296
Pentagon 565
Philadelphia Navy Yard 62, 82
Philippines 342
Policy Analysis Division, Headquarters, Marine Corps 258, 260
Pollock, BGen Edwin A. 191-92, 587
Puller, BGen Louis B. 111
Punji sticks 634

Quang Nam Province 492, 498, 628-30, 634, 637, 654-59, 666, 668
Quang Ngai 658-59
Quang Tinh 658-59
Quang Tri 658
Quantico 83, 181-82, 184, 194, 274-75, 277, 289, 470, 587, 641

Queen Sirikit 314
Que Son 427, 660-61, 663

Rather, Dan 475
Reagan, President Ronald 264
Rhee, Syngman 234-35, 237-38
Ribbon Creek tragedy 397, 587, 591, 595, 598
Ridgway, Gen Matthew B. 245, 611
Robb, Charles 387, 470-71, 473-74, 475
Robertson, LtGen Donn J. 633
Rockets 619-22, 623, 626, 651
Rocket belt 489, 623, 658, 671
Rota 391
Royal Marines 381-82, 384-85
Rudder, Earl 604-05, 607-08

Saigon 476, 499, 530, 532, 539, 660
Samoa 100-01, 104, 112
Samoan Defense Force 103
San Diego 31, 196, 394, 400
Santo Domingo 97, 389
Search and destroy missions 496-97
Secretary of the General Staff, Headquarters, Marine Corps 260
Seoul 219, 238, 240
Senate Armed Services Appropriations Committee 353
Sensors 499, 671-72
Shapley, LtGen Alan 296
Shaw, BGen Samuel R. 587-591
Shepherd, Gen Lemuel C., Jr. 127, 594, 602
Shoup, Gen David M. 286, 288-91, 294, 592-93
Single management of air 670
Snedeker, Gen Edward W. 288-89
Shell, BGen George "Buddy" R. E. 592
Sparks, Col Michael 643
Sparrow Hawk Operation 647
Special Landing Force (SLF) 637,381
Spellman, Francis Cardinal 226-27, 230
"Stack Arms" 455, 458, 475, 480, 678, 681
Status of Forces Agreement 344
Stillwell, Dick 483
Supreme Commander, Allied Power (SCAP) 146

Tacloban 144
Taiwan 216
Tanwo-Do 220
Tarawa 98, 107, 119, 128, 199, 469, 678
Taylor, Gen Maxwell B. 221, 238-39
Taylor, Myron 152
Tet offensive 479
Tet '69 657
Texas A&M 5, 21, 31-2, 34, 63, 364, 391, 397
Thailand 116, 297-98, 301, 306, 328, 336, 378