The David and Barbara Pryor Center
for
Arkansas Oral and Visual History

University of Arkansas
365 N. McIlroy Ave.
Fayetteville, AR 72701
(479) 575-6829

Arkansas Memories Project

Martin R. Steele

Interviewed by Scott Lunsford

February 25, 2010

Fayetteville, Arkansas

Objective

Oral history is a collection of an individual's memories and opinions. As such, it is subject to the innate fallibility of memory and is susceptible to inaccuracy. All researchers using these interviews should be aware of this reality and are encouraged to seek corroborating documentation when using any oral history interview.

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Transcript Methodology

The Pryor Center recognizes that we cannot reproduce the spoken word in a written document; however, we strive to produce a transcript that represents the characteristics and unique qualities of the interviewee's speech pattern, style of speech, regional dialect, and personality. For the first twenty minutes of the interview, we attempt to transcribe verbatim all words and utterances that are spoken, such as uhs and ahs, false starts, and repetitions. Some of these elements are omitted after the first twenty minutes to improve readability.

The Pryor Center transcripts are prepared utilizing the *University of Arkansas Style Manual* for proper names, titles, and terms specific to the university. For all other style elements, we refer to the *Pryor Center Style Manual*, which is based primarily on *The Chicago Manual of Style 16th Edition*. We employ the following guidelines for consistency and readability:

- Em dashes separate repeated/false starts and incomplete/redirected sentences.
- Ellipses indicate the interruption of one speaker by another.
- Italics identify foreign words or terms and words emphasized by the speaker.
- Question marks enclose proper nouns for which we cannot verify the spelling and words that we cannot understand with certainty.

- Brackets enclose
  - italicized annotations of nonverbal sounds, such as laughter, and audible sounds, such as a doorbell ringing;
  - standard English spelling of informal words; and
  - interviewee and interviewer edits.
- Commas are used in a conventional manner where possible to aid in readability.

Citation Information

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Scott Lunsford interviewed Martin R. Steele on February 25, 2010, in Fayetteville, Arkansas.

[00:00:00]

Scott Lunsford: Marty—uh—today's date is February 25, 2010. This is our second session with you. Uh—I'm still going to ask you—uh—if it's okay that we're recording this audio/videowise and that it's gonna be archived in the Pryor Center archive and a copy at Special Collections here at Mullins Library. We'll take this stuff—we'll—uh—make it right with you, and then we'll wanna post it on the web and have it—uh—available for educational and research purposes. Is all that . . .

Martin Steele: Mh-hmm.

SL: . . . okay with you?

MS: That's very much okay.

SL: Okay. Good.

MS: That . . .

[00:00:35] SL: We've already got your birthday. We've—we—I think in the—uh—last time around—oh, I should say that we are back at the Pryor Center at the University of Arkansas in Mullins Library.

MS: It's great to . . .

SL: And . . .

MS: . . . be back here, too.

SL: It's good—of course, I love Fayetteville so . . .

MS: Me, too.

SL: Um—we got you into high school, and you gave us some—uh—pretty—uh—great accounting of your athletic—uh—uh—prowess at [*MS laughs*] Fayetteville High School—uh—both—uh—mostly football and track. Uh—I did see that you also lettered in basketball.

MS: No, I didn't letter in basketball.

SL: Oh. Oh, this . . .

MS: It was baseball. That was in baseball.

SL: Oh, is that a baseball? Okay.

MS: And when I was a soph—we had a baseball team, and I . . .

SL: Uh-huh.

MS: . . . participated in baseball my sophomore year and lettered with that.

[00:01:23] SL: Now—um—so I—I—I kinda wanna stick with Fayetteville for a little while longer . . .

MS: Sure.

SL: . . . before we get on your career path. Um—you were raised

Catholic. Your mom was a devout Catholic.

MS: Yes.

SL: Um—uh—St. Joseph . . .

MS: School.

SL: . . . Catholic School . . .

MS: Mmm . . .

SL: . . . here on Lafayette . . .

MS: Yeah.

SL: . . . what was then on Lafayette Street . . .

MS: It . . .

SL: . . . here in Fayetteville. Um—and that school just went through junior high school. Is that right?

MS: Yeah, first through ninth grade.

SL: First through ninth grade.

MS: Yeah.

[00:01:52] SL: And then you went to Fayetteville High School.

MS: That's correct.

SL: So I—I wanna talk just a little bit about the differences [*MS laughs*] between those two schools . . .

MS: Yeah.

SL: . . . and—and how that affected you and—and what you perceived at that time.

MS: My—dramatically different, first of all—uh—maybe not so aware of it, Scott, from—uh—being a student in St. Joseph's. But you always kinda knew it was—uh—different than the public school system, whether it was Washington School in—in grade school, which was just down the street, if you will, across College Avenue, or Woodland Junior High and Ramay Junior High, which had just come into being when—when we were in—uh—seventh, eight, and ninth grade. I think that the education was profound—uh—at St. Joseph's because of the tenacity of the nuns—uh—who taught us there. Tremendous in—uh—what I'd call arts and letters, English, spelling—uh—social sciences, those kinds of things. Not so strong in mathematics. I never was a very good mathematic student. It kinda carried with me to Fayetteville High. But values—obviously—uh—Catholic mass every day before school started. Right and wrong. Uh—respect for your fellow human being. Uh—even in Fayetteville at the time, this—kinda this notion about the small Catholic community. I think the state, at that time, was only 2 percent Catholic. It was predominant, you know, Baptist and Methodist in the Fayetteville community. But because of the university—uh—this eclectic, tremendous community, in my opinion—uh—you never really felt—uh—ostracized or totally different. But by

the time that I left Fayetteville High—or to St. Joseph's to go to Fayetteville, I felt that I was more than prepared academically to be able to make it—the transition. The biggest challenge was going to be the social and the size 'cause St. Joseph was very small. We probably had fifteen or sixteen people in my ninth-grade class, and then suddenly to go to this school with seven, eight hundred, a thousand kids in school—uh—it was gonna be a—an adjustment. And that was probably the biggest adjustment that I had to make—uh—goin' to Fayetteville High School. I—it wasn't traumatic. It was just different in that regard. [00:04:18] I—I found Fayetteville High School from the outset—because I'd had an older brother eight years older that I had watched all of his football games and sporting events and an older sister four years older to be—I was very familiar with it. I mean, I understood what was going on there through the eyes of my older siblings. Uh—and the most difficult thing—I was lookin' at some old report cards that I'm not too proud of—uh—[*SL laughs*]—from my sophomore year. Uh—I did pretty well in everything except geometry. I had Mr. Buell Woods, who was a [*SL laughs*] notoriously famous geometry teacher that—he had these lines about black bear. I never could understand anything the man was saying. He had chalk all over him. I mean,

there're probably famous stories about Buell Woods. And I—I just couldn't get it. I had no idea what he was talkin' about and did poorly—uh—barely passed—but—uh—geometry and knew I wasn't gonna be a mathematics student from—uh—from that day forward. [00:05:12] But the teachers that I had—uh—I was looking over in the yearbooks and the impact that they had on me, and the feedback that I was getting from them about my role and responsibility as a student in Fayetteville High School and as an athlete in Fayetteville High School. [*Clunking sound*] The seniors when I was a sophomore were very inspirational. People like J. D. McConnell and ?Toger? White. From athletic field people, basketball people, that I really did—uh—have a connection with, with being inspired by their character, how they conducted themselves both in school and—uh—on the football field. [00:05:50] As we've talked briefly about, the most powerful impact of all, though—the teachers were great. Mrs. Andrews was my Latin teacher.

SL: Mh-hmm.

MS: Uh—uh—Miss Taylor was my biology instructor, and I took advanced biology with her. Uh—Mr. Benton was my civics teacher. He was a tremendous influence on me because . . .

SL: Is that Ishban?

MS: Yeah, yeah.

SL: Uh . . .

MS: Tremendous influence on me.

SL: He was retired military, right?

[00:06:20] MS: Yes, he was. And he—he and I had a—a symbiotic relationship—uh—in Fayetteville High School, and I took every course that he—he offered the entire time I was there because he had such an impact on me about—he was kind of a—gruff to some people, but for me, it was just every utterance was something about responsibility as a citizen of the country and kinda was shaping, unbeknownst to me, about kinda the direction I was gonna go in my life because of how he was—uh—talking about civics and everything from voting to military service, et cetera. But he—he was a great influence on me in—uh—Fayetteville High. [00:07:05] Some of my teachers wrote these notes that I was just looking at next to their photograph about the impact I was having on them, too, which were quite surprising what their expectations were. And they weren't just gratuitous comments. They were—they were really seeing something there about what they believed to be part of my future and responsibility. And where some kids wouldn't think about it, or it wouldn't mean anything to 'em, my nature as a

human being was such that I personalized all that, that it was meaningful and, "What are you gonna do with this?" And so from the early stage—uh—I was serious with my fellow students—uh—serious with my teachers, serious with my coaches. Uh—high school wasn't a frivolous event for me. I mean, we had fun and did stupid things that I regret.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:07:53] MS: Uh—you know, because of the proximity of the university, we had a football coach—uh—who was the most inspirational person to me, Jay Donathan, that I've spoken to you about and will—can speak in more detail. But my recollections, which people have verified they were—they're correct—that [*sniffs*] he had a policy that—uh—you couldn't smoke, which I never smoked in my life, so it wasn't an issue. But you could be almost drunk in front of him, fallin' down drunk after a football game, and he would—he would see you, and all he would do is run you till you threw up, or he'd punish you for drinkin' alcohol because—because of the university, you could get alcohol in this town. I mean, right, wrong, or indifferent, it was the Rockwood Club. You could go out to any liquor store, and they'd just turn your head—their head the other way when you drove in, and they sold it to you. And so, alcohol was a part

our life. [*Laughs*] [00:08:42] But if you smoked and he saw you smokin' or smelled tobacco on you, you were done. That was it. One and done. Gone. So—uh—I found that—uh—to be rather ironic, first of all, but—uh—but he truly was—uh—an inspiration and a great—uh—leader. Very, very tough. He was classified as being a sadistic coach. Uh—but for whatever reason, like Mr. Benton in the classroom, I had this relationship with Jay Donathan which was singular, seminal, and stayed with me through my entire life. [*Clears throat*] And wherein he could—and throughout—uh—you know, when I was a junior in high school, which his—was his last year because he was fired at the end. We went—we only lost one game to Springdale when I was a sophomore and then tied Springfield Parkview. But my junior year, we were 5-5 because—uh—he ran everybody off 'cause he didn't think they understood what bein' a football player was. And we were so small numberswise. We just couldn't really compete. We'd fight like crazy but—and we won. We beat—uh—Springdale, and we beat Rogers and—uh—Siloam Springs and—but when we got to play those Springfield schools, I mean, they just wore us out till my senior year, when we beat 'em again. [00:10:04] But—uh—[*sniffs*] but I have a couple stories that—that—uh—I would like to relate, just about the

impact he had. He could—he was very—uh—tough on people, and he knew personalities and how to deal with—uh—student athletes, who to kick in the butt, if you will, and—to make—inspire them to be better, and who to pat on the back. And I fell in the latter category. But there're a couple of incidents that, you know, forty, fifty years later, they sound bizarre—uh—and—and maybe even surreal or—or, you know, just—"Is that right or wrong?" But—uh—in practice once, we had a drill when I was a junior, when I was just coming into my own of understanding that I was gonna make a major contribution to this football program and I—and he was—he was the force behind that, that he found a place for me to play, which was defensive back, and I wasn't gonna play quarterback, which my brother was a quarterback. And I was gonna be runnin' back and a defensive back, and—and I—I learned how to hit people and not get hurt, even though I was very small. And I was vicious because of him. I mean, not [*SL laughs*] dirty, but vicious.

SL: Mh-hmm.

[00:11:14] MS: And he saw that in me, and it was kind of, for everyone else, a model to emulate. He would use me as a vehicle because of my size. I probably weighed 125 pounds, five foot seven or eight, but I'd—my nickname was "Bullet" for—uh—

being such a force on hitting someone, and it didn't matter if they were 250 pounds or whatever they were. But—uh—I just kinda embraced it, that it was gonna be a—but we had a drill once, and I—I don't know if I should say his name, but I know it—but anyway, we were playing where . . .

SL: Oh, you can say the name.

[00:11:50] MS: Well, Ja—his name was Jack Husted. He was a good friend of mine. Later became a marine. But there was two on one or three on one and the—Jack Husted was younger than we were and kind of afraid. He wasn't really much of a football player, but he was a great kid. But he had to carry the ball. Two guys tackled him, and then I came in and cleaned it up, if you will. And it was a brutal drill. I mean, absolutely a brutal drill. I doubt whether they do that today in high school, but merciless, if you will. But anyway, in the middle of the thing Jack Husted gets up. He's frightened as heck. I can't remember who hit him, but his helmet flew off. He had no helmet on, and I hit him right, square in the mouth with my face mask. Blood flyin' all over. Teeth go out. [*SL laughs*] Coach Donathan's got blood all over his trousers, and I'm thinkin', "My God, what did I do? I just destroyed this guy's face." And—and I had this—this one second of regret, one second of "This is crazy, you know.

What did I just do?" Just—'cause he was helpless, you know. And then he came over to me and put his arm around me and said, "That's what we're lookin' for here." Without hesitation. Showed everybody the blood. "You won't run sprints today." You know, and I'm thinkin', "Well, there's—somethin's wrong with this, you know." This is not right in my—in my mind. [00:13:03] And so, while sprints were going that day, he pulled me over and said, "It really wasn't right, but it is what we're lookin' for here, though. And no hesitation. This is a brutal sport. You get it. I'm proud of you. I know you're embarrassed. You hurt the kid bad. He'll get over it. Life goes on, but you're a football player, and you're a student athlete." So anyway, we were playin' in Siloam Springs later on, and—uh—and I was a defensive back, and we were very, very tough. I mean, Fayetteville High was known for its physicality. They just wore people out, whether we had enough players or—anyway, it's a great story that I've shared several times with former players, and they remember it as vividly as I do. But in the first half, I had some late hits. Whistle blew, and I piled in just like I hit Jack Husted in practice, and the flag would go, and fifteen yards for pilin' on. And—and at the end of the half, we're walkin' off the field, and the referee comes over, and he calls me

over. My number at that time was twelve, but later it was forty-four. But he said, "Number twelve," he says, "if you have one more late hit, I'm throwin' you out of the game. And coach"—and he called Coach Donathan over and said, "He's just had too many late hits, and I'm throwin' him out of the game if he has one more late hit." And I'm just kind of stunned and sayin', "Yes, sir, Mr. Referee," and so the referee walks off, and it's understood. Donathan puts his arm around me. We're walkin' to the dressing room for halftime, and he says, "If you don't have a late hit on the first play of the second half, you'll never play another down for me again." [*Laughter*]

SL: Gosh. [*Laughs*]

[00:14:43] MS: And I said, "Coach, he's gonna throw me out of the game." He said, "You heard me, son. If you don't have a late hit in the first play of the second half" [*clears throat*]—and some of my friends, like Paul Ramey, who was an All-American my senior year, and Kenny Ramey could tell the story better than I can, but anyway, I was the safety. I was the fastest guy on the team, and I was the safety on the kickoff, and we kicked off to them in the second half. Now, I'm—I'm just—the whole halftime, I'm thinkin', "My gosh, you know, this is nuts." So anyway, we kick off, and some little, innocent guy [*laughs*] from

Siloam Springs catches the ball, and Paul Ramey puts a hit on him, I mean, almost dismembers the guy. I mean, he hit him so hard on about the five or six yard line, and the guy is literally getting up to hand the ball to the referee, and I just come in and spear him right in the chest. Flags go off. Whistles are goin'. Looks like it's gonna be a fight. 'Course, Ramey knew what I had been told 'cause I told him in the dressing room. This is what he said. He said, "Just make sure I'm outta the way [*laughter*] when you do this." [00:15:44] So the referee looks at me, and he said, "He told you to do that, didn't he," about Coach Donathan, and I said, "Yes, sir, he did." And they just marked off the fifteen yards, and I stayed in the game. And I looked over at Coach Donathan, and all he did was nod his head once. That's all he did. And that was it. I had crystallized about what this was all about. It—it kinda took me to a different level as an athlete, I mean, to a different level of understanding that as vicious as this sport is, there—and the boundaries that you cross in it, that there's a—there's a reason for all of this, and I couldn't quite figure out what it was, but as I shared with you at the end of the year, there were five of us that made All-Conference, and we were all juniors. None of the seniors did, and I think the community was upset with Coach Donathan, with

the severity of which he did those kinds of things. I mean, was this right for high school kids or whatever? And—wherein I had totally embraced the whole thing. [00:16:52] I mean, you could think of it as being nuts at this time but I—the one story that really did capture the essence of our relationship, which stays with me today, was at the end of our—uh—junior year when he had been fired and he was in his office on the last day when we were doin' yearbook signings. It's—it's either the last day or the next to the last day. I'd taken my yearbook in to ask him to autograph it for me, and he was very difficult to deal with. He—it was on his time and his space, and it was normally a one-way conversation. You just listened. [*Clears throat*] But for some reason, it was—there was a connection, and all the time, he had either a wry grin or a nod like that incident that I shared with you or—but he was tough as nails. But anyway, I put—I said, "Would you please sign this?" And he said, "Put the book there. Come back at the end of school. Get outta my—get outta here." And so, I turned and went back to class and came in at the end of school and—to get my book. And it was sittin' in the same place, and I didn't know whether—what he'd done or seen it or whatever. I said, "Coach"—and he said, "Turn the inside cover. Get outta my face," is what he said. And I started

to say somethin' to him, and he said, "Get outta my face, Steele." So I picked the book up and ran across the gym floor of Fayetteville High School's gym, outside the double doors where the trophy case is, and opened the inside cover and looked at the bottom right-hand corner. I'd looked all over because there were a bunch of students had signed it. But in the bottom right-hand corner was a note from him, which said, "If I had one to pick as an athlete and a person, you're my choice." And he had *one* underlined. [*Clears throat*] And it then just said, "Coach Donathan." Well, that—that probably, in my formative years of my life, had more impact on me as developing as a man because I revered the guy so much. And I knew how he thought. I knew—uh—what he was all about. I knew what he was thinkin' I was all about, and so it just stayed with me through my life—uh—the next year in high school, about my roles and responsibilities as a student leader in school. [00:19:08] Obviously, it stayed with me in the marine corps. It was the thought that I had my entire two tours of Vietnam. Uh—it just kept coming back to me 'cause it was [*clears throat*]—my senior year I had—I was the recipient of the Randall Osborne Award. I don't know if they still give it, but it's named to the best student athlete in Fayetteville High School. I—I don't know whether they

have it. But my brother had been a recipient of it years before, and we were the first brother combination to ever receive the award. And I—I received it and that—I'm convinced because I—I didn't play basketball but just football, and—and I was in the National Honor Society and—and student activities—Key Club, 26 Club, and all that stuff. But I'm convinced that that formative—uh—formative stage of my sophomore and junior year with Jay Donathan was kinda what took me to understanding the holistic nature of all of this.

[End of verbatim transcription]

[00:20:02] And you know, I had a lotta offers to play sports in college at various schools around. I wanted to play for Coach Broyles. I wanted to play here at Arkansas. I wanted to play for Groundhog Ferrell in baseball. And it was kind of a dream, but I was so small. And really, Coach Broyles had made a arrangement with my mother that I needed to weigh 150 pounds to play football at Arkansas, and he came to my last game. We played Parkview here, and he was in the stands. And my parents—you could sign back then, right then, and Paul Ramey had. And he made me get on the scales in my last—he was in the dressing room with us, and I asked him if I could—I'd got on the scales, first of all, with all my uniform and helmet, and

[*laughs*] could you imagine?

[00:20:55] SL: I was gonna say before or after the game?

MS: No, it was after the game and . . .

SL: You'd probably lose 5 pounds during the game.

[00:20:59] MS: Well, yeah. But I mean, it wasn't even close. I mean, he laughed, and everybody standin' around, they're all [*SL laughs*] lookin' at me. And Coach Broyles said, "No, Marty, I'm—you need to get down to your jockstrap and get on the scales and"—I said, "Coach, can we wait till tomorrow? I'm so dehydrated I've lost weight." And he said, "No, I made this arrangement with your mother that I wouldn't subject you to this because of your size unless you weighed a 150 pounds. And you can play baseball for Groundhog or"—so anyway, I got on the scales, and I don't think I weighed a 120 pounds. I mean, I was . . .

SL: Yeah.

[00:21:39] MS: And it just kinda was so—had such an impact on me about, my gosh, [*laughs*] what to do. And so I had a scholarship to go to Arkansas Tech and a number of other places. And Coach Broyles had shared with me. He said, "You know, Marty, I—Darrell Royal said you could come and play for him at Texas, and there's no weight restriction," and I said, "Coach, I—they're

the enemy. I wouldn't even ever [*SL laughs*] think about goin' to play [*laughter*] for Texas." And he said, "I don't wanna play you every year, but Coach Bryant said, 'Frank, that kid can weigh 50 pounds. He can come to Alabama and play for me.'" And I said, "Coach, I—this is where I wanna come." And he said, "Well, I made the deal with your—arrangement with your mother and"—and that's why I revere Frank Broyles. I mean, he was so—another inspiration to me because I'd known him since he got here in [19]58. Been a ball boy on the sidelines from the time I was a small boy. Around him and all the coaches that he had here, the great coaches that he had here, Groundhog Ferrell, Mackenzie, Dixie White, Steve White. [00:22:45] I mean, I could just go on and on and on, all the great coaches he had while I was growin' up that were an influence on me, Hayden Fry, Johnny Majors, all of 'em. But no one—Frank had so much character and he—and that—he meant it, what he said. So I was really not committed. I'd had a offer to go play for the St. Louis Cardinals. They had beaten the Yankees in the World Series right at that time, and I had a contract to play with them. But I was so undecided. Eleven football scholarships and a baseball contract, and I was in love with my wife now, my high school sweetheart, but I was really not prepared to come up

here to not play sports. And that's kinda what happened in Fayetteville High. I think that the experience in high school was so profound because of the quality of the teachers there, because of the university, because they were—either their spouses were teachers or professors at the university or whatever, and you know, I mean, David Mullins's son was in my high school class. I mean, everybody—you think about the quality—we had more National Honor Society students at Fayetteville High than—SAT people, whatever. I mean, we just—it was a unique place because of the university. And their—kids' parents were professors here. Bright. It was a serious place to go to school. It just wasn't messin' around, and that's what just made Fayetteville High so, so special.

[00:24:14] I'm gonna jump ahead. I think I may've shared this story with you, but when I'm a two-star general later in the Asia-Pacific region, I'm in Indonesia, and it speaks to the volume or the capacity or the impact of Fayetteville High and Fayetteville, Arkansas, had on me—the university, too, but just Fayetteville High. This sums it up. The Indonesian people, which are the largest Muslim population in the world—I was there with their special operations command, and I'd been invited there to talk on the issues of stability and security in south Asia by President

Suharto. But they had a luncheon for me with all their special operations forces. Ten thousand soldiers in this luncheon. [00:24:59] And the commander, whose name was Prabowo—educated in the United States. He was Suharto's son-in-law. Said, "We have a tradition here. We all sing. Everybody's a singer. And we'd like you to sing, and we'll know the song, so one of our people will sing the song that you're going to sing after you sing it and—because everybody's a singer here." And I said, "Well, what do you mean, you'll know the song?" And he said, "Well, we know every American song. I mean, this is our culture, and we mimic—we can—we'll sound just like whoever it is." [*SL laughs*] And then he named singers, and I said, "Well, you wanna make a bet that you'll know the song?" And he said, "Sure." I said, "Okay, a Coca-Cola for—you won't know the song." He said, "I promise you, we'll know it, and you'll lose the Coca-Cola." And they had Coca-Cola sittin' out. So I got up, and I sang Fayetteville High's alma mater [*SL laughs*] in front of ten thousand people. [*Laughter*] [*Sings*] "Dear Fayetteville High"—I mean, I could sing it word for word.

[00:26:00] SL: [*Sings*] "Alma mater true."

MS: Yeah, yeah.

SL: Yeah.

MS: [*Sings*] "Our alma mater true. Dear Fayetteville High, we all hail to you."

SL: Yeah.

MS: [*Sings*] "Our colors wave, the purple and the white." Anyway, he's lookin' at me dumbstruck, and then [*SL laughs*] I finish. And they all give me a standing ovation, all ten thousand of these kids, these soldiers. And he said, "Well, you win a Coca-Cola. [*Laughs*] And what is that?" And I said, "That's my high school alma mater from Fayetteville, Arkansas." And he looked back at me [*clears throat*] and said, "That's why America's the greatest country on earth. You'll come back, and we'll sing that for you." [00:26:34] And I did go back. The next time, they sang Fayetteville High School's alma mater. [*Laughs*] Had every word down.

SL: That's amazing.

MS: It is, isn't it?

SL: It is amazing.

MS: Yeah.

SL: That's good that you tie that together like that.

[00:26:52] MS: Well, I mean, it's a hook. I mean, it really—who else would do that? I mean, I don't—again, it's not living in the past or—it's just the matter of the impact of that experience here

with the racism and the things we've talked about and the tensions, people guiding you to make the right choices between right and wrong, people guiding you that it's your responsibility to make the decision about the choice, guiding you to understand that you have to live with the choice you make. You're accountable. You're gonna be responsible. And our issue was, at that time in the [19]60s, the number one issue in America—and racism and hatred and bigotry. And Fayetteville High, Fayetteville, Arkansas, as the first integrated community south of the Mason-Dixon Line after *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education*, was this bastion of racial tolerance in a sea of racism and hatred all around us. And people like Jay Donathan and I. C. Benton—I just remembered his—that's—Mrs. Andrews, all these teachers, Velma Hall. I mean, I can go on and on and on. Mrs. Taylor. They all were inspirational. Mr. Duncan, Harry Vandergriff, everybody. Everybody. I just lost the name of Wayne, the superintendent moved to Little Rock. But they were all guiding us about how to live your life and how to make those decisions and they just—they did it. They did it. And again, some people disregarded it. I mean, high school was a—just, you know, kind of a rite of passage goin' through. But some of us who were representing the school and the community,

particularly in athletics, around baseball in Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, and football in Arkansas and Missouri, we were singularly unique in Fayetteville High School in this state. And as I shared the last time, we had better teams than everybody. [*Laughs*] We had better athletes than everybody. We had better coaches than everybody else. I mean, we were smaller, and you know, we may not have won the state champion—they didn't have a lotta that stuff back then.

SL: Right.

[00:29:01] MS: They didn't have playoffs and all that, but . . .

SL: Do you . . .

MS: . . . but we really knew we could compete with anybody.

[00:29:05] SL: You—I know you never saw Coach Donathan again after that day, but do you have any idea what ever happened with him?

MS: Well, I wouldn't wanna—yeah, he went to dental school and he—I don't think he made it all the way through. I think he had some issues in his personal life, and he became a fishing guide down in south Arkansas. And my recollection or understanding, and I just don't wanna misspeak, but I believe he ballooned up. His father had been a football player, and he ballooned up to over 300 pounds. [00:29:37] And I think that he suffered the

same fate, and I believe he died prematurely of a coronary. Yeah. And I don't know if it was while he was a fishing guide or not but—I mean, I should know that, and I don't but—again, I—you know, there's another thing about my nature is that when you remember things like that so long ago, you remember them so vividly. And the relationships that you have with people are so personal, and they're so intimate, if you will, and so profound on your life you can remember these things like, "If I had one to pick as an athlete and a person, you're my choice." It just kinda sticks with you. But what you do is you put these people in a pedestal or on a pedestal, in a box of their goodness and their greatness, if you will, and all of their shortcomings or faults are irrelevant to you. [00:30:30] I mean, it's not that you've—he was a tough guy, and there was doubt about it. I mean, you talked sometimes—like Bob White who followed me in school, I mean, he thought that he was sadistic and just was over the top on all these kinds of issues and, I guess, begrudges Jay Donathan for that. But for me, it—that was part of his raison d'être, if you will, as a football coach, but I always just found the good and put him on this pedestal for me.

[00:31:02] SL: Well, you know, football coaches, you know, the stereotype is that they are tough.

MS: Yeah.

SL: And that they can be mean. I think it's called tough love, maybe, but . . .

MS: Yeah.

SL: . . . you know, there's discipline. They're disciplinarians, and at the same time, kinda your mother.

MS: Yeah.

SL: So it's a very dynamic and complex responsibility and assignment and opportunity for both player and coach. It's a . . .

MS: Yeah.

SL: It is kind of—you work with—how you work with it . . .

MS: Yeah.

SL: . . . and develop what you can from it.

[00:31:37] MS: Well, what happened—I mean, that's a good point. I'm just thinkin' about—he was followed by a man named Ray Brown, who was a great coach at Fayetteville High for years.

SL: I was gonna ask you about Ray . . .

MS: Yeah.

SL: . . . and what your relationship was with him.

[00:31:47] MS: Well, it was a great one. And I don't think it would've worked if Ray Brown had been—in reverse, if Ray

Brown had been there my sophomore and junior year, and then I would've inherited Jay Donathan. But the fact that I had gone through this kind of rite of passage as a smaller player to be so inspired—by the time I was a senior, I clearly—I was the captain of the football team and the leader of the team. Played both ways. There were a few of us that played offense. I mean, I was on every play in every game. I was a running back and a defensive back. And as a senior, I had this responsibility, and Ray Brown clearly understood what had happened to us, the seniors, of going through that almost baptism of fire with Jay Donathan. And he knew that there wasn't anything that he could do to replicate that. It's not his nature. He wouldn't—he couldn't run us to death. I mean, we would've sit there and all died. I mean, that's the way we were, particularly the seniors. And he knew that he had a different leadership style, and it was more technique and getting the seniors to be seniors in this crisis of racism and our responsibilities as football players. And of course, my senior year, we didn't go undefeated, but we were the conference champs here and beat the Springfield schools again. But we all understood our role and responsibility, and he knew how to get inside. He had a son who was a tremendous football player, "Shorty," who was behind me, but started for us.

I mean, we just had—the chemistry was just right with everybody. And I don't wanna say—demean any of his style, but we would laugh—I guess the seniors would laugh. We're doin' two-a-days of—you know, them thinking, the new coaches thinking, that they were putting us through some ritual, which, you know, in lingo, I'd never used it back then, but I mean, we had already been through the Bataan Death March, so [*laughter*] . . .

SL: Yeah.

[00:33:47] MS: . . . there's nothin' you're gonna do here that's gonna change anything that happened. And we all knew about Bear Bryant at Texas A&M from the—you know, all of us who were athletes. We all—being around the Razorbacks, we knew what they were doin'. Our coaches—I think my senior year, we had Johnny Majors come over and Hayden Fry 'cause we ran the same systems that Frank was runnin' at the university. [00:34:12] Fayetteville High did—ran the same plays. But what had happened—it was just perfect. It was a perfect fit, and we had some tremendously gifted football players on my senior year—All-State, All—again, Paul Ramey was an All-America, top thirty-three football players in the country, and he truly was a tremendous football player. And I think eighteen of us had

Division I scholarships or could play anywhere. I mean, Ronnie Cole went on to be a two- or three-time All-America, played for the 49ers, and I mean, we just had some great football players here that—and black and white. Many of the kids behind us, Robert Wilkes and Brad Jenkins, they really blossomed, and they were great players later because of the leadership we provided them both in football and basketball and track, wherever, because we all had been hardened by this experience of how far you could push yourself, what you could do, things you didn't believe you could do that you could do, all those things that some places it works, it's electric, and you get it. And some places, it's a façade, some guy tryin' to be a tough guy and doesn't pack it. [*Laughs*]

SL: Yeah.

MS: But anyway—but Ray Brown was—he was a great follow-on to Jay Donathan, and that's why they were such a success for years after that because of his presence.

[00:35:35] SL: By the time I got to Ray Brown, we were runnin' the 5-3 defenses. Did he . . .

MS: Yeah.

SL: . . . put that in, or was that a Donathan defense that . . .

MS: We had a 6-4. I mean, it was interesting. We ran a monster

defense 'cause Arkansas did and—but variations of all that, and probably Ray Brown got away from what Frank was doin' just because of his personnel and his son. But I would say he's probably the one who brought that. I'm—I remember doing that my senior year. [00:36:10] He was a tremendous coach.

SL: He was a great coach.

MS: Tremen—yeah, he really was and he—very soft spoken. Kinda didn't look you in the eye. He'd look over his glasses and look down, and you don't know whether you're gettin' chewed out or what. You [*SL laughs*]—he never was direct or anything, but just, you know, "It's time to step up," or whatever. I mean, he was wonderful at halftime about what it was gonna take to win the game or—and never—I mean, I never heard him raise his voice. I just . . .

[00:36:42] SL: I heard him one time.

MS: Did you?

SL: Yeah, in a football game.

MS: Yeah. He coulda . . .

SL: Springdale football game.

MS: . . . done it, but I, again, I don't remember. I blocked that out if he did.

SL: Uh-huh. Yeah.

MS: But not the case with Coach Donathan.

SL: He wasn't really yelling at anybody in a negative way; he was yelling to get us motivated up . . .

MS: Yeah.

SL: . . . 'cause we were kinda listless in the fourth quarter . . .

MS: Yeah.

SL: . . . of a game . . .

MS: Yeah.

SL: . . . against Springdale.

MS: Yeah.

SL: We came back and won, so . . .

MS: Yeah, yeah.

[00:37:04] SL: . . . it was good, but there was a couple other things you mentioned, and I can't remember if we talked about this in our earlier part of our interview. But you mentioned—and this is probably after—I don't know if you went to this place in high school or after, but the Rockwood Club . . .

MS: Yeah.

[00:37:22] SL: You mentioned the [*MS laughs*] Rockwood Club. Now, was Ronnie Hawkins . . .

MS: Sure.

SL: . . . at the Rockwood Club . . .

MS: Yeah.

SL: . . . at that time?

MS: Yeah.

SL: And did you know Ronnie?

MS: Absolutely. And the other guy, he's been on the board here, was the owner, John Tolleson.

[00:37:37] SL: John Tolleson.

MS: Is that—yeah.

SL: He wasn't the owner of the Rockwood . . .

MS: Okay.

SL: . . . but he was a rival of . . .

MS: It was—yeah, yeah.

SL: . . . Ronnie's.

MS: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

[00:37:42] MS: Ronnie played at our high school prom and sock hop, Ronnie Hawkins and the Hawks, so he had—we all knew him. He was a fixture, really, and he was so good. We used to think—I mean, my gosh, we had all this talent around us. I remember Jerry Lee Lewis came to the university my senior year in high school, and I heard him play at the SAE house. [*SL laughs*] And I'm—it was the same type of thing. You're a senior in high

school. They're rushin' you to be an SAE. You're in the SAE fraternity house, and here's Jerry Lee Lewis standing on a piano playin', you know, and you're doin' things you shouldn't be doin' as a eighteen-year-old, but I mean, that's kinda what the environment was here. I mean, yeah, but the Huddle Club—all of those were all part of our life here. I didn't do it an awful lot, but just enough exposure to know that it existed. [00:38:43] Anyway, I—there were so many stories. I think I shared the one with the track down in Little Rock.

SL: Yep.

MS: Yeah, that was . . .

SL: Yeah, we got that one.

MS: . . . yeah, that was a major event in my life here.

[00:38:51] SL: Now, there's another—just looking—glancing over your year—now, what year did you graduate?

MS: [Nineteen] sixty-four.

SL: [Nineteen] sixty-four. Now, is—that's the same year university won the national championship.

MS: It's correct. That following fall—my freshman year here was when we won—started the twenty-two-game winning streak and won the national championship. Tremendous football players. But see, my litmus or reference point for all the years

subsequent, because I'd played football in the marine corps and was an All-Marine football player 'cause I weighed over a 150 pounds, but I was the only person on the All-Marine team that didn't play college football and just had played at Fayetteville High. But I, again, I knew that I could play, and I was an All-Marine baseball player, All-Marine fast-pitch softball player—the only marine fast-pitch team that went to the national championships. I was on that. So I knew that I had the talent to play at any level and did it. But for me—again, Paul Ramey, who played at Arkansas, he got hurt in the high school all-star game and kinda played one-legged his entire four years up here. If he'd've been—if he'd've remained healthy, he'd've been a force at the university. [00:40:02] But every time I'd come back to see him—he dated my girlfriend, my wife of forty years, while I was in Vietnam, which is another great story, but perhaps my wife wouldn't appreciate if I left it in the archives of the university. But anyway . . .

SL: [*Laughs*] Well . . .

[00:40:18] MS: It is a great story that he dated her. But—'cause I wanted him to. I wanted her to have somebody to go out with and so on. But they—the—whenever I'd come back, I'd always see Paul, and we'd talk, and it was always about Razorback

football. And he would always say, "You could—you'd start here. I mean, you would play. It doesn't matter about your size. If you would've came here, you woulda been"—'cause by then I weighed a 175 pounds, and I was, you know, bigger.

SL: You'd filled out.

[00:40:49] MS: Yeah, I'd filled out. And he said, "You'd've played. I mean, you were better than anybody we ever had here at defensive back, faster, hit smarter. You'd've played." And I think I shared this with you, but when I came back as a captain in [19]72, it's when—what's it—Joe Ferguson was here. And we played Southern Cal in the opener and got swamped and [*unclear word*]. But anyway, Coach Broyles had come to me about comin' out when I came back to play 'cause I—by then, I'd been an All-Marine football player. It was between tours of—I'd come outta two tours of Vietnam, and I was comin' to be a student, and I had a wife and two children. And he saw me about playin', and I gave it some serious thought about playin', and people like Paul Ramey said, "You should do it." And Coach Broyles wanted me to do it.

[00:41:42] SL: Well, you'd met the weight requirement.

MS: Yeah, yeah. [*SL laughs*] I met the weight requirement. My mother was happy and . . .

SL: There you go.

MS: But—and my wife and I talked about it, but I realize that I was a marine, an officer of marines, and my—it was time to put that stuff behind me. Coach Broyles said, "Marty, it's just a great story, you know, from where you've been, what you've done. It's a great thing if you'd do it." And we had a wonderful couple of conversations about it and—but I said no.

[00:42:13] SL: Well, I wanna go back to that in just a minute, but I wanna talk about all the things that are written in your yearbook. And it's—it looks, just at a glance, that people—kids came to you . . .

MS: Yeah.

SL: . . . with their problems. Now, how did this counseling . . .

MS: Well, I think—I don't know.

SL: . . . stuff happen?

MS: That's a great—I think—again, it's how I'm hardwired. It is about saving the world. I mean, I know a lot about my personality from formidable tests and things like that, so I know how I'm hardwired. [00:42:52] Back then, I think it was a empathy and an effective listener and problems that people thought were significant. I didn't really think that they were that significant or put 'em in proper perspective for them because of

what I'd—the experience that I had growin' up, my family experience and so on. So what happened was is that early on in the socialization, I guess, puberty, seventh, eighth grade, [*conversation in background*] I had had so much education and training . . .

TM: S . . .

MS: . . . from the nuns, my priest, Father Edward.

TM: Excuse me, Scott.

SL: You know what? We gotta stop this guy off the phone.

[Tape stopped]

[00:43:29] SL: We're talkin' about how the kids would come to you . . .

MS: Yeah.

SL: . . . for counseling, and you'd . . .

MS: It started early on. I—and I don't know what the—it was the—I think, bein' a effective listener is listening to someone and walkin' 'em through what they were goin' through and then talking about options for solutions of how to deal with it. And you know, the—during that period of your life post-puberty, it's boy/girl and struggling with relationships, and "I'm in love, and she jilted me," and girls with, "He doesn't understand," and all this kinda stuff. And I—what happened was, is once that

occurred, the reputation starts and it—the—people just come outta the woodwork and they—"You need to go talk to him [*SL laughs*] about it." [*Laughs*] So by the time I'm a sophomore in high school, I had women who were juniors and seniors comin' to me about their boyfriends and so on. Nothin' to do with me. It was about their relationship with someone else and seeking advice, and I would give it. And I had—although I started dating my wife when we were in the tenth grade, we both dated others. She was very attractive. Seniors were dating her, and I was dating juniors and seniors when I was a sophomore. And it really wasn't about so much my relationship with the woman as much as it was about them confiding in me about their real boyfriend, who was their age, and they had just broken up, or they didn't wanna break up or—you know, but they just wanted to talk to me about it. So we—you hook the alcohol, you hook the parties, the university—I remember sittin' over here where Hayden McIlroy's house is right behind the Walton—right there on that . . .

SL: Yeah, on the corner.

[00:45:21] MS: . . . and sittin' in that—in front yard over the time I was a sophomore or junior or senior in high school and probably having, without exaggeration, twenty-five conversations with

people. It sometimes went on all night long, just talkin' to 'em about their love life and their problems and recommendations. And never was about me givin' the answer. It was about walking them to the answer, makin' them come out themselves to say, "Well, this is how I'm gonna deal with all this." And it was rewarding, first of all. It was very much in consonance with my mother, who was a nurse, very nurturing. It wasn't about me, or it wasn't an ego thing. I never even reflected—someone would say—if the girl was very good-lookin', one of my friends may—"What are you doin'? What's"—and I'd say, "You know, she"—it was all in confidence. It was never like high school, where everybody's talkin' about their exploits. I never did that, never breached the trust in a relationship with anybody. It was sorta like bein' a priest, if you will, in a confessional.

SL: That's what I'm . . .

MS: And—yeah.

SL: Yeah.

[00:46:22] MS: And it was alwa—they always knew that they could trust anything that they told me. It was always in private, never would be revealed to anybody over any time.

SL: And their ex-boyfriends didn't bow up or . . .

MS: No, the ex-boyfriends would say things like, "I hope you can

help" or—they all had kinda great lines about 'em. And they were—I mean, a lotta guys I talked to, too, because they were screwed up in my mind. I mean, their mind—the head was in the wrong place about all this, and you know, they were typical high school guys, doin' stupid things that they shouldn't've been doin' or things that they would probably regret later on. But they—I never really suffered. [00:47:06] One thing—I have a great story. I may've mentioned it before, but Ronnie Cole, who's been married to Helen Langham—they got married in high school. I was the best man in his wedding. She was pregnant, and she was our homecoming queen. [*SL laughs*] And . . .

[00:47:28] SL: "Dear Fayetteville High."

MS: "Dear Fayetteville High." [*SL laughs*] And I was the captain of the team, and our homecoming game, I escorted her to crown her on the fifty yard line. And Ronnie was a six foot two, 220 pound—I mean, he's the guy that played pro football later, just a tremen—but tough as nails. He was one of those guys that Jay Donathan kicked in the fanny. Did not pat on the back. He used to call him Ronnie—I—again, he would say, "I bet you squat to pee." [*SL laughs*] And it would make Ronnie Cole so mad he'd start foamin' at the mouth. I don't know if I shared that with you before. But anyway . . .

SL: No.

[00:48:04] MS: . . . he would just get absolutely livid in the huddle, and he'd do this during a game. After missin' a block or somethin', he'd call him over. He called him Sister Cole. [*Laughter*]

SL: Gosh.

MS: And, "I bet you squat to pee." And he'd come back in the huddle, and he'd foam with spit comin' out, saliva. [*SL laughs*] Anyway, he would say, "Better get the ambulances lined up," and he was serious. And I'd go over to Coach Donathan and say, "You know, it's over." And what would happen was he'd just start pummeling the guy on the opposite side, and they had to put 'em in the north end zone there, the ambulances, and they'd just line up there to truck 'em in to [*laughter*]—but that's how he responded. [00:48:42] Now, subsequently, Ronnie Cole became a great football coach in Jefferson City, Missouri, state champions, and I think they even won a mythical national championship. And Ronnie used to have me come speak to his football teams up there as a general in the marine corps. But he would always speak about Fayetteville High. And you know, the—they had these marvelous teams, and he would describe his players to me as, "Who will play on Sunday," meaning who'll

make it the NFL, who'll play in Division I. He had players that never played for him that would play college football. That's how big their program was. But I would always ask him, "Could we beat these guys?" And they're huge, now. I mean, these kids are . . .

SL: Yeah.

[00:49:21] MS: . . . two eighty, 290, 310, and you know, Ronnie was one of our biggest players at 220. And he would always say, "Absolutely, yes," that we would just beat 'em up [*SL laughs*] because we were so much tougher than they were; we had Jay Donathan instilled in us; that—he said, "Marty, we'd just beat the hell outta these kids if we played 'em." I said, "God, look at—they're so huge." Then he said, "No. Don't have it here like we did." I said, "Will they foam at the mouth to get him goin'?" He said, "Where he patted you on the back and did that to me, I've never done what he did to me. I mean, it was an inspiration for me to be a college football player, and it gave me the toughness, but I don't coach that way. I mean, I'm more of a pat-on-the-back guy because of what I watched—what he did for you. It's why I have you back here to talk to"—and I did it several times. But anyway, I got off track there, but I was talkin' about . . .

SL: Well, that's okay.

[00:50:16] MS: Yeah, there was something I wanted to say to hook back to the—oh, the high school homecoming game and counseling. And the last thing, when I left the dressing room to go out to escort his girlfriend, soon to be his wife 'cause at that time she was probably pregnant in high school, I said, "Well, I'm gonna go out, and I'm really honored. Ronnie, I'm sorry that you're not gonna be able to do this with Helen," because I was the captain of the team. And he looked at me, said, "You kiss her on the lips, I'm gonna kill you." [*Laughter*] So I looked up at him, I said, "You probably will, won't you?" So I walked out, and I'm tellin' Helen this story 'cause she's nervous, and she's just . . .

SL: Yeah, sure.

[00:50:57] MS: . . . absolutely, stunningly beautiful walkin' on the field, and I'm walkin' with her. I saw it in the yearbook. They have a picture of her there, and my hand is the only thing in the picture. But I said to Helen, I said, "Ronnie just told me if I kissed you that he would kill me." And Helen looked at me, and I didn't know she was pregnant at the time. I think she was, but anyway, she said, "Well, if you don't kiss me on the lips and put your tongue in my mouth, I'm gonna be very upset." [*Laughs*]

And I said, "Helen?" And she said, "You heard me, Marty." So I did.

SL: Oh!

[00:51:25] MS: I did, when I kissed her, just a slight French kiss, and she smiled, just absolutely beaming radiant. And I said, "Helen, you're absolutely stunning. You'll remember this night for the rest of your life." And she said, "I'll remember this." She said, "Ronnie will be okay with this." And I said, "I'm not tellin' him." [*Laughter*] But she did. She told him that night, and he came to me. He said, "Steele?" And I said—so I said, "Ronnie, you're gonna be fine." So when I was—there was a small Baptist church over by Jefferson School where Ronnie was married later, and I was his best man at his wedding in high school, and we've maintained a close relationship forever because—isn't it great stuff, though? I mean, it really kinda is from . . .

SL: It is. It's great hometown stuff.

[00:52:04] MS: Yeah, and he's still married to Helen, and they have—you know, they—you don't think that those things work, but they do, and they did, just like mine did with my wife.

[00:52:12] SL: Yeah. Now, okay. I think we need to talk a little bit about Cindy.

MS: Yeah.

SL: So y'all got together at St. Joe?

MS: No . . .

SL: No?

MS: . . . she was at Woodland, and I met her at a dance, and she asked me to dance.

[00:52:26] SL: Do you remember what the dance was? What that song was?

MS: No, I don't. She does, probably. I remember we—in Fayetteville High our sophomore year they had Sadie Hawkins.

SL: Yep.

MS: And she asked me for the date in Sadie Hawkins the first time. And I had danced with her in the ninth grade 'cause St. Joseph's used to go to the parties at Woodland. They invited us to come, and they would allow us to be at their parties, which was a big thing for us; but anyway, we did. But she invited me to Sadie Hawkins on the date, and I mean, I—she was extremely stunning and—but she was datin' a senior, somebody on the football team and anyway, I—she said—and she will tell you to this day that she knew that she was gonna marry me that—from that point forward, and all the rest of it was just kinda goin' through the motions until we were seniors when we were—we started datin' seriously after—in our senior year, whenever all

the falderal had gone off and—but we had one of those dramatic relationships because I was so serious, and she wasn't. She was an average student, liked to party and have fun, and I was always tryin' to solve the world's problems, talkin' about the Cuban Missile Crisis or savin' the world from nuclear threat from the Soviet Union or—we'd go—our dates were pretty simple. We would go out. I had a car that I paid fifty bucks for, a Pack—a [19]52 Packard. And we would go out to Vic Mon Drive-in, and I would buy her two iced teas. We'd each have an iced tea, which were ten cents apiece. [00:53:58] And we'd just sit there and talk about the world's problems and go park, and police'd come and [*SL laughs*] shine the lights [*laughs*] in our windows. We found different spots around town. But didn't have much money to do anything. But most of the conversations were always heavy about the world and politics, and obviously, my senior year was when President Kennedy was assassinated, so it was the, you know, the end of an era.

SL: Camelot.

MS: Camelot. And it was very serious because that happened in November, obviously, and that—like—we've talked about this before, but you always remember where you were and for that—it's December [19]41 for that generation; Kennedy's

assassination; 9/11. I mean, you know where you were, but for us it was—you know, our yearbook was dedicated to him. But it was serious 'cause this—the world was not—we had known it because of the race issue, but it was a different place after that, and we were goin' into the world. Some of those quotes that you can read that were in my senior yearbook, it really speaks about responsibility. "We're gonna have to get involved. We're gonna have to be held accountable." I mean, that's the kinda stuff I was sayin' when I was a senior in high school and—because I was serious. And my girl—my wife, my girlfriend, she was attracted to that and was attracted to this nurturing relationship. Never jealous of other girls. She would send 'em to me, you know, to—"You need to talk to so-and-so about such-and-such." [00:55:33] And always knew that the confidence was there, that it remained in confidence, and always knew that they would be better off for it at the end. So we had a wonderful, a wonderful relationship. Part of the reason to stay at the university when I coulda gone someplace else to school or go to the Cardinals was, I was madly in love with her and, you know, I—when I left after one semester—I went to the university for one semester and then enlisted in the marine corps. It was still that I was in love with her, not fulfillin' who I was, had all

these opportunities, kicked 'em all away, didn't really know—knew I wasn't gonna be a pre-med student anymore—knew—this is—somethin's wrong, but the glue was her, you know. And I just had to go figure out what the heck I was gonna do in my life. And that's when I enlisted in the marine corps and I—after one semester at the university.

SL: Okay.

MS: [*Unclear words*]

[00:56:27] SL: Before we get to that, I wanna ask you to help me with somethin'. We're very interested in Arkansas music, and we've got a couple of sessions with Ronnie Hawkins.

MS: Oh, neat.

SL: And I've just recently, a few months ago, found—someone called me and said they had a recording of that prom dance . . .

MS: No kiddin'.

SL: . . . at Fayetteville High School with Ronnie Hawkins.

MS: No kiddin'.

SL: Can you describe visually what it was like . . .

MS: Yeah.

SL: . . . being in front of Ronnie Hawkins?

MS: Yeah, I tell you, it was electric. Anytime he was up there—everybody in his band was so gifted—the drummer—and I can't

remember a lotta their names right now, but the songs were so soulful and so rhythmic for the times. And in our view, he was so much better than anybody else that was out there, and here he was from Fayetteville. And you could understand what he was sayin'—the—all the—"Georgia"—I mean, I can't remember the—all the names of the songs, but I mean, I just—it was electric, and he had all in the palm of his hand for makin' the place jump and jive and then the slow dances, and he didn't have to say anything. I mean, just six bars of music, and it was—you know, everybody was out there. And he'd play all night. He never—I don't know how they did it. I mean, but he—we had a dance in the school cafeteria that he came to play in, and I mean, it was truly mesmerizing just to listen to the guy and . . .

SL: Well, he . . .

[00:58:08] MS: . . . he had such a profound effect on all of us. I was—my senior year I was the sop hop—sock hop king. [*SL laughs*] Elected king of the sock hop, and Kathy Chain, who's married to Tommy DeWeese, was the sock hop queen. And they were in love back then, I mean, since the seventh grade, and still are married today and live in Fayetteville. But you know, when I remember when I sat down—there's a photo in my—in

the—my senior yearbook, and I remember talkin' to her, and what we were talkin' about was Ronnie Hawkins. I mean, that's what the conversation was, just the impact that he was havin' on us with all of it but . . .

SL: Well, he was a kind of a natural athlete himself.

MS: Yeah.

SL: And . . .

MS: Yeah.

SL: . . . did he do athletic things on the . . .

MS: Well, one thing that—he was movin' around a lot, and he was perspiring profusely, you know. And as much as we were dancing, he was performing, so he was soakin' wet with sweat. I mean, that's somethin'—a visual that I remember of him. [00:59:10] But I—another thing that I remember—he'd play a song, a slow song, and we would say, "Play it again," and he'd do that. [*SL laughs*] You know, we'd just stand there [*laughs*] and tell him to do it again, and he'd do it again, you know, just without missin' a beat and . . .

SL: Well, I know . . .

[00:59:28] MS: I mean, he used to kinda hop acro—I mean, he did a lotta things that were so ahead of his time, like Bo Diddly. I mean, he was a white guy doin' the same thing. He had the

same moves, the same—and they were just tremendously gifted musicians. All of 'em. And it made you so proud that, you know, he was from here. So he was special. He really was.

[00:59:48] SL: You know, I think he had the predecessor to the—Michael Jackson's moonwalk.

MS: Yeah, he did.

SL: Ronnie called it the camel walk.

MS: Yeah, he did, and that's what I was sayin'. He was movin' across the stage. I mean, I wouldn't—he did, and he had his guitar at the same time that he was doin' it. That's what I was talkin' about a moment ago. I mean, all those moves and walks and—he was soulful. He was way ahead of his time, I thought—just . . .

[01:00:13] SL: I've also heard that he was capable of doing backflips.

MS: I don't remember seein' that.

SL: You don't?

MS: It coulda happened, but . . .

SL: Okay.

MS: . . . I don't remember that. But he was somethin' else. He was ours, too. That's the other thing. And so we all knew him from town, and I mean, I don't know how many times I heard him

play over my lifetime. You know, just—and each one was better than the one before.

[01:00:35] SL: And then there was also John Tolleson.

MS: Yeah.

TM: Excuse me, Scott, we need to—it's . . .

SL: It's noon?

TM: It's—well, it's tape time.

SL: Okay.

MS: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[01:00:44] SL: Okay, Marty, we've had lunch. We're on our second tape of today. We've been—we're still [*MS laughs*] talkin' about Fayetteville.

MS: Yeah.

SL: There's so—and part of our problem is, is that you and I [*MS laughs*] know so many of the same families and the same institutions and—so it's hard for me not to linger on your earlier years. We do need to get to your career at some point in time.

MS: Yeah. [*Laughs*]

[01:01:14] SL: But we were just talkin' about a guy named Doug Douglas, and we were also talkin' about Mad Dog Cummings.

MS: Yes.

SL: And you were good friends with Steve Cummings.

MS: Yes.

SL: Do you wanna talk a little bit about Steve?

MS: Yeah, I do. First of all, his brother, Doug Cummings, is my age, and so we kinda grew up together and [*SL clears throat*] played together, and there's three Cummings boys. Gordy was the youngest. He was a couple years behind me, but I knew them all very well. But Steve—again, another one of those nurturing relationships—when I was in high school, Steve's about four years ahead of me, as I recall. I knew him from junior high and watched him play football, and he was a great football player at Fayetteville High, and he went to the University of Kansas to play football. [01:02:01] But one summer when I was workin' for Brennan-Boyd Construction Company, they hired Steve. I had been there a couple of years, and I think it was between my junior and senior year, and it was a very difficult job. We built a lotta the buildings in Fayetteville. The Carlson Terrace sticks out the most. And the work was very serious, ditch-digging work and pick and shovel, but Mr. Joe Brennan, who was an influence in my life, [*SL clears throat*] wouldn't tolerate slackers. And he used to hire people in the morning. When he would tell me that if anyone was found around the watercooler, you'd be fired by

noon, and I used to—he used to tell me, "Don't ever get around the watercooler 'cause you'll be gone, too, Steele," even though he knew my dad, and I really did work hard. But he was true to his word, and they fired people by the droves every day. [01:02:58] Well, one year he—they hired Mad Dog, [*laughter*] who was a college student comin' back. And they paired Mad Dog with me for me to be the work model to emulate. [*SL laughs*] And Mr. Brennan told me that and Doug—or Steve—Mad Dog—he really didn't wanna work. He just wanted the money. By—about that time we were probably makin' $2.20 an hour and talk about a storyteller. He did—wanted to do no work; wanted me to do all the work; and wanted to just talk [*SL laughs*] and shoot the bull all day. Well, there was a unique thing that happened that—in that time that really kinda stood out with the relationship that I had with Steve, which carried with us all of our lives until, unfortunately, he took his own life. And it was always the centerpiece of our opening of every conversation we ever had. We were buildin' Carlson Terrace, and there was a new methodology for laying footers in the construction projects, and it was cardboard. And what you did, you had flat sheets of cardboard that had wax on them, and you folded the boxes up and then put metal bandings, three of them, on them and then

laid them in lieu of steel at the base of a ditch or the footing of a building. And because of the way they were constructed, they could stand so many hundred thousand pounds per square inch, and you could pour concrete on top of 'em, and they were just as good as if you had rebar in there. [01:04:31] This was a—so this was a new technology. It was kind of out of the box. And simultaneous with that, this particular summer—blazing hot in Fayetteville like it is in many summers—there was a strike with the concrete company, Arkhola Sand and Gravel or whatever it was called. I think that's what it was called back then. And so this project, bidded project, needed to stay on course, and Mr. Brennan and Mr. Boyd bought their own concrete truck, and they bought their own concrete. And two things [*laughs*] happened where the train came down—well, the Fayetteville train station there, and Mr. Brennan came to me and wanted Steve and I to go unload all the concrete—98-pound, 99.6-pound bags of concrete layin' there on this flat car. Ten thousand bags. [*Laughter*] [*SL clears throat*] So I drove the pickup truck, and so it was supposed to be Steve and I. And we had been on this detail making these cardboard boxes, folding them and folding them. We wore hard hats. It was hotter than blazes. The wax would melt and get all over you, get burns on you, and we were

doin' this and foldin' and puttin' the ACCO fasteners on 'em, and we got pretty good at it. And Mr. Brennan would come over, and he was startin' to say how many per minute, per hour, per shift, per day we would have to produce. And Steve used to just sit there and let me do the talkin', and he never liked to do any work. I mean, he just—he would complain and tell these stories and swear and every—we'd fold the boxes, and he had to take a little bit of muscle, and he would be complaining and had it all under his breath just to me—hilarious. I couldn't stop laughin'. [*SL laughs*] [01:06:23] And Mr. Brennan would look at me laughing, and he knew that Steve was complaining 'cause he really didn't wanna work. "Slow down, Steele. Slow down. We don't need to do this many boxes. [*SL laughs*] Would you please stop? You know, nobody's watchin'," you know. So, I mean, I—he just had me in stitches and we—so when we got this task to go do the concrete, I'm drivin' the pickup, and Steve's sittin' with me, and he says, "I'm not unloadin' any of this." I said, "Steve, it's gonna be a two-man job here," and he said, "No way." [*Laughter*] They sent us both over there. It's ten thousand bags of concrete. I mean, we gotta—so he went down and sat in the truck. Sat in the truck and so I got two 99—or I think they were 99.6- or 98.6-, 100-pound bags of

concrete on my shoulders to load 'em in from the flat car into our little truck to deliver to the site to mix, to do—and Steve's just sittin' there watchin'. Won't do anything. So I said, "You know, this is crazy." And I'm gettin' burns. I don't know if you know anything about concrete, but I mean, I would just burn a hole right through your T-shirt, which was all we were wearin', hard hats, Levi's, and T-shirts. And it's just burnin' holes through, and I got these big burns [*laughs*] on my shoulders, and he hadn't lifted a one, I mean, lifted a one. So we go—do this for several iterations 'cause you can only lift so many or put so many in the back of a pickup truck. [01:07:50] And finally, I said, "Why don't you just stay here and make boxes," 'cause we knew that one guy could make the box. And he said, "Well, I'm not doin' any concrete [*laughs*] [*unclear words*] any concrete bags." And I said, "Okay. Well, you do the boxes, and I'll tell Mr. Brennan that we need to keep the boxes goin' because once this starts happenin', and we're pourin' concrete, we're not gonna have enough boxes." We had these piles of these flat sheets of cardboard, so Steve said, [*breathes through teeth*] "Don't think I can do that. I don't think I can do those boxes alone." [*Laughter*] I said, "What do you mean? What do you mean? You're not doin' the concrete. You can't do the boxes?

You can do the boxes alone. You know that I"—he said, [*breathes through teeth*] "Don't think so." [*Laughter*] So he continued to go in the truck and didn't—and I did the whole ten thousand bags, and he sat in the truck. And, 'course, we had a deal I never would say anything, and then we'd made boxes, and so he, for thirty years after that until his death, would always thank me for coverin' for him and never droppin' a dime on him to Mr. Brennan about not unloadin' the concrete truck and did it all myself. And so I—every time I came to Fayetteville for those years, Steve—and all kinds of issues with drugs and alcohol and so on—he would always talk to me about his life and what he had done good and what he'd done bad when he divorced his wife. And you know, his nickname wasn't Mad Dog back then, or I didn't know it. [01:09:15] He was always Steve to me. But I started talkin' to him more and then callin' him on the phone, as he was troubled by all these thing—demons that he had. And he really did—he shared with me his thoughts of taking his own life, and I'd try to encourage him just to—it's—everything's okay and so on. But he always, no matter what, he always said, "You've got to see me every time you come," and I always did. We'd always go to lunch together out at the country club or someplace or just sit under a tree. We would sit under a

tree and talk. And I used to do that with John Lewis, too, by the way. But he would always share with me his greatest fears and his biggest demons. And I'd listen and then say what I thought he could do. And the last time that I saw him, we went out to the country club and had lunch, and we were talkin', and he was near the end when he really was in bad shape. And he was addicted to Listerine back then. [01:10:16] He was no longer drinkin' alcohol and thinking that he wasn't. But he had cases of Listerine in the trunk of his car, and he was drinkin' the Listerine. And I—you know, I revered the guy so much, and we were so emotional with one another, huggin' each other, and he would joke about that was his addiction, but he always had clean breath, you know. [*SL laughs*] And I would say, "Steve, you just—this is killin' you. You can't be doin' this. This is alcohol and"—and he said, "I'll be all right." And then the—he said, "This'll probably be the last time you'll see me," when I was leavin' town once, and I think—week or so later he took his life. So I miss him a lot.

SL: Well, he was a character.

MS: Well, he really was. Tremendously gifted athlete, though. But funny and lazy, [*SL laughs*] and he knew it. He'd—just—it was just really fun to be around the guy for me.

[01:11:19] SL: What about Doug Douglas?

MS: Well, I—as I indicated earlier, at one time when I was in junior high, I had a girlfriend, which was Doug's sister, Ann, and that's how I met him, because of her, and that they used to have parties over at the Fulbright house on Mount Nord, and Ann and I—and I got to know him, and then through the years, I'd come back and play golf with him up at the country club or—and followed him along, and he would bring me up to speed with Ann 'cause she married Frank Kelly, who we went—I went to high school with, too, so I'd kinda keep up with Ann and what was goin' on with the distributorship 'cause Frank, I guess, worked for—I'm tryin' to get it all right, but I'm—I believe he worked for the beer distributorship, and then he maybe has his own thing now. I don't remember. But anyway . . .

SL: Yeah.

MS: Yeah, I think so.

[01:12:20] SL: Well, Doug had the Schlitz distributorship.

MS: Yeah, yeah. Okay. Well, somewhere in there—I mean, I—the Budweiser guy—I just lost his name now—Budweiser dealer . . .

SL: Yeah.

MS: . . . distributorship.

SL: That would be . . .

MS: I can't believe I've lost it.

SL: Yeah, now you're embarrassing me 'cause . . .

MS: Yeah.

SL: . . . I know him, too.

MS: Yeah. Me, too. He . . .

SL: I'll think of it in just a minute.

[01:12:45] MS: Yeah. I can't believe it either. But anyway, I used to just keep up with him, and he'd tell me the stories of what was goin' on. He was kinda one of my sources in Fayetteville to tell me what was goin' on but that—not much more than that. I just—he'd speak about Doug. I mean, I always heard the stories about him from Jim McCord. He used to share with me Doug Douglas stories of all these crazy things that he would do and the fun that he was havin'. Golly, what's the other guy's name? Yeah.

TM: I can see him. Glasses, curly hair now.

MS: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

MS: Yeah.

SL: [*TM clears throat*] Oh, I almost got it.

MS: Yeah, I do, too.

SL: We'll think of it in a minute.

MS: Yeah, yeah.

SL: It'll come out and . . .

[01:13:28] MS: Well, he dated my sister for a while, and I got to—and I really did know him through the years, too, and stayed connected with him.

SL: McBride.

MS: Yeah, Bob McBride.

SL: Bob McBride.

MS: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

MS: Yeah. Sorry, Bob. But anyway . . .

SL: Boy, I'm so glad I thought of that. [*TM laughs*]

MS: Yeah, yeah.

SL: I would've been miserable.

MS: Anyway, [*SL clears throat*] but he—I would keep up with him and, really, all the people from Fayetteville older than I was, I would just stay connected with 'em when I came back and kinda trek around town to catch up on what was goin' on in their lives and how they were doin' with their marriages or divorces or . . .

SL: Right.

[01:13:59] MS: . . . families and—but it's all been meaningful to me because I watched them grow up. My sister, who is four years

older, just like your brother that—I mean, I was able to stay connected to all those people through her and just—you know, what everybody was doin', 'cause it just meant so much to me.

[01:14:23] SL: Okay, so you fall in love with Cindy in high school.

MS: Yeah.

SL: So much so that [*MS laughs*] it really influences what you chose not to do as far as your athletic career. And about this same time, you're—do you get a story from your . . .

MS: Yeah, my dad.

SL: . . . stepfather . . .

MS: Yeah, my . . .

SL: Your dad.

MS: Yeah, that's the—that same period is when he shares with me his story of his experiences in World War II as a prisoner of war in Stalag Luft 1 in Barth, Germany. And as I'd shared with you before, he took all day—I took a day outta school, and he took a day off work and just from start to finish told me the story of his experience of being a pilot, a P-47 Thunderbolt pilot, and being shot down on his thirteenth mission, evading the Germans and the French Underground for weeks and then being captured in a hay truck incident where everybody was killed but him and then—a remarkable story of courage, and then being a prisoner

of Stalag Luft 1 and his insatiable desire to stay alive and survive the experience, but the profound impact of what being a POW had on him and how it affected his life, how it affected his thought process, his value system. I'd shared that his license plate was POW13 till the day he died. We never had a Japanese car or a German car in our driveway. He wasn't so mad at the German people per se, but he was treated and abused like most of the prisoners were by his handlers or the guards. And towards the end of the war, he was—they were all very old men because all the young ones had gone off to fight the Russians on the Eastern Front and Stalag Luft 1 is up in the northeast portion of Germany. And they were very angry and bitter men at the end of the war that they had lost, and it was over, and so they took it out on the prisoners. And my dad had been beaten profusely, almost to death, and he was very angry about that, that—one, tenacious in that he survived it, but he never really forgave them, nor ever really recovered. I don't know what that word means in this context, but never really recovered from his horrific war experience. [01:17:13] And when he shared it, it was, you know, a seminal event. My older brother had gone through it on his eighteenth birthday; my sister had gone through it; now I was goin' through it. And it was one of those

things where you couldn't talk about it, couldn't ask him a question during it, couldn't talk to your siblings or my mother about it. It was just forbidden.

[01:17:37] SL: And he was only gonna say it once . . .

MS: Once.

SL: . . . to you.

MS: Yeah, just once. It was one eight-hour session. It was very regimented. He kept drinking chocolate milk. You couldn't go to the bathroom. You had to just sit there and listen. If you got up and went, it was over. I mean, he was gonna be there, and I laughed. I think I mentioned to you last time. I just—in retrospect, I laughed profusely, as he was the one drinkin' chocolate milk all day, and I didn't—couldn't understand why he didn't have to go to the bathroom. But I was mesmerized by his story of courage and survival skills and self-discipline and commitment. And it kind of—at the time of, you know, "What am I gonna do in my own life? What's this all about?" Vietnam's starting. Preservation of our way of life. Domino theory. Communism in Asia. We're bein' threatened. You know, Kennedy's . . .

SL: Assassination.

[01:18:20] MS: . . . assassinated. The world's in a different place.

We had gotten through the Cuban Missile Crisis, which I think I'd shared with you that—and I'm goin' back a bit—but when I would visit, for example, Ronnie Cole when he was coaching at Jefferson City, Missouri, in his introduction he would he always say to his players in introducing me, "We were thinkin' about girls and drinkin' beer after the football game, and Marty was thinkin' about the Cuban Missile Crisis." And I didn't remember that, and he would say, "He would talk about it in the huddle, you know, or here in the game, and least we're not bein' nuked by the Russians." And it, you know, it had escaped me, but it was kind of how the seriousness of all this to me, and it speaks volumes to the state of mind I was in, the responsibility to serve the country, "What's this all about?" Not happy with school. Not doin' very well in school. I was a Sigma Nu, a pledge, protected by J. D. McConnell, again, who was my pledge father. Didn't have to do all the ridiculous things of, you know, clean bathrooms with toothbrushes and things like that.

SL: Hazing.

MS: Bec—yeah. [01:19:26] He protected me—all the hazing. I didn't have to do any of that but—and I kinda liked that we won the football championship. Jim French, who's a doctor now, was the quarterback, and I was the wide receiver, and we won—beat

Mack McLarty, who was a Sigma Chi, but I knew I wasn't in the right place. Just—it just wasn't right. And so then I was such a good student in high school, particularly my junior and senior years, that I was doin' poorly in class—wasn't payin' attention or just—it just wasn't right. I wasn't—I didn't belong there. It was my money. That was the other thing. It wasn't my dad's money, so I'm payin' for school. I'm paying for my car, insurance, dates, 'cause my dad gave me no money. And I was wastin' my money, you know, that I had worked so hard for at Brennan-Boyd Construction Company, all the things that I'd done, that I wasn't prepared for this, and I was—I knew I wasn't gonna go to Arkansas Tech to play football, and I wasn't gonna go Alabama or—so it just got—the combination of all that. [01:20:28] I was just talkin' to Jim French, and he remembered it, that—not too long ago we had this conversation. He's in the DC area now—a plastic surgeon. We went out to some flea-bitten motel out on 71 near the drive-in theater out there—but, you know, pay five bucks and stay all—to study all night before my chemistry [*laughs*] exam—our chemistry exam—final. And Dr. Cordes was my professor, world-famous—drove Model A Fords around here. [01:21:04] Anyway, I had asked Dr. Cordes, "I make a A on the exam, what will I make in the

course?" And he said, "Mr. Steele, whatever you make on the exam, that's what I'll give you in the course." And I had such a lousy grade. I was an honors chemistry student at Fayetteville High. That was so disappointing, too. But anyway, we studied all night long and went in there, and I think the exam was worth two hundred points or somethin'. And my recollection is—and I could be slightly off but not much. I think I got twenty-one [*SL laughs*] and flagged [*laughs*] the chemistry exam. And of course, Jim French did very well, and he went on to be a doctor in medical school and I—that was it for me. I said, "I'm outta here." You know, that was—"I'm not stayin' so" . . .

[01:21:48] SL: And Cindy was okay with that?

MS: Well, I don't think so. I'd have—you'd have to ask her. I think that she wanted me to stick it out and change majors and not be in pre-med, do history or somethin' like that, even back then. She didn't necessarily want me to go to Russellville to go to school or somethin' like that because they were really—they had recruited me heavily to come to Tech to play. That's where Ronnie Cole went. Another—Harold Downum, another Fayetteville High football player, went, and they were both sayin', "Come down here. I mean, you can play right away," and so, anyway, [*unclear voices in background*] I had a friend

from St. Joseph's School and Fayetteville High named Bob Bergedick, who left at nine weeks of our freshman year and enlisted in the marine corps. And just about that time—my dad has told me the story. Bergedick comes home from boot camp in that Christmas vacation and says what a great thing it was. And commensurate with that, a retired colonel, a family friend of ours, named Goode Burleson, who had been a marine for thirty-plus years, who lived out south of town and was a friend of my family's—my mother and his—and Goode's wife were religious in the Catholic church, friends. He had spoken to me about the marine corps. And then I read *Guadalcanal Diary*, and then I'm—my dad, and then it's—so when Bergedick comes home and says, "I think you'd like it," I enlisted. [01:23:23] And I remember the—I reflect back on it. Back then if—the joke was—'cause the draft was still on, and the Vietnam War was starting, and the standing joke was if you could fog a mirror, you could get into the military.

SL: [*Laughs*] You could breathe.

MS: I mean, it was—you just had to be—yeah. [*Laughs*] But I had a recruiter that came up from Fort Smith—big, giant marine, distinguished-lookin' guy, that—for some reason, it came in the conversation with my dad about becoming an officer, and this

recruiter lied, [*laughs*] like most of 'em did, I guess, and said, "Sure, he'll just go right into boot camp," big baritone voice, "and then he'll leave from there and then go to officer candidate school," which was just bogus as heck. But—and I wasn't even thinkin' about it—I wouldn't—I didn't know anything about it anyway, but anyway, that's what—I went to Little Rock on a bus, and fourteen days later was in my first airplane ride from—to San Diego.

SL: Camp Pendleton.

[01:24:34] MS: Yeah, or camp—it was San Diego Marine Corps Recruit Depot and then I went out to Camp Pendleton. But the boot camp's in San Diego.

SL: Okay.

MS: So that's how I got outta town after all that. Again, I think it's the frustration—why—you know, if someone said, "Why did you come in the marine corps?" or asked me "Why did you do that?" You know, my response is normally something like, "Known but to God." I—you know, it was just all things were crashing at once. All these opportunities, all these alternatives. My nature is such, you get too many things to choose from, not knowing what to do except the one constant in the middle of all this, not to be blamed, but it was the constant—was that I was in love

with Cindy, my wife. And somehow I had to figure out how to get back to that, but I couldn't stay here—didn't—you know, just—it wouldn't've worked. I wasn't ready for it. I wasn't ready for school at the time. Frustrated about athletics and I—it wasn't—just wasn't workin'. So anyway, jokingly—I mean, I could—like everything else—I just addressed people from the recruit depot in Parris Island at a formal dinner just recently and I was tellin' 'em my experiences in [*laughs*] boot camp to all the drill instructors at this formal black-tie dinner—formal for us. They had me as their guest of honor. And of course, boot camp back then was far different than what it is today, thank goodness, 'cause I was part of the changing of boot camp. But back then it was physical abuse, corporal abuse, mental abuse. I mean, they used to beat you back then. It was very, very brutal. Wrong, but very, very brutal. It kinda made Jay Donathan look like a acolyte, you know.

[01:26:19] SL: I was gonna ask you how it compared.

MS: Yeah. Well, I mean, I think that the [*SL clears throat*]—I was—I had gone—that—you know, ROTC was a requirement here, so I had been in Army ROTC in that one semester. So I knew all the little close-order drill movements, attention and right face and left face, which put me ahead of my peers in boot camp, so I

had that, and I was physically fit. That was the second thing that put me ahead of everybody. And I had gone through Jay Donathan to understand that I could push myself to any limit. But I wasn't prepared for the physical abuse. I mean, I—there are so many horror stories that I won't share all of 'em, but I mean, just literally abusing people and—physically. And I was an honor graduate from boot camp and promoted meritoriously to private first class from boot camp, but I was knocked out twice by my drill [*laughs*] instructor goin' through boot camp. And people that previously—he had beaten people, and he was court-martialed for it because the marine corps was tryin' to get their arms around this, and all the privates had lied under oath to protect the drill instructor, previously, before I got there. And you know, even when he knocked me out, there was never a thought for a moment that I would say, you know, "I was abused by my drill instructor," because we've revered them so much. But it was very physical. [01:27:43] We had to fight all the time. I was the guide, is what it's called, which was the number-one guy, and part of that ritual, if you will—every night after evening meal I had to fight everybody in the platoon, bare knuckles. It didn't matter who won; you just did it. And the Jay Donathan experience had prepared me for all that. [01:28:02]

We—by the way, that's another thing in Fayetteville High. We used to in—in p—phys ed, Donathan'd have boxing gloves, and we fought. That was the other thing that he did to kinda toughen us up. So I knew how to fight because he taught me how to do that. I mean, I used to fight Ronnie Cole—these guys 100 pounds heavier, and it just didn't matter, you know. And I—it was also—that's another thing about the fighting in the marine corps, kind of the ethos, if you will. It's not about winning and losing the fight; it's about being in the fight. So the judging was not so much if you—I mean, I got hit by a lumberjack from Idaho in boot camp that I never thought I'd get up, the guy hit me so hard. But it wasn't about that the guy hit me so hard and almost knocked me out. It was about was I gonna get up to go another round, you know. And that's what the whole thing was, was about seeing your mettle, if you will, if you had the fortitude to be able to get through all that. So the—that recruit training experience—none of which we're—is allowed today. They don't even use profanity anymore, and they definitely don't put a hand on anyone. And my experience in boot camp was such that it had a profound effect on me about there's gotta be a better way to do this. I mean, these were World War II vets, hardened, grizzled people, the drill

instructors. Revered 'em. I'm not gonna say their names. Some of 'em are still alive. But they were—they had a powerful influence on me, like Jay Donathan. They were Korean War vets. They were warriors, and this was, "Goin' to Vietnam. We're preparin' you to go to war, and people are gonna try to kill you, and we're gonna prepare you to survive in that environment." And you could—the whole thing was about mano y mano, hand-to-hand combat like they had in Korea against the Chinese, like they had against the Japanese in World War II, and it was about how you fight and survive and kill the other guy. And they definitely taught you how to do that. And so it had a profound, positive effect. [01:30:05] But I remember one of the most powerful experiences for me, which I've shared on—with the drill instructors just recently and in some public speeches that I give. I was meritoriously promoted, and we were going from boot camp graduation to the next training event, which is called infantry training regiment, ITR, infantry trai—up at Camp Pendleton to learn about weapons for a month, every kinda weapon, and then we were all goin' to Vietnam. And it was machine guns and mortars and flamethrowers and all this kinda stuff. Well, when I graduated, this drill instructor, who stayed connected to me forever—I was the last guy on the bus,

and everybody was on the bus, and he wasn't gonna be on the bus with us. It was just drivin' us from San Diego to Pendleton. And he looked up at me—I was on the first step of the bus, and he was on the ground. And this seminal moment, again, that happens in our lives, my moment with him was, he looked up at me and said, "I'm gonna follow you, PFC Steele, 'cause someday you're gonna be somebody in this marine corps, and I hope that I have the privilege to work for you someday." [01:31:13] And I'm eighteen years old. I'm a PFC outta Fayetteville, Arkansas. Gone through all this stuff that we've talked about. This guy had knocked me out twice. I mean, literally knocked me out—he knocked me out, and I woke up, and he asked me if I was okay, and soon as I said yes, he did it again, [*laughter*] knowing that I wasn't gonna do anything about it—just sit there bein' knocked out, but anyway, he looked—after I s—he said that, "I'm gonna follow you someday," and I said his name, which I'll—he'll remain nameless. I said, "I don't know what you're saying, but I'll tell you that if that condition ever occurs and you do work for me, you'll never strike one of my marines." And he looked up at me in this poignant moment and said, "PFC Steele, I pledge to you this day that I will never strike another marine as long as I'm privileged to wear this uniform." And I looked down at him

and said, "I'm holdin' you to that." And he followed my career. Wrote me the letter when he was at—when I made general and said—every time, he would always write, "P.S. I still have not ever struck another marine."

[01:32:24] SL: That's quite remarkable.

MS: Yeah.

SL: That goes against every DI . . .

MS: I'm gonna think about it.

SL: . . . stereotype I've ever . . .

MS: I'm just a . . .

SL: Exactly.

MS: . . . punk PFC outta boot camp and—but he followed me forever. And everywhere I'd go, somebody would say his name, and I'm not gonna ever name his name again but—I don't know what the statute of limitations is on [*laughs*] some of his, but it would always be that he was askin' about me, and it was just a—it really was—it was one of those moments that you have in life that are—it stays with you forever. And of course, when I told the drill instructors all this up at Parris Island, you know, less than a year ago, I mean, it—that had a remarkable effect on them, and they all came up to me after—said, "I can't imagine havin' that conversation with one of my recruits." And I said,

"Well, that just shows you"—and he said, "Well, it's powerful for them now." I said, "Fortunately, you know, that stuck with me—when I became the chief operating officer of the marine corps, one of the major thrusts of General Krulak, our commandant, and I were to change boot camp and change behavior of drill instructors. [01:33:32] We implemented a program called the Crucible, which is the rite of passage at the end of recruit training, which is still used to this day. But it all emanated from me sharing with General Krulak my experience in boot camp, and that these are the things that we need to institutionalize to get away from that. That this is a mentoring role that you don't make a tougher marine by beatin' on him or abusin' him. And you gotta train them right. You gotta inspire them. You gotta give them living examples of heroes, and this Crucible is a forty-hour, strenuous, strenuous rite of passage with leadership challenges for individuals and teams to go through and walking, I think, over thirty kilometers. I don't know how the—what the distance is, but where you're really exhausted at the end of it all. But at the grad—the end of it is when you get the eagle, globe, and anchor, which is the symbol of the marine corps, if you get through that rite of passage, and that's when you become a marine. [01:34:29] And we were involved in developing all

that, and you know, I've witnessed it. I've been the guy—I've been there seeing them getting the Eagle, Globe, and Anchor for the—as a general, for the first time. Witnessed it at San Diego. Witnessed it at Parris Island, and it's right now. It's the way it should be, and they're doin' great things in the recruit training of an all-volunteer force. No draftees. And I often say that if I could be anything in wishing my life to live over again, I'd like to be PFC Steele again. Wouldn't wanna go through boot camp again, [*laughter*] but I'd like to be graduating from boot camp because I'd wanna be led by the kinda people that are leading these young men and women now in the marine corps and in our sister services, too, but in the marine corps because it is my service. [01:35:18] But they really are—they're mentoring. And listening to a drill instructor today, as I've been privileged to do countless times, teach a young man and woman without raising his voice or using profanity or threatening bodily harm, to me is—and again, they're just as qualified and because these are the young men and women that—we call them the strategic corporals today in Iraq and Afghanistan—that we've given so much responsibility for them to do independent actions on the battlefield—because there's no general, there's no colonel, there's no even captain around—that they're out there on their

own in these villages to have to make instant decisions. And we called it the three-block war, where we're taking a young man and assimilating him. And it comes outta this experience that I just shared with you, that a young man eighteen to twenty-two years old that comes from our society, and what we were creating was an individual who, in a three-block radius in some foreign country with a non-state act or religious extremism, will nurture a child at six in the morning and protect the mother and have the skill sets to do that as a diplomat—and he's eighteen to twenty-two years old—because of the training we've given him. And then at noon, in that same three-block radius, will have the wherewithal to be able to be a diplomat, stopping warring tribes or warring factions, leveraging local citizens against the Taliban, for example, to work with one another, and he's eighteen to twenty-two years old, and he's in a three-block war or three-block radius of tremendous tension and strife. [01:37:05] And then at six o'clock, when diplomacy breaks down and people are tryin' to take one another's life, has the instantaneous ability to be able to shoot you in the face if the National Command Authority says, "That's the bad guy." So that young man, nurturing a child, being a diplomat, and being a ruthless warrior, is what we've created, and that's what we have now. And it all

kind of emanates from that experience, that that's what we had to grow. And that's why they're so great. That's why these young men and women that are in this protracted war today, eight and a half years long, have just—not only in the marine corps but in the army, primarily are those two services, and the air force and the navy, but I don't wanna denigrate anybody. But that's why they've been so magnificent. You'll have the outliers, the Abu Ghraibs and all that other stuff, but on the whole, these young men and women are phenomenal in what they do, and it's how we've trained 'em.

TM: Scott . . .

[Tape stopped]

[01:38:03] TM: When were those changes? When did you start those changes?

MS: Well, the—we started in the mid-[19]90s when General Krulak was a commandant, when I was his chief operating officer. We had talked about it for years, but we implemented it because he was then in a position of authority to do it. And there had been evolutionary puts and takes and things that had occurred over the years, of trying to get some of the abuse down. But to the dramatic effect of what I'm talkin' about, it was implemented in 1996, [19]97 timeframe—ten, fifteen years ago.

[01:38:41] SL: Back when you were going into the marine corps, how long was boot camp? What was the time period?

MS: Eleven weeks.

SL: Eleven weeks.

MS: Yeah.

SL: And then you go to Camp Pendleton.

MS: For a month.

SL: For a month.

MS: For four weeks. Yeah.

SL: So you're talkin' seven months?

MS: Yeah.

[01:38:59] SL: And then you're sent to Vietnam?

MS: Well—right. I was sent to—I came home to Fayetteville for a short period of time. I don't know, ten days. And then I was station—sent to my first unit, which was the First Tank Battalion at Camp Pendleton, California. And again, every marine or rifleman, I had—because of my education background, I had scored on the administrative side. I had scored very high, and so they were going to make me a . . .

SL: Secretary. [*TM coughs*]

MS: We call 'em—no, a Remington Raider, we called 'em. An administrative clerk.

SL: [*Laughs*] A Remington Raider.

[01:39:35] MS: Yeah. [*Laughter*] And of course, back then, as is today, every marine was a rifleman, so when I checked in, my—to my first unit, which was Company A, First Tank Battalion, as a PFC, the first thing they did was take me up to the tank to say, "You're not just an admin man here. You're gonna learn about the tank, and you're gonna work on the tank, and you're gonna continue the training that you had on the weapons and so on." So we were supposed to go—that's when Lyndon Johnson had the buildup in Vietnam immediately. This is in March/April time frame of 1965. And so in the summer, we're going to Vietnam, and we're on LSTs—that's another story I could talk about forever—on a World War II—it's called the USS *St. Clair County*, with tanks, and we're supposed to be steaming from San Diego right into Vietnam. And we go through typhoons—flat-bottom boat, eight knots, people sick, throwin' up. I'm just peelin' potatoes. Shaved my head bald because it's so hot. I mean, it's just unbelievable experience. And I'm on mess duty, and everybody's throwin' up and [*SL laughs*]—I mean, we just—it was traumatic. But we get detoured into Okinawa, Japan, and we thought it was just gonna be for forty-eight hours and then kinda—and make sure the ship could make it. But we ended up

staying for three or four months on Okinawa and training. And so then I became a machine gunner on a fifty-caliber machine gun, and we did a lotta patrolling of what we were gonna experience in Vietnam on combat patrols and so on. [01:41:23] So although my specialty was administration, my—like all of us, we really were focused on fighting and focused on night defense and machine guns and so on. So I was confident that when we went from Okinawa to—down to Vietnam, that, you know, I could, blindfolded, take machine guns apart, and I was prepared. I mean, we were extremely well-trained because we had all these veterans of World War II. The senior staff NCOs, they'd all fought in Iwo Jima and the Battle of Okinawa, and they'd all made the landing at the cho—Inchon in Korea; fought in the Chosin Reservoir in Korea. I mean, they were grizzled, grizzled warriors, and those were the mentors of mine. And I remember the night before we left, [*laughs*] my senior staff NCO gave a bottle of whiskey, and we were sittin' there drinkin' on the bed in Okinawa at Camp Hansen, Okinawa, back and forth, shootin' it down straight. And I was gaggin', and I didn't know why he was doin' it, but it was the same type of relationship. He said, "You're goin' to war for the first time, and I'm gonna do everything in my power to save your life, and you're gonna do

everything in your power to save my life. And that's what this is all about. We're gonna fight like hell. But that's what this is all about." And that's what happened. [01:42:45] And I—we landed—made a—an opposed landing in Vietnam, and the bullets are comin' over. And we'd had the typical breakfast, bac—eggs and steak and all that. As we're getting in the net—cargo nets just like in the [*laughs*] movies. And the boat's comin', and these little zingers are comin' over, and you know, I turn to a magnificent marine, World War II vet, named Willie P. Zymet, who was a mastery gunnery sergeant, and I said, "Master Guns, is this the way it was in World War II?" And he said, "It's exactly the way it was, Steele." And he said, "If you throw up"—'cause everybody was pukin' in their helmets and—he said, "I'm gonna throw up down the back of your jacket." [*Laughter*] And I looked up—back up, and he said, "I'm serious. If you throw up, you're gonna make me throw up, so don't throw up." And I said, "I promise you I won't throw up." And didn't. But it was tenacious, and we were in that stage of the buildup where there were—they—it was pretty intense early on in the fight and . . .

[01:43:48] SL: Fifty-caliber machine gun is a World War II weapon.

MS: Yeah. Very powerful. It was a ground-mounted defense weapon, primarily, in how we were usin' 'em then. But I mean,

it was a anti-vehicle weapon. I mean, it would shoot holes through trucks, but we did it—used it for antipersonnel and . . .

SL: And it's kind of a two-man thing, isn't it?

MS: It's a two-man thing.

SL: One guy carries the sticks . . .

MS: Yeah.

SL: . . . the other one . . .

MS: Yeah, that's right.

SL: . . . and the ammo . . .

MS: That's right.

SL: . . . and the other one carries the gun.

MS: That's right. And then the position is—you know, it's a dug-in position and so on. I mean—and it was a magnificent experience in many ways because of the responsibility they gave us—the—and the—what we witnessed and observed and participated in. We're still tryin' to save the villages back then from the Viet Cong and the NVA just starting to come down the Ho Chi Minh trail. This was [19]66 now, and the war's just kinda building up to a fever pitch at that particular time.

[01:44:54] SL: So where in Vietnam were you?

MS: I was in Chu Lai, Vietnam, just south of Da Nang, then on Hill 55. But what we did most—because of this requirement for

patrolling, I was involved in the early stages of patrols to find water to feed all these marines, and I've—I did find the watering hole that ended up feedin' thousands of marines fresh water. We were going in to probe where the enemy was making his logistic lines, and I was involved in all that. I was a lance corporal. We had fights that I really do not wanna talk about but fights that after one—it affected—we lost a lotta marines—that I was meritoriously promoted because of the fight in that experience on the battlefield by the commanding general of the First Marine Division to the rank of corporal the next day for what had happened the previous night. They didn't give medals out back then. That was how they recognized you for what you did, so I was standing in mass formation. Some—a friend of mine—anyway, standing there when a helicopter came in. We had no idea why. And all dirty and grimy and hadn't bathed in weeks and shavin' out of our helmets. It was pretty grim, really. No hot food. C rations. Livin' out of a hole. But a microphone comes on after the helicopter lands and stops. Dust and dirt, and your eyes are like this [squints eyes] and it—they said, "Lance Corporal Steele, front and center." And I'm kinda—didn't even hear what they were sayin', and a guy jabs his elbow into me, and "They're talkin' about you, expletive," [*SL laughs*]

calling me a shithead, as a matter of fact.

SL: That's good.

[01:46:49] MS: "They're talkin'" . . .

SL: That's good.

MS: . . . "'bout you, shithead."

SL: That's all right. [*Laughs*]

MS: And I said, "What?" "They—they're callin' you out there." And so I'm tryin' to do a military movement to get way up, and I get to the top of the hill, and there's—I'm nineteen, I guess, then. I'm a lance corporal, and there's this two-star general standing up there to promote me on the top of the hill. They read this meritorious promotion warrant, promoting me to corporal, and he's congratulating me for my performance and what I had done up to that point, which is, in our own little way, "Save the world; find the watering hole; fight the enemy and"—but we—just recently a—the phone rang just, I mean, within the past three weeks. Just think about this. That was 1966—and left a message on our home phone in Tampa and I—didn't say—said, "This is a voice from the past," and "Please call me at such-and-such." And Cindy said, "I don't know who that it is, but I wouldn't call back." And I said, "No, I'll take care of it, honey." And I got out in my car, and we have a—you know, a

hands-free . . .

SL: Yeah.

[01:47:57] MS: . . . Bluetooth whatever in the car. And I—I'm sittin' in the driveway of my home in Tampa, and I dial the number. And the phone rings, and this voice picks it up. And I said, "You called me and said, 'It's a voice from the past,' but you didn't identify yourself of who you are. This is Lieutenant General Marty Steele." He said, "It is a voice from the past and," and that's about all he got, and I said, "Arthur Hornel Beard III." And he said, "My God!" And I said, "We were lance corporals together and fought side by side in 1966." And he said, "General, you haven't heard my voice since 1966, and you're sayin' my name, and you remembered Arthur Hornel Beard III." [*Laughter*] And I said, "Artie, that's your name, isn't it?" He's cryin' on the other end of the phone, and he said, "That's my name, and I'm just—I've been trackin' you down and I just"—this is just a month ago. "And I been trackin' you down." He said, "I lost it. I really—from that night and those experiences, I really kinda went in the tank when I was in my thirties. I've never recovered from what we went through. And I just wanted to thank you for who you are and congratulate you. And you became a general out of all that, and a lot of us became hospital

patients." But I—he's the second one. [01:49:27] I had another guy that—I went to give a speech in Seattle. I'd formed an organization called the US Marine Corps Vietnam Tankers Association, and the prerequisite was you had to be in a tank unit in Vietnam, and they asked me to be a part of the founding of this great unit. There is a Marine Corps Tankers Association, but they were—that's every—peacetime, wartime, all the wars. But the Vietnam era, because of the war, because of its results and ramifications, the Vietnam era were not really embraced by the World War II and the Korean War era—tankers, in this case. You had to be in a tank unit. But anyway, I helped form this organization, and we were having a reunion out in Seattle, and they wanted me to be the keynote speaker 'cause I'm privileged to be the highest-ranking tanker, tank person, in the history of the marine corps. No one has ever made three-star general. [01:50:26] So I agreed to do it. But I'm standing there—this was a few years ago but—and it's the cocktail hour of the opening night of the mixer to get ready. And a—this very heavyset woman comes walkin' forward towards me, and we're all just sittin' there havin' a drink, and I think I'm drinkin' ice water, since I'm gonna speak. But anyway, I look at her, and she gets closer, and there's a group of people that—my

commander in Vietnam when I was a lance corporal. I mean, everybody's there. I mean, it's like two or three hundred people. For the first reunion, it was remarkable. And the woman says, "You won't remember us but"—and I said, "Ma'am, I've never met you in my life, but the person behind you"—emaciatingly thin—she's very heavy—"is James O. Jaggers." And she started cryin' immediately. Turned around, she said, "Jim, he remembers." And he looks at me, and she steps aside, and I walk toward him, and he's cryin'. I'm cryin', and [*clears throat*] I hug him, and he said, "Marty, how do you remember?" And I said, "Jim, we fought all night, throwin' rocks at 'em by the time the morning came 'cause we didn't have anything left." And he said, "That night you showed that you were gonna be a leader in the marine corps, and that night I became a hospital patient. I've been in the hospital seventeen years on and off since that night, comin' out of Vietnam. And I just—you—when I found out that you were the speaker—I don't get too far away from the hospital, but I've just come down here to hug you and tell you how proud I am of you." He just passed away not too long ago. I've stayed with him. I called him every Friday from that moment on just to see how he was doin'. He had Agent Orange—cancer the size of grapefruits in his stomach. He was in

really bad shape towards the end, but I mean, again, the bonding of that experience as a young man. Doesn't matter what your thoughts are about Vietnam, wars, man's inhumanity to man, the banality of war, but what happens to you—all of us who are—experienced it and the bonding that takes place is something that you can never take away, ever. And Arthur Hornel Beard III and James O. Jaggers—you think about it. You haven't seen 'em since 1966, but you can remember 'em as vividly as the day before yesterday and the powerful impact that the—those shared experiences have on each of us. So . . .

[01:53:07] SL: Let me tell you what I think I know about tank units. Tanks are great. Armored vehicle. Lots of firepower. But they're kinda sitting ducks without the infantry around them. Is that kinda the [*unclear word*] . . .

MS: Well, it was even worse than that in the early stages of the Vietnam War. The—there's—the tank performance when they got into battle was remarkable. They really did extremely well. But in the case of the marine corps, it's an infantry organization, so shu—part of my life story is just choosing as an officer later to be in tanks because they were frowned upon. [01:53:54] And using your example, which is right—it's one step more, Scott—is that tanks, because they are vulnerable, and if you had infantry

around them, the infantry becomes vulnerable because the enemy's tryin' to kill the tank, and subsequently, the spalling effect of the metal fragments that hit the tank kill the infantry around. So the infantry didn't like being around tanks either. Now that's the way the marine corps employed them in Vietnam. It was—we used to have a euphemism: two on the ridge, three on the bridge, support by fire from a thousand meters, meaning nobody wanted 'em around because they would draw fire. And we had all these missions, like harassing an interdicting fire—what they're—what's it called—at night, where you ramped up, like, almost like an artillery piece and fired rounds that were illumination and—but when they got in the fight—in the battle of Hue City, for example, which is the largest battle in a built-up area since World War II, in Tet [19]68, the tanks were magnificent in what they did, and in several operations they performed magnificently. The marines who were tankers, even though you had this condition, were tenacious warriors with the—but generally speaking, in the marine corps, we were always employed, in my humble opinion now, incorrectly. We were used poorly. Not—the terrain in Vietnam was not conducive to tanks because of the rice paddies and gettin' stuck. That—an event like that could occur one time and then turn an

infantry mind off. We don't want 'em because they're too much problem for us. We have to spend more time recovering the tank outta the muck, and it draws fire and so on and so forth. [01:55:42] So—you know, I'm jumpin' ahead a little bit, but my experience, because of the quality of the people that I was with and their job, knowing what they had done in their community, trying to add depth to the battlefield, if you will, and as a supporting arm, even as a young man, I knew that I wanted to stay in that to change it, to make it better, and to be used much more effectively. Not so problematic in the army because of the massive numbers. Marine corps doesn't have very many tanks. In fact, probably 775 are the most that we ever had. Maybe in World War II, they had volumes more. But very—three battalions at one time in the marine corps. Now there's only two on active duty and then a reserve battalion. [01:56:32] So it's a very small community, first of all. And secondly, as opposed to the army—large maneuvers, just like in the first Gulf War—these tank divisions, tank armored cavalry regiments, armored mechanized units moving en masse—the army employed them far differently than the marine corps did. Now—and the first Gulf War was the first time—it's a—it gets later in my career, and you saw some of it—that picture of me in the desert pointing out to

General Gray how we should better employ all of them as a mass force. And I had the privilege again to be a part of the changing tactical use of armor in the marine corps and the acquisition officer for the tank in the marine corps. So it's something that I'm quite proud of, the fact we changed the whole culture. But it was a long, tedious process, constantly tryin' to prove yourself of value; denigrated at the bar; denigrated on the—in the training area that you're just—draw fire, and "you get my marines killed if you're an infantryman, and you're really not that much of a value." And most of it was untrue, but there was a—just enough kernel of truth there. For example, a friend of mine got a tank stuck in the Cua Viet River up near the demilitarized zone and then had tried to get it out with another tank. Got it stuck. Tried to get it out. Got it stuck. And so when that happens once, that word spreads around, and so they're useless to you, you know. And so it's—but you know, through this organization that we formed and the reconnecting of one another and the dramatic impact that we had had on one another, and then the contributions we made even during the Vietnam War have more come out in light. [01:58:20] In fact, there's a lot of, not revisionist history, but a lot of history being written about the value of the tank in the marine corps,

particularly in places like Hue City and Tet [19]68. It's coming out and being done by tankers that—and the infantry is saying, "You're right. They did do that." That was—but I can tell you some horrific stories of friends of mine that I've met through this association that the—in Tet, the enemy put women and children out and—to block from bein' shot by the tank with the antipersonnel rounds and the traumatic effect—post-traumatic stress of the people who survived that and pulled the trigger, if you will, and did take those lives as they were tryin' to get to the enemy and how that's affected people for forty years of having to do that. 'Cause it's still the biggest beast in town at the end of the day because it's a tank, and it's gonna—focus of the enemy. They're either gonna try to get rid of the thing—I mean, get it out of the battle as quickly as they can.

[01:59:25] SL: So you said that you were on station at Hill 55 when you first . . .

MS: Yeah.

SL: . . . got there. Now—so you're out in the jungle, I guess.

MS: Out in the jungle. Many incidents—tigers roaring. Once I'm walkin' down a path once, and a big cobra snake with the thing [*whistles*] out, and I'm thinkin' the thing's gonna eat—you know, just take my head right [*laughs*]—but we had everything. I

mean, all of that was in that environment—water, monsoon rains, water up to your neck, cowardice. You're talkin' about an A-gunner. My A-gunner was a moral coward. He was drafted. He—his name—he's still alive. He will remain nameless, but he robbed a liquor store in his hometown, and the judge gave him four years in the marine corps or four years in prison. And he was my assistant gunner, and he was a decrepit human being. Shoulda never been allowed to be in the military. And in the fight, he was a coward, and I got him off my gun and made him a mail clerk, and it's rather gross, but he violated the—that's how we got him outta the marine corps. He masturbated in the centerfold of *Playboy* magazines that were being mailed to the troops, and he was caught, and we got him out on a violation of federal mail charge with a bad conduct discharge, but that's how we had to deal with guys like that. But we just had all kinds of people. Like I said, you could fog a mirror, and some of 'em were magnificent and great and heroes and inspirations to meet, both in the fight—later, for years—and then guys like this that were just—didn't belong there and shouldn't've been in. Shoulda been in jail.

SL: Most of the . . .

TM: Scott, we need to change tapes.

SL: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[02:01:21] SL: . . . the—it doesn't bother me.

MS: Which way to go.

SL: Wherever you wanna go.

MS: Yeah. I mean, I'm okay with—I could talk about it more in the second tour as an officer. I just would say that what we were—young men who did what the nation asked, and I don't mean this gratuitously but we—even though many were drafted, we were there really believing in that early stage of the war that we were serving a purpose and preventing the domino theory and Communism. And we were all kinda bonded together to do that, and we saw—you know, from my perspective, the fight is what's immediately in front of you, so next guy comin' over the wire, and you're sure not thinkin' about the politics of all this or what got us here. And back then it was—all the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and what Fulbright had done and—those are all not even in the scope of our thought process. [02:02:18] It's "We're there. We're in the fight. Those guys are tryin' to kill us, and what are we gonna do about it?" And so remarkable relationships were formed, friendships that have lasted for forty-plus years. Lots of people traumatized by the experience

with post-traumatic stress that—like James O. Jaggers, God rest his soul, who was hospitalized for seventeen years from that one moment in time that we were together. And you know, what happened to him, as a good friend of mine, and didn't happen to me, who know—who can answer that? You know, it just—we're side by side. And as he said to me, you know, "That night you became a leader, and that night I became a hospital patient." I mean, that's a powerful statement from another man to another man. And it's just—do I still have nightmares? Obviously, when I'm dealin' with the young men and women today who have post-traumatic stress, I do get into a little more granularity about my experience because I want them to understand I know what the heck they're goin' through. And it's not an embellishment of my experience. It's just so you can identify with me a different war. But war is war. Death is death. And you can't explain it to someone who hasn't experienced it and they—and if you have experience, you can empathize. You can communicate effectively. You can share. [02:03:52] I mean, I have a young man who I'm workin' with that has post-traumatic stress disorder extremely bad from his experience in Iraq, and you know, when I first shared with him my experiences, he had shared with me his experience the day before, which was

traumatic, I mean, traumatic, and not to be shared. Again, it's very private, but when I share with him, I mean, he came up to me after my remarks and me telling my story and put his arms around me, crying, whispering in my ear. He said, "General, do you still have nightmares?" And I said, "Son, I do. They're less frequent, but they're just as intense forty-five years later." Fortunately, they're less frequent. But again, you can't explain that or share that unless you've lived that. And of course, it enabled me to help him help himself. I mean, I got him in the hospital to get treatment for his condition, which is very justifiable, what he experienced himself in that war and the traumatization that he has. It's gonna be a lifelong experience for him to get through this. He's a healthy guy. I mean, he's outta the hospital now, but he needed hospitalization and treatment and therapy to be able to get through the horrific experiences that he had in the war, as so many in this fight have. Because again, this war, like all wars, that it's that moment. You're face to face. When you ask a young man, "Tell me about yourself. What do you do?" "Well, sir, I kick doors down and kill everybody on the other side of the door." And that's an opening when you're introducing yourself to a young man that's comin' outta this war in Iraq, and that's how he

introduces himself. That's his opening line, before he even tells you his name. "Tell me about yourself." "Well, sir, I kick doors down and kill everybody on the other side." And it doesn't matter who's on the other side. [*Laughs*] And . . .

[02:05:54] SL: It's kill or be killed.

MS: Yeah. Yeah. And I've shared so many experiences with young men who've lost their closest friend because of what was on the other side, who have taken the lives of children, women, bad guys who are using women and children to shield them on the other side. And the vivid memory of that experience, as intense as it was, and in some cases, brief as it was, it's—you know, they're gonna—just like in my war, my dad's war as a prisoner of war, wars since the beginning of mankind, it—you can't describe it. You have to—how do you deal with it, and how do you help people? My—part of my life and reason for being right now and passion in life is my—people that work with me say—I mean, this is who I am. It's—now at sixty-three, it's giving back to help these young men and women get through their trauma to be able to be healthy citizens and contributors to the American way of life and the dream. They've earned it for what they've done and what this nation asked 'em to do, right, wrong or indifferent, again. I mean, thank God, in my humble opinion,

again, that like—unlike the fact that they turned on my generation with Vietnam, that we became the culprits. We became the baby killers. We became—you know, because of those crimes that were committed there, if you will. We're the fall guy, and this country has yet, thank God, and I hope it never does, turn on our young men and women in uniform, however long and protracted this is, even though we have the incidents like the prison incident in Iraq and still have innocents kill every day in this war. [02:07:41] I hope we never do turn on them because it's not a matter that they're pawns in a chess game, 'cause I don't mean that at all. They're doing what this nation's asked them to do and what its leadership has asked them to do. And they're extremely well trained. They're committed people. Unlike in my war, all of 'em are volunteers. There are no draftees. They're—we don't have guys like I had to deal with. And I say this unabashedly, they're magnificent human beings, and they're doin' the best they can with all this. And they keep going back because they wanna honor those who've fallen before. They wanna take care of, because of their experience, the new people coming in because they know how to do it better than the new people coming in. And they're remarkable for their steadfastness and ability to be able to operate in the

environment there. But still, you know, so many of them—the percentage has gone up, and it's really hard to quantify, but I would—the estimate right now is that there are six hundred thousand young men and women that have experienced the war in Iraq and Afghanistan that have some form of post-traumatic stress or traumatic brain injury. That is, not a visible wound but commotion of the brain from an IED goin' off that shook them up, and then, subsequently, twenty-four hours, a week later, six months later, they fall down because of the separation in their cranial cavity that—you know, they never received a purple heart for that. They just got shook up when the bomb went off and killed, you know, five guys in front of 'em in a vehicle. [02:09:16] And you know, these numbers are gonna continue to grow the longer we stay in this war. And so what my—I'm all about is my—from my personal experience, from my experience with my peers, and from my passion about our way of life and these young men and women is, "Okay, I got it. What are we gonna do about it? What are we gonna do to help them? Get them medical treatment. Get them psychotherapy. Get them treated. Get them to assimilate back in." You know, the employers that, you know, that I'm dealin' with, most of their dialogue with me is, "General, all I wanna know, is this man or

woman gonna go postal on us if we hire him? I mean, is this a risk to my company and the safety of my employees?" And even though I'm a layperson, I've had so much involvement with all this, it's—the answer is either, "No, he"—that they're fine, and they'll be fine, or "They're not worth the risk right now. They need therapy, but when they come out of it, I think they'll be fine," or "Absolutely. You cannot even interview that person because they're—they need therapy now, and I wouldn't recommend that you hire them." But we're all discovering this by exposure to it and communicating with them, and they're not revealing it to anybody, these six hundred people that I've been privileged to work with. They've never told anybody that they have it until they tell it to me at midnight, alone, and say, "Sir, I got a problem." "And why did you come to the program?" "Well, sir, Joe Schmo told me about the program and that you're here and that you get it and that you'll help me." Or talk to a wife. "Why did you come to the program, ma'am?" "Well, you had Joe Schmo in the last program and his wife, and they said, 'There's a general named Steele that'll help you and your husband get through this,' and I'm here for you to help save my husband's life and my life and my family's life."

[02:11:20] SL: This—the psychological trauma of experiencing a

firefight and fighting for your survival, I'm just gonna guess that that is gonna stick with whoever experiences that all of their life.

MS: Yeah.

SL: And it sounds like to—somehow or another, despite all the horrific things that you experienced, you have been able to push on and be productive and see problems and propose solutions in ma—across many levels . . .

MS: Yeah.

SL: . . . of the armed forces, but it sounds like to me that one of the greatest costs of warfare that's just now really starting to get some attention is what happens to the human that survives the war and what that—and how he carry—how they carry that war with them for the rest of their living days.

[02:12:26] MS: Oh, I think you're absolutely correct, Scott. I mean, that's—that is the—again, wars are horrible. There's nothing good about any war. You know, and you read all these vignettes—my line has always been that if the leadership—you know, we get further and further away from members of Congress or the commander in chief, for example, you know, we go—have to go back a long way to—George Herbert Walker Bush, you know, served in World War II, but most of the commanders in chief we have and we're gonna have, they'll

never have worn a uniform, never been in harm's way. And most of the members of Congress haven't, so it's very difficult—and I often say to people that—and I have to our leaders in Washington—"You wouldn't be making these kinds of decisions if you had experienced this yourself, not for these reasons. If you—or had a child going to fight." You know, I say this, and it sounds crass, but you know, I've said it to many people. If President Bush, for example, didn't have girls, but he had boys, and they were gonna be in the fight, there may have been a different decision about goin' into Iraq in 2003. I've shared it to other people in the leadership of the government at that particular time. I would say, "It's not your son; it's my son that's gonna go fight this fight. And it's thousands of other parents. It's not your child, and it's not you. You've never seen it. You have no idea of what it is, what's gonna happen, and you know, my entire life—I've lived this with a father who was in World War II. My father-in-law was in World War II and Korea. I've had three tours of combat in Vietnam and the first Gulf War, and if you don't know what that—the costs are of that, it really is a disadvantage for you in making these national command, authority decisions regarding life and death." And what we're—it has to be—and I'm not saying it doesn't mean or justify or is

there a just war 'cause I—we—wars have gone on forever, and I don't really do—believe that any time in the foreseeable future, hundreds of years, that we're sophisticated enough as human beings to learn to respect one another to avoid war and use diplomacy. I'm not that naïve at this juncture, but I also think that it's—well, as it is in my case, a goal that we should all be aspiring for, to use diplomacy. [02:15:09] And my life as a marine for thirty-five years was always about not the first recourse is with arms because of what you said, Scott, that if the tool of the sword, if you will, is the first response to crises, I believe that over time you are doomed as a society if you don't use diplomacy and that the last resort is armed force toward the preservation of your way of life or your society or your culture or democracy. Whatever you wanna put on the end of that. I'm just a believer that from my life experiences that—is it possible or probable that we're gonna end up there? Yes, but it should be not as a first recourse or a first response. It should be after all efforts at diplomacy have failed. I'm not a believer, also, in that we should be the initial or first responder, if you will, or preemptive is the word that we use in the military, that we make preemptive strikes. [02:16:13] I'm just not a believer in that. Now, I'm—you know, when it gets—we could be here for weeks

talking about 9/11, and the response to 9/11, I mean, was a firm—as I've shared with you, the FBI came to the Intrepid. I was in New York. Watched the planes go into the building. I called the FBI and the Intrepid Museum, which I was privileged to be the chief executive and president of, became the headquarters for the FBI, and we had 750 agents investigating the attack on America. And my response was Afghanistan because I've studied it so much, and it's where Osama bin Laden was and Al Qaeda. And our focus of effort, in my view, should've been concentrated on that, and we should've had a armed response to that heinous attack on America. But that's not what happened. I mean, we've drifted all over the map and . . .

[02:17:07] SL: It was all about oil.

MS: Well, in Amer—at—amongst other things, but yes, you're right. But anyway, they're—goin' back go your point, your question, it's not quantifiable, in my opinion, to evaluate the long-term impact on people's lives. Look at my own stepfather. POW13 for the rest of his life from his experience as a prisoner of war in World War II till the day he died in the [19]90s. [Nineteen] forty-five was when he was taken out of a prisoner-of-war camp by a Russian on a horse, a Cossack, who took all of them out of

the prisoner camp. And then he went immediately, as part of his story, to one of the concentration camps, where he was lifting out eighty-pound Jewish people, who had not died yet, in his arms, carrying them out. And he was thinkin' about his own existence as a prisoner of war and then these people tenaciously clinging to life, carrying them out of a concentration camp. He's not gonna recover from that, and he never did. He never did recover from that for as long as he lived. So do I believe it stays with you forever? You bet, 'cause I've lived it. It stayed with my dad. Still with me. And it's still with these young kids now comin' outta this war, and it's gonna be with them for the rest of their life. [02:18:29] Some of the stories that I cou—wouldn't share because of the confidence are so horrific of their experiences in this war. They boggle your mind, they're so horrific.

SL: You mean in the Iraq War?

MS: Yeah, yeah. They boggle . . .

SL: Your current—the current . . .

MS: Yeah.

SL: . . . really, recovery effort that you're involved with for these soldiers.

MS: Yeah, yeah.

SL: Well . . .

MS: Predominantly—yes. Predominantly workin' with marines. But I mean, again, they're down there, as I indicated earlier—we've made them the strategic corporal, as we say, both in the army and the marine corps, and they're having to make these life-and-death, instant decisions on their own in a moment of crises, and they're makin' them [*laughs*] to survive and believe and do the right thing. But the consequences of that decision are forever, I mean, and they're accepting tha—those consequences, and they're there to talk about them, if you will, but someone else is probably not. And it runs the full gamut of innocent civilians, and you can get jaundiced about it, or you can get, you know, disrespectful of another human being, just as we, in all wars, we demean the Japanese and have names for them; demean the Germans and have names for them; demean the North Koreans; demean the Chinese. We create these images of people of being less than human, and they are not less than human. They're human beings. And it's the same way with Iraq. They—we've created images of people in that culture that are less than human, and we're—the cycle is just repeating itself again. And you know, my goal, if you will, is that it really is understanding one another, appreciating the cultural differences,

religious differences, tolerance, compromise, relationship building, communicating effectively, using diplomacy in lieu of war. In the case of this war, my—again, I could talk forever about it, but it's really that we're not, from a Western culture perspective, gonna solve Middle Eastern issues. Our view from a—our lens-colored glasses from a Christian democratic perspective to a Muslim perspective, they just don't match. [02:21:08] They just don't match. And so I'm a believer, a firm believer, that problems in the Middle East and throughout the world on these kind of extremists is that Muslim moderates, whether they're secular or moderate in their religious beliefs, they have to be part of the solution to solve Muslim extremism, just as we have our own extremism in Christianity. We—it's an issue. They're not gonna resolve that, and we have to resolve it in our own culture of religious extremism, whatever way you view that, Christianity, anything to a fault or to an extreme in me—a zealot in one community is to me—can cause problems for [*laughs*]—because they take it in their own mind that they're the only ones that have the answer. And so we don't have the answers. I mean, that's one thing in my life that I've learned, that we're in the naïveté of thinking that we have all the solutions. We have a problem, and we can solve it in thirty

minutes with two commercials. I've grown past that, and [*SL laughs*] we don't. We don't. [*Laughs*]

[02:22:11] SL: Okay, I'm gonna take us back to Vietnam 'cause I wanna try to get back to a chronology . . .

MS: Okay.

SL: . . . of your career. And I'm gonna ask you a question that might kinda surprise you 'cause we're—we've been pretty, in a general way, pretty thorough about the horrors of war. Now, you did two tours of duty there?

MS: Mh-hmm.

SL: All right. So in your Vietnam experience, what was beautiful about it?

[02:22:42] MS: Well, again, I think that—I alluded to it earlier. The bonding, the first of all, amongst the people that I was in the same predicament with or the same condition. That's—you just can't put a quantifiable figure on that. I mean, it's just—it's so beautiful that, as I say to public—in my public remarks now, it's not sellin' shoes at Kinney's, and I don't mean to denigrate Kinney's Shoes. It's a matter that in my profession, it's all about life and death. And in the profession of arms, it's—we go beyond respect for one another. Where we're tryin' to create that in the business environment where capitalism and

competitiveness leads that you can still respect one another. In the case of the profession of arms, that we all learned to love one another. And I say that unabashedly as a man, as a warrior, but that community, a group of people, loved one another with all of our individual warts and maladies and shortcomings and faults, et cetera, sin, from a Judeo-Christian perspective, but we all learned to love one another. And we've got to the point wherein, as I mentioned earlier in a different frame, but you knew that I knew that you knew, Scott, that I would give my life for you tomorrow in the firefight. I'd give my life for you to preserve your life. And I knew intuitively that you'd do the same for me. And the beauty of war and the horror of war is that when you create that bond with some person, you can supersede or rise above all the ugliness of it because you have this relationship with people. There is no petty bickering, or you know, you're all in the same predicament, if you will. You're all in the same moment, and what happens is, is that the bonding is beautiful and they—so that's one thing. [02:24:46] The second thing—in the case of Vietnam, the environment was so aesthetically beautiful. I mean, as you talk about jungle and the green and the simplicity of the country, the people living in Vietnam, I learned and took away from my experiences in these

little villages that we would go through to have the deepest and highest respect for them culturally. Couldn't speak the language, but didn't matter 'cause you could communicate—I mean, because you had that same look in your eye and every—you could communicate with your hand and arms, and they knew what you were talkin' about, and you knew what they were talkin' about. And they're beautiful people. And so for me, the respect for them—I mean, they were victims of this, too. They didn't know what the heck was goin' on and couldn't control anything. That was a beautiful experience of getting to—around that culture and those people because I came away with a—when I see a Vietnamese today—I mean, I've got one at my Lowe's. He's at the checkout counter at Lowe's in Tampa, Florida. And soon as he sees me, we talk about he escaped in [19]75, and he's raised his family here. It's an immediate conversation, and it just picked up from the one we had the previous day, the last time I was in Lowe's. And I've had hundreds of those conversations over the years. [02:26:16] Just as an aside, when I was a captain in [19]75—[19]74, [19]75, in Pendleton, Camp Pendleton, California, we were a site for all the refugees comin' outta Vietnam. And we had thirty-five thousand Vietnamese . . .

SL: Wow.

MS: . . . living in tents at Camp Pendleton. And I was one of the young officers in charge of takin' care of those people, feeding them, sheltering them, clothing them, nurturing them. And they had all come outta the horrors. I mean, great stories of mattress sacks full of American cash these people had been clingin' to since they got outta there. Families destroyed. Husbands behind, still captured by the North Vietnamese. Women and children—my—our babysitters for our children in Camp Pendleton—my—when my kids were younger were these refugees, Vietnamese, that—who couldn't speak a word of English, but we had 'em babysittin' our kids. And my son still remembers this day. He was four, and he couldn't speak to the babysitter, who didn't understand a word of English. I'd gotten her outta one of these tents. Just a beautiful lady. My son wanted to go out and play, and she would—she was afraid to let him go out and play because she didn't know where he was gonna go, and so she, you know, told him to stay, and so he opened the window, kicked the screen out, and jumped outta the second story [*laughs*] of our house at Camp Pendleton into the front yard. [02:27:51] And my wife and I come home from the event we were in, and my son's draggin' his leg around. And

I'm—"What did you do? What's wrong with you?" you know. And he's a little bitty tyke, and he looks up and says, "I'm okay." [*SL laughs*] This is a marine major, lieutenant colonel selectee today. Tremendously gifted athlete. But he said, "She wouldn't let me out to play, so I jumped out that [*laughter*] window." But then going in to see her horrified, just horrified. I mean, crying and weeping and—'cause that was a little child that she was takin' care of, that she felt that she'd failed in her responsibility. And we're tellin' her, "It's okay. He's all right. We'll get him X-rayed." And 'course, no bones were broken. [02:28:24] But anyway, that again speaks to the beauty of it all and the long relationships over forty years—the great—as my nature, again, is—guilt I have that we didn't win. There's another beauty about it is that if you're gettin' into somethin' like that, you should win at the end of the day. If you're gonna put American lives in harm's way, you need to bring every resource you have to success, and we didn't do that, and we abandoned those people. You know, time has healed a lot of it right now, as you read in the paper. I mean, I was involved in getting the North Vietnamese to the Pentagon when I was a general later. But I just think that the cultural—the learning that I am convinced that is a result of my experience with Vietnamese, that

diplomacy, mutual respect, admiration, recognizing our differences, understanding that we're all human beings, whether you believe in a supreme being or not, which I do. We're all God's children, if you will. How do we leverage that to be much more respectful of one another? [02:29:42] And so the beauty of it is is that the lessons of the defeat are that, for me, as you've now learned, if I spent the rest of my life—we're never gonna get in that kind of a situation again unless we're gonna win, and we really need to understand when we commit to something like that, we'd better know what we're doin' and what the end state should be, what the strategic plan is, what the exit strategy is. How do we define victory? What are we really tryin' to accomplish here? You made a comment, a reference, "It was all about the oil." I mean, I—there—it's about a number of things, but the understanding that I have from the experience—the preciousness of life, the value of life, the horror of war—was the beautiful thing of understanding for me, as a professional marine officer and leader in the marine corps, of we're responsible here to make sure that we're prepared to preserve our way of life, that we build the best possible marine corps to do that. But at the same time, we shouldn't go willy-nilly or without justification into any war at any time.

[02:30:52] SL: What was the—what were the differences between the two tours in Vietnam?

MS: Tremendous difference. Tremendous difference. My second tour was when I was a lieutenant, and I was on the USS *Saint Paul*, CA-73, which was a heavy cruiser, eight-inch and five-inch guns, and it's a remarkable ship now of razorblades. It's been destroyed. But it had [*SL laughs*] fought in World War II, the entire Korean War, and multiple tours in Vietnam to where the *Saint Paul* had fired more rounds in harm's way than any ship in the history of mankind. Some—the movie *In Harm's Way* was, a matter of fact, was made on the USS *Saint Paul*. And so I was part of a marine detachment, thirty-eight marines and two officers, that were responsible for, in wartime, manning a five-inch gun, and then the officers were responsible for controlling the fires of the ship—one inside the ship and the other one was up in an airplane calling the fires and—all four corps and in Cambodia when President Nixon sent us to Cambodia. [02:32:09] So I was viewing the war from a completely different perspective where I was, in the first time, in a hole eating C rations, soaking wet. I had immersion foot the entire time I was in Vietnam because you could never get dry. Sleeping in clean sheets on a beautiful ship that had hot food

and so on, but had these moments when you'd go off when you're firin'—the ship was almost firing twenty-four hours a day. It would sail up and down from a little mountain range that the Australians were fighting down near Saigon called Vũng Tàu, all the way up to the demilitarized zone, and continuously firing all the way up. And then the ship would turn around and fire, and then it would only go off the line to get more ammunition to fire. So everywhere we went, we were picking up another land spotter or another unit that needed fires to fight the enemy. And that was in [19]69 and [19]70 when the war was intense.

[02:33:03] SL: What's the range on an eight-inch gun?

MS: Twenty-eight, twenty-nine thousand yards is the effective range of an eight inch and fifteen, sixteen thousand, maybe seventeen, on a five inch. But we, durin' that time, fired experimental rockets that went sixty thousand yards.

SL: How does that equate in miles?

MS: Thirty miles.

SL: Wow.

[02:33:29] MS: So again, because of the special nature of this ship and its uniqueness, we were taking research and development weaponry and firing it for the first time. It—we didn't know whether it was gonna explode in the tube [*SL laughs*] or what,

but we were firing these experimental rockets. And, as in the book, I mean, many times when I was flying in the plane, calling fires, I was taken aback by the accuracy of this ship. I mean, you're calling from fifteen hundred feet or five hundred feet, depending on—the enemy was tryin' to shoot you, normally in a Piper Cub or a helicopter or something. I mean, you were pretty vulnerable up there. And that was another experience because everybody was—they knew that what was happening to them on the ground was being caused by you in that little plane goin' eighty knots in circles up above 'em, and so we were constantly a target to be shot outta the sky. And I had my other experiences with pilots who were army—I had all kinds of them, but cowardice in the—you know, in that, which is reflected in the book, again. But I had an experience with a person who had little time to do, tryin' to get home without bein' killed. It was an—in this case, an army pilot, but coulda been anybody. But—and we were in the middle of a major fight, and there were—a major fight on the ground and lots of—I was calling B-52 strikes and naval gunfire and artillery all at the same time, and I was controlling it as a first lieutenant. All my . . .

[02:35:03] SL: At fifteen hundred feet.

MS: At fifteen hundred feet. Makin' sure I was outta the way of the

B-52 strike [*laughter*] that was at thirty thousand feet and in the artillery and makin' sure—and he—and there were just a tremendous amount of enemy on the ground, North Vietnamese. And the fight was hellacious. Hellacious. And you know, he thought we were gonna—they—we were the target. They were shootin' at us like crazy, and we were catchin' bullet holes in the plane, and he wanted to go down, you know, and I wouldn't let him do that. And I ended up havin' to pull a pistol on him to threaten his life to say, "You're gonna stay up here. We're gonna do this together." But it's recorded in the book. And he pooped on himself in his flight suit.

SL: He's scared . . .

MS: Yeah.

SL: . . . scared to death.

MS: Yeah. And when I got on the ground, had to go to his commander and say, "That's enough. Don't put him back up in there. He's got a week or two to go. Just let him stay on the ground because he's gonna get somebody killed. He's a menace." [02:36:01] But anyway, so it was a difference in that. It was the helplessness of understanding that you're firing around—once up on the demilitarized zone, a young lance corporal in a tower—we used to have them—observation

towers—and they would call the fires if—like, at night when we weren't flying. And they could see the enemy moving, et cetera, and they knew where the friendly forces were. And these young, tremendously talented, young people, eighteen, nineteen years old, were calling the fires of our ship, and the helplessness that you had, knowing what they were goin' through, having been out there in the previous tour, of the kid saying, "They're comin' after me now, and there's no way I'm gonna survive this." And talkin' to a kid on the radio 'cause you're controlling it from the ship, saying, "It's gonna be okay" and to hang in there and knowing that it's not and that they're gonna get him and this is it. But . . .

[02:36:57] SL: The line goes quiet.

MS: Yeah, the line goes quiet, and this is—they're at the base of the tower now, and I'm done, and the helplessness of that. So that was a—for the people on the ship in the navy who were sleeping on clean sheets, removed by being away—I mean, the enemy wasn't shooting at us, if you will. There's a story there that I'll tell you in just a second. The—and knowing what was going on on the ground 'cause I'd been there and the frustration with that, of not being able to do anything about it. But you're tryin' the best you can to get the fires to support. [02:37:34] But I

once had a mission that's recorded in the book [*laughs*] where I was calling fires, and I saw a North Vietnamese go into this mountainside and, which was unusual, and the fight was goin' on in the valley. But for whatever reason, I'd vectored the fire up where I'd seen him go, and it was a little hole in the ground. But what it was was an underground cache of ammunition that they had been movin' down the Ho Chi Minh trail. And when I hit it with the very first eight-inch round at about fifteen miles, about thirty thousand yards, and it hit right where I was lookin'. I mean, it couldn't've been a more perfect shot. Well, there were thirteen secondary explosions from all the ammunition that had been stored underneath the ground in the mountain. And it just—it was significant on what it had done to—and of course, they went up and investigated. The whole mountain just ripped open like it had been graded. You know, I mean, like football fields opening up. And it was, oh, eight, nine hundred meters along the top of this ridge with all these explosions had gone because they had dug in there. [02:38:48] Well, anyway, I was written up for an award for that because of staying in in the fight, and we were shot at, and I had holes in the plane [*laughs*] again. And then—and again, the irony above all ironies is, is that when it went through the process of this award and it was

downgraded from one award to another award. And then, finally, it was downgraded to a award without a Combat V, which—meaning as if I was not even in a fight because the ship that I had come off of, the *Saint Paul*, had not been fired upon by the enemy. [*SL laughs*] Nothing to do [*laughs*] with the fact that I was . . .

SL: Even though the plane had been.

[02:39:29] MS: Plane—yeah, and had been hit and—but it, again, shows you the—it's something that I use today to talk to people about. It's not about you. First of all, you gotta humble yourself. And—because, like in any war, protracted as this one is, we now have people going there to get a medal, unfortunately. That's the nature of warfare. And if you survive this and you were in the military during this period of time and somehow you're not recognized for heroism, your career's in jeopardy if you're a careerist and not a—and it happens—it's happened throughout history. [02:40:04] Bonaparte used to say, "What a man will do for a bolt of cloth on his chest." It's something that's stuck with me 'cause I use it when I talk to commanders today. And I have the privilege to address marine commanders who are being selected as lieutenant colonels or colonels to command. But I tell them this story just so they get

it. It's not about them and "You, too, can survive this. I mean, this is what happened to me. It's—at the end of the day, don't compromise yourself, sacrifice your people, or prostitute yourself for a stinkin' medal. Just do what you have to do to get the job done and take care of your people and fight." And it resonates with 'em, too, because some of 'em have to admit they can't—they have a hard time lookin' at me in the eye sometime because they are over there because they're fearful of . . .

SL: Not getting a medal.

MS: . . . not getting an award, a combat award. [02:40:52] So there was a major difference between the two tours of duty. That's the other thing I wanna make—just a major difference. By then, lot of protestations. It's all come through. We were still doin' the right thing in [19]66. [Nineteen] sixty-nine, [19]70, it's all gone south. It's not—the Giap Invasion doesn't occur till [19]72, but it's starting to turn. Attitudes have completely turned in America. The protestations are out. [*SL clears throat*] The Democratic Convention of [19]68 in Chicago; war protestors; Kent State, all that had occurred. I mean, it's just a nightmare back here, and you're—so it was a totally different environment. I was still proud. What I would normally do is go into a—fly from the ship—when I'd get inland, I'd be in a

helicopter, and I would get out, and I would see the troops that were going to be supported on the ground—army—I mean, I supported everybody. Army. [02:41:48] Australians in the south, marines, it didn't matter. But I really get the tenor of where they were and see their morale, their attitude, and I was extremely impressed even at that time with the tenacity because, again, they were in the middle of it. I mean, they couldn't go anywhere. This was their fight, and they could do all the protestin' they wanted to back in San Francisco or wherever. It sure wasn't gonna do 'em any good out where the fight was going on. So I was struck [*telephone rings*]—I mean—excuse me.

TM: I'm gonna break for one second, Scott.

SL: Okay.

MS: That's all right.

TM: Well, okay. We can go.

MS: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I'm sorry.

SL: Okay and . . .

MS: Apologize.

SL: . . . let's keep rollin'.

MS: That was one of my commanders, by the way, from that period of time.

SL: Line him up for an interview.

[02:42:38] MS: Yeah, he's a wonder—he'd love to come here. But anyway, it was a different environment, but I was still struck with the professionalism of the marines and soldiers who were in the middle of the fight. But you know, the politics of it all were much more acutely aware of all that from all the protests.

[02:43:04] SL: Let's talk about a [*TM coughs*] couple of weaponry icons from Vietnam that kinda came to the front. One was Napalm. One was Agent Orange. Did you witness either one of those . . .

MS: Oh . . .

SL: . . . kinds of strikes?

[02:43:19] MS: . . . absolutely. Napalm, for sure. I was involved in delivering Napalm, I mean, in the coordination, because I was up in the sky, the B-52s, all of this, whatever ordnance we had available, it was always in the pre-brief of what could we put on the target, so I was involved in that and witnessed its effectiveness and—firsthand, obviously. Agent Orange—the—my units that I was in and around, the tank battalion that I was in in the first tour and—we were allegedly exposed. I've never had ramifications from it, but people I served with have died from exposure to Agent Orange that were with me. So—but I never

really knew what was goin' on. I never really saw—I never felt that at any time was I being sprayed by some defoliant personally, but obviously knew it was goin' on, but I . . .

SL: How . . .

MS: . . . I never saw . . .

[02:44:326] SL: How quickly did Agent Orange do its job? I mean, how long did it take for it to . . .

MS: I could—I don't know.

SL: You don't know?

MS: I would say it didn't take very long. I mean, it was a poison that killed the—I mean, I have been on a patrol wherein the previous patrol it had not been hit by Agent Orange and went back the next time, and there's not a leaf on a tree. I mean, it did its job. [*Laughs*] But I wouldn't know that—from the time that they sprayed it to the time that it was barren trees or whatever. But . . .

SL: It was quick.

MS: It was a—it was quick from my recollection. I don't know the technical—I couldn't give the answer. I don't know. But I do know, I've been around [*laughs*] a lot of—even in flying a mission and then going back later and seeing—it looked like locusts had been through the place, you know, where it had

been sprayed. Somethin' outta the Bible, you know, 'cause it was just that barren where it had been, so it did its job.

[02:45:33] SL: One other popular image of that war is the—it seems like the major combat happened in the evening, in the dark. Is that right?

[02:45:52] MS: Well, yeah. Obviously, for them, the—I mean, it ebbs and flows. The latter part of the war when they had massed forces down below the demilitarized zone, when they really thought that it was turning in their favor 'cause the will of the American people was changing, they fought a lot in the daytime. But in my first tour, most of the fighting that they would do was at night. I mean, the odds—again, we had rudimentary night-sighting devices back then. You had to have ambient light from the moon and the stars to be able to see them. You could. They were kinda green shadows. But you know, it evened their chances out. I mean, they were much more effective. They'd—they slept in the daytime and fought at night, so from our perspective, a little bit more fearful as soon as the sun went down. If it was no moon the—your blood pressure went up or the tempo went up because you knew that—particularly, in no-moon situations or quarter moons, they were comin' because they had the advantage to—and if they had

probed you during the daytime to see where you were, where your positions were, if you were in the night defense—they were uncanny at knowing where—what the weak spots were, and that's what they did. So, yes. Some of my experiences were most horrific at night. [02:47:26] People lost their lives and—the other thing was that they were very effective at infiltrating—not major assaults, but they had a psychological advantage of kinda sneaking through and then getting in individual holes and cutting people's heads off and things like that. And they were very effective at doin' that, and I had some experiences where I was goin' into a hole where the marines who had been there the day before or two days before had all been killed by someone having done that. And that affects you.

SL: Well, sure, it does.

MS: Yeah, yeah.

SL: Sure, it does.

MS: I mean, the . . .

[02:48:11] SL: You know, as conscious as—conscientious as you are about helping our current soldiers and all that, I get a sense that your work also helps you in a way.

MS: It's very cathartic. Very cathartic. Sometimes it's debilitating because it's exhausting when I—these programs that we had for

these transitioning marines were a week long, and with thirty in a class and me spending so much individual time with each and every one of them, male and/or female, in going through this to a granular detail, I would be physically, mentally, emotionally exhausted at the end of a week, and I would need to take a week or ten days to recoup and get me back in battery. [02:49:13] And some of the experiences with these young men and women were—had such a profound effect on me, it would take longer than that. I mean, I could almost—you know, it would bring my nightmares back in full force. So—but on the whole, goin' back to your point, it was cathartic because you knew you were—it was value added—it was helping them. I could handle it even though it was exhausting, and it wasn't martyrdom or anything or—I could handle it. But I really did know that—and I have so many wonderful stories of kids initially saying, "Well, who is that guy? Why is he here?" Never talked to a general in their entire life. They're getting outta the marine corps, just trying to get a job, and suddenly, I'm reaching inside their soul and their—and pulling it out. And a lot of the cathartic experiences were—I—too numerous to count, but hundreds of these young men and women at the end of the week, saying, "Thank you for savin' my life." And you know, "I had no idea—

'why would you wanna be even doin' this'—and no idea that I'd ever reveal myself. I'm a tough marine, and [*SL laughs*] I'm not sharin' with anybody. I mean, I've told you things that I've never told my wife—will never tell anybody. I mean, you're encouraging me now to get therapeutic help, to go to a doctor, and I'm—you're gonna have to help me 'cause I'm not ready to do that yet." [02:50:45] "I mean, I can't imagine telling a doctor what I've shared with you." And I would, you know, say, "You have to. I mean, you're—it's—your situation is so severe that—you know, I'm tryin' to help you get a job, get you back in college." We used to use the term "goin' postal." I'm sayin', "I—you know, you've seen so much, and you have such a disregard for Americans, thinking that they know—don't under—appreciate what you've done—have any idea what you've done. They're all stupid. You're of little tolerance or patience of listening to somebody talk about a hangnail. You know, I mean, you're just not there yet, and you've got to assimilate back in. And part of the assimilation into our society is you're gonna have to get help for yourself to communicate this—to get out to deal with it." And they would inevitably say, "I've already done that. I mean, you've helped me." And I'd say, "Step one. You know, step one of three, but you've got still a long way to go on some

of these." So that cathartic experience and the remarkable nature of these young men and women, their character, if you will, the character of their deeds, their selflessness [*clears throat*]—again, as I've shared with you at lunch, the—without relatively few exceptions, the lion's share of all the young men and women I've been dealin' with came in directly as a result of the horror of 9/11 and that they had, just like in the case of my dad, a feeling of responsibility to preserve our way of life and volunteer their services and come in the marine corps. Just like in my war, again, it didn't really matter what your specialty was. You could be a clerk. You could be a . . .

SL: A bugler.

MS: Huh? Yeah.

SL: A bugler. [*Laughs*]

[02:52:35] MS: Yeah, a bugler. You could be a—an infantryman. You could be an artilleryman, a logistician, a pilot. I had a young—one kid that—post-traumatic stress—that never saw a shot fired. He was a helicopter crewman, and all he did was sleep—sweep the blood outta the back of the helicopter of all the evacuees that he had to carry out. Marine blood. And he never saw an enemy. Never saw a bad guy. Never had a shot fired in anger. But he has PTSD so bad, it's *The Shining* and Jack

Nicholson and the blood comin' down the hotel hallway, you know.

SL: Yeah.

MS: "I'm back." That . . .

SL: Absolutely.

MS: . . . that's what he has. That's his recurring nightmare, is sweeping the—up above his boots in marine blood. I mean, just one story again. And it hits everybody differently. One kid that never saw a shot but had the responsibility working in the morgue of removing the personal effects of marines deceased. And all of us used to carry our girlfriend, loved one, parents' picture in the helmet, and then havin' a kid that had nothin' but goo inside of his helmet, and this kid, sole responsibility as a military policeman was to—personal effects and reach in there and get the picture out and clean it off to get it into the personal effects, and there's nothin' but a mass of goo, and the impact it had on him. I mean—and sharing that with me, that that was it. And I said, "Well, when did you know that you were over the edge?" And he said, "I did that to—and it was one of my friends, and I couldn't recognize his face, but I could recognize who was in the photo. And the only response that I had, General, was, 'Let's do lunch,' to everybody standing around the table." He

said, "At that juncture, I knew that I was in great need of help."

[02:54:28] SL: Okay, so two tours in Vietnam. Now did you come back here between the tours?

MS: No.

SL: When did you get married?

[02:54:42] MS: Yeah, I went—I got married, and I went to—I came back after the first tour of duty, and I'll do this quickly, as a corporal, and I was stationed at officer candidate school as a corporal coming out of Vietnam. I had an appointment to the Naval Academy written by my commander, and they wanted me to play football and all that stuff. And I had the grades and all to go to the Naval Academy. And they came down to interview me and said, "You're in," and I played the string out as long as I could. I was a leadership instructor of combat leadership to officer candidates, college graduates goin' through OCS. And I was teaching them about leadership under stressful situations, and I was doing typing, too, 'cause that was still my skill, writing training schedules and things like that. But because it was early, [19]66, I was one of the few people on the staff who had been to Vietnam, so they were using my expertise, my experiences as a patrol leader on patrols, machine gunner, the jungle, dot, dot, dot, dot, dot, to talk about leadership to these college grads that

were goin' through OCS. And I made a decision not to go to the Naval Academy because I wanted to marry Cindy, and you can't be married at the Naval Academy. And I—she waited for a year, thirteen months, and I was the only guy in my unit that didn't get a "Dear John" letter. Everybody got a Dear John letter, which is, "Dear John, I don't love you" . . .

SL: Yeah.

[02:56:11] MS: . . . "anymore. I love"—and in my unit that I was in, everybody, married and/or single, got a Dear John letter. There weren't very many married people back then 'cause it was a single marine corps. But that had a profound effect on me that she waited. She dated Paul Ramey and had fun here at college at the university, but you know, we knew we were gonna get married, so I couldn't think—imagine having her wait four more years while I went to the Naval Academy to play football and play baseball or whatever, so I said, "No." And that had a profound—that was another juncture in your life. Here I am, at that time, nineteen, makin' this decision, and that's when my mentor came in—we were talkin' 'bout mentors—but my mentor came into my life, and he was a—the man that changed my whole life, and it's recounted in the book and someone I speak to all the time—about all the time. But he was a staff sergeant

from Pennsylvania named Karl G. Taylor, and he was an infantryman and was an instructor at OCS. That's why I knew him. He—officer candidate school—he had not been to Vietnam yet. And he observed me teaching and observed me in my—how I conducted myself, and he was ten years older than I was and been around a while, but he hadn't been to Vietnam yet. But anyway, a big, massive man. I used to think he was six five, 250, but he really was six two, about 220. [02:57:41] But big barrel chest. Not a ounce of fat on him. Just a absolute stud. And I used to believe that he had a cleft palate 'cause had a serious speech impediment. He spoke with a lisp, and I later learned, as I'll relay this story, that was not what had happened to him. Anyway, he came over to me after I'd turned down the Naval Academy, and he knew about me, and he knew about the car—Saint Louis Cardinals, that I had a contract with them that I had—and had football scholarships, and now, here I was, a corporal and, you know, typing training schedules and then being thrust out by my leaders to teach leadership to these officer candidates and kinda just showin' up, you know. I mean, I'm just glad I'm alive and—but I'm thinkin' I've got a responsibility to tell people what I have experienced and how you have to know a map and a compass to not get lost and all

that stuff. Well, anyway, he puts his arm around, and he's a hu—he's just a behemoth, I mean, next to me, just—and with this lisp. And it wasn't as severe as the way I was sayin', but [speaks with a lisp] "What's wrong with you? You know, you stupid? What—what you doin' here?" You know, I say, "Well, I'm teachin' these guys how to fight and win on a battlefield." [Speaks with a lisp] "Yeah, I know what you job is, but what're you doin' here? I mean, you just got to go to—you could go to the Naval Academy, the best school in the country?" He was a marine now, you know. [*SL laughs*] "You coulda played for the St. Louis Cardinals? They're the world champions, and you're—you're—what're you doin' here? What're—have you got any plan in your life, you know?" [*Laughs*] And I'm sayin', "Staff Sergeant Taylor, I'm just tryin' to do my job here." And said, "Well, you got a goal or anything? What're you"—"Well, I'm a—I just—you know, I'd like to make sergeant, and then I'll get out, and I'll probably go back to play football at Arkansas or somethin'," 'cause I always knew that I was big enough now that, you know, Frank'd probably have me back, and I could play if I wanted to. And Cindy would be here, et cetera, et cetera. [02:59:40] Anyway, so he said, [speaks with a lisp] "Well, you know, it's just—you're just—too many opportunities here. Too

much—you're not thinkin'. You're—I'm talkin' to you every day. We're gonna have a—we're gonna have a plan for you." [02:59:52] So every day this guy would mentor me. I mean, some days it was thirty seconds. Some days it was a minute. Some days it was thirty minutes. Some days it was out and under a tree. But I mean, he was the epitome for me in my entire marine corps career—his name was Karl G. Taylor—of a teacher, coach, mentor, role model, and evaluator, and the epitome of a husband. He had a wife and kids. He was a staff non-commissioned officer. He was a leader. But he had in this one package teacher, coach, mentor, role model, and evaluator. I'd never met anybody like him. [03:00:25] And even with his lisp, every time he opened his mouth, it was like the Sermon on the Mount to me 'cause everything he said to me was so wise and sage, and he got my attention, you know. But I just—I really didn't have any idea what to—I was still comin' outta here, gone to Vietnam, racial tension here, kids dyin' in my arms in Vietnam, fightin' and survivin', don't know why. Why did the guy next to me get shot in the chest, and I'm alive? Why am I still here? Is there a God? "What's this all about, Alfie?" I'm tryin' to figure it all [*SL laughs*] out, and here's this guy, suddenly comes into my life and changes everything. Just

everything. And his statement was, [speaks with a lisp] "If you're not gonna go the Naval Academy, and you're in love with your high school sweetheart, you're gonna go to OCS. You're gonna go to officer candidate school." And I said, "Well, listen, Staff Sergeant Taylor, I never really saw officers in Vietnam. I mean, I know what we're doin' trainin' here, but you know, we're kinda out there on our own." And I got some great friends who are officers, if you will, but I mean, it's not a familial relationship because we're very strict about that back then and to some degree today in the marine corps. But I said, "I—you know, I just—my recruiter lied to me about that. I mean, I've just not really thought about it. I think I'm just gonna do this to get out in four years and go back." And he says, "Nope. Nope. Not gonna do that. You're gonna"—[*laughter*]—so he made me write a personal mission statement about my value system, my belief in God, what money meant to me, what marriage meant, what leadership was. [03:02:00] And I—he made me write it down, and I wrote it down, and it's the first time I've ever written a personal mission statement. And he would critique it, and he would look at it with me, and he'd mentor, and we'd talk about it—talk about—well, anyway, I took the College Level Examination Program test, the CLEP test is what was called,

which is a college equivalency test.

SL: Yep.

[03:02:18] MS: And I passed it, which speaks volumes, again, about Fayetteville High School. I had one semester of college here, and I passed it with a four-year college equivalency, and so I was a—when that happened, my—you know, the commander came to me and said, "You're in. You're—go to OCS." So I'm there teaching at OCS. I'm a—on the staff at OCS. Taylor's tellin' me to go to OCS. I pass the test. [03:02:49] The commander's sayin' do this, and I'm still kind of—my personality is, "Hmm, is there another [*laughs*] option here? [*SL laughs*] Should I really make a commitment to do this? What does this mean?" But anyway, I go in to OCS, having just turned twenty. I'm the youngest guy in the class. Everybody else is college grads or had been around a little—they were—I was the youngest guy at age twenty. And—classic, again—it's the night of the first Super Bowl between the Green Bay Packers and the Kansas City Chiefs. And Taylor comes up to me [*SL laughs*]—now the roles are gonna change, you know. Now he's gonna be my teacher, and I'm the little punk candidate on the other side. And he says, [speaks with a lisp] "You better watch the football game [*laughter*] 'cause this the last game you gonna watch for a

while. But when it's over, you come across the street and check in, but why don't you watch the game and"—so I'm watchin' Green Bay pummel the Kansas City Chiefs on TV. They played out in LA, as I remember, so it's East Coast time watchin' the game. And you know, the Super Bowl wasn't much back then. They were havin' this war between the AFL and the NFL . . .

SL: Yeah.

[03:03:51] MS: . . . and all that stuff. But I watched the game, and so I'm in my marine uniform, and I go across the street and, unlike boot camp, where you're in yellow footprints that are led at forty-five degree angle, there are no yellow footprints. But everybody's there. They're all scared to death—I mean, these college grads. And there—I'm standin' there, kinda thinkin', "My God, am I really gonna get into this? That—now I've been on the staff, but now I'm gonna be a part of it." Well, Taylor comes up and says, [speaks with a lisp] "You stay right here, and you wait in line because your ass is mine [*SL laughs*] once you [*laughter*]—'cause I'm gonna be"—he's gonna be my instructor, my sergeant instructor. So I'm standin' in line. They're all movin' forward and a lotta—we had all kinds of panic 'cause it was rough. They were not treatin' people with a lotta dignity, and you're captured. You can't go anywhere. So he'd keep

comin' up, and he said, "Yep, you're mine. You're mine." And then as we get closer and closer, he said, "Ah, I may not be able to count very well." And you know, I'm lookin' at him, but I am not lookin' at him 'cause if I looked at him, he would be all over me for turnin' my head 'cause I'm lookin' straight to the front. And he says, [speaks with a lisp] "Ah, I screwed up. You're gonna be in Fourth Platoon, and I have Third Platoon in Company E." He said, [speaks with a lisp] "But I'll be watchin' you the whole time, and you make us proud." And so I go into OCS. It's the winter. It's January, and we have snowfalls, and I'm involved in—as a student we had a Ph.D. . . .

SL: Just a second now.

MS: Yeah.

SL: I think we've gotta change tape.

[Tape stopped]

[03:05:30] SL: So this is tape four . . .

TM: Yes.

SL: . . . today? [*MS laughs*] And we're talkin' about officer . . .

MS: Candidate school.

SL: . . . candidate school.

MS: Yeah.

SL: And we kinda got into this 'cause I was asking about when you

married Cindy, but . . .

MS: Yeah.

SL: . . . you're—I know we'll get back to that.

MS: I—we're gonna get right to it . . .

SL: Okay.

[03:05:46] MS: . . . quick, but I wanted to share because it's so meaningful in my life with the Karl Taylor association and experience. In officer candidate school, my bunkmate was a Ph.D. who had helped design DuPont Lucite wall paint [*SL laughs*] and wanted to come in the marine corps to be a pilot in the Vietnam War. And he was much older. I think he was twenty-seven. Wonderful guy. Remain nameless. We had the guy that designed the Cadillac Coupe DeVille for General Motors in my platoon. All these guy—one guy that played for Texas Christian University as defensive end, football player. But a number of extremely talented people that were coming in the marine corps to serve during the Vietnam War. And the irony of the young man that designed DuPont Lucite paint—we had very few, if any, Ph.D.s in the marine corps at that time. But they made him my bunkmate to get this guy through, and they shared with me on the side, "You're gonna get this guy through if he can do it or not." And he was crying at night for his

mother, and [*SL laughs*] you know, just a—couldn't make his bed. Knew—we had hospital folds and all, you know, drop a dime on it and all that. He was petrified with all that. [*SL laughs*] And he was last in his peer evaluations. We'd each write an evaluation about somebody's performance in a billet, and he was last, but he was brilliant. He was an absolute brilliant man and a wonderful guy. [03:07:13] And the whole experience for me was helping him get through this OCS—ten weeks, I think, maybe—yeah, ten weeks in the dead of winter in Quantico with tremendous snowstorms like they've had this year. We had similar ones back then. And it's very hilly terrain. Unlike boot camp where the regimen in boot camp is team-building, and if someone fell out of a run, for example, the whole unit runs around to pick up the guy who fell out, and it's all for the team. In officer candidate school, it's building individual leaders that are gonna stand out. So when a guy falls out of something, it's—you just let him sit there, and he's not gonna make it. So all these experiences that I had, and being an instructor there, I clearly understood it, and I could laugh at night when these guys were, "Woe is me" and again, I'm the youngest one there. But I had a sense of awareness of what was going on. The instructors all knew me. I mean, I wasn't

given any preferential treatment, quite the opposite, but at the same time, it was a game to me, you know, just—it was a survival game. Do—you know, follow the instructions. And I had a wonderful experience in officer candidate school with helping this guy get through, which he did, and he became a pilot, and he flew in Vietnam, and everything happened. And many of these people that are in my unit—we just had a reunion this past summer, as a matter of fact, at—in Washington, DC, and they all did great jobs. We lost a lotta people in my basic school class, which is the school after that. [03:08:56] But I wanted to share two points about it that—at the end, when you get commissioned to second lieutenant, we have a tradition—several units in the army have it, but it's a real tradition in the marine corps, which everyone does, and that is at the first sign when you're—now an officer—of respect, the first sign of respect is a hand salute, a verbal greeting, from a subordinate to the officer. And it normally is something like this, "Good morning, Lieutenant Steele," and then the return response is, "Good morning, Staff Sergeant Taylor," in my case, who was the first one outside the building at Quantico, Virginia, where we had graduated from, a theater. The Potomac River's in the back. It's a cold, March morning. He's blockin' the sun that's comin'

up from—you know, I mean, he's that—still big in my life. I could tell you a lot of incidents about OCS of him and I getting through it together on a snow hike, fifteen miles, and nobody makin' it but he and I and a couple of other people, and hundreds of people falling out. But we just had this bond goin' through this experience. Well, anyway, this hand salute and verbal greeting sign of respect is followed by the officer passing a silver dollar to the enlisted person who shows you that cert for a sign of respect. It's a tradition that's gone on forever. It still goes on today. And it's a seminal moment because it is about your authority as a leader of marines as an officer, and it's memorialized by this passing of this silver dollar. [03:10:327] Well, it was with Staff Sergeant Taylor, and I tell this story publicly a lot, and I wanna share it in this because it's another one of those seminal events [*laughs*] that we have in our lives that shape who you are and why you do the things you do and what happened in your life and what do you do with these kinds of moments. Well, at the end of the hand salute, I give Staff Sergeant Taylor the silver dollar, and I look up at him and say, "Do you have any last-minute instructions, Staff Sergeant Taylor?" And he looks down at me in his inimitable way [*SL laughs*] and says [speaks in a lisp], "Lieutenant, do your duty."

And he hand saluted and turned around and walked away. And you saw me get this outta my briefcase. I carry it with me everywhere I go. But that's the last time I saw Staff Sergeant Taylor. [*Papers rustling*] And this is his story that I'd like to share.

SL: Okay.

[03:11:26] MS: "For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving as a company gunnery sergeant during Operation Meade River in the Republic of Vietnam on the night of 8 December 1968, in the form that the commander of the lead platoon had been mortally wounded when his unit was pinned down by a heavy volume of enemy fire, Staff Sergeant Taylor along with another marine crawled forward to the beleaguered unit through a hail of hostile fire, shouted encouragement and instructions to the men, and deployed them to covered positions. With his companion, he then repeatedly maneuvered across an open area to rescue those marines who were too seriously wounded to move by themselves. Upon learning that there were still other seriously wounded men lying in another open area in proximity to an enemy machine gun position, Staff Sergeant Taylor, accompanied by four comrades, led his men forward across the

fire-swept terrain in an attempt to rescue the marines. When his group was halted by devastating fire, he directed his companions to return to the company command post, whereupon he took his grenade launcher, and in full view of the enemy, charged across the open rice paddy towards the machine gun position, firing his weapon as he ran. Although wounded several times, he succeeded in reaching the machine gun bunker and silencing the fire from that sector moments before he was mortally wounded. Directly instrumental in saving the lives of several of his fellow marines, Staff Sergeant Taylor by his indomitable courage, inspiring leadership, and selfless dedication, upheld the highest traditions of the marine corps and of the United States Naval Service. And the president of the United States, in the name of the Congress, takes pride in presenting the Medal of Honor posthumously to Staff Sergeant Karl G. Taylor, United States Marine Corps. Signed, Richard Nixon." [03:13:25] This man is my hero, and my personality type is that one of our character traits is that we have to have a hero in our life to be able to do the things and what we call saving the world. We have to have some model to emulate, and for me, it's Staff Sergeant Taylor, who died on 8 December [19]68. So what made—what's happened is, is that for all of my life, he's been the model

because he put his arm around me at the moment and [speaks in a lisp] "What're you doin'?" And I think about him every day. He's the last conscious thought I have every night. Even when I'm privileged to be in the spoon position my wife, I think about him. I talk to him every day. The first thing I think about every morning when I wake up is his immortal soul and my responsibilities about doin' my duty. I've read this thousands of times to thousands of audiences since he received this. [03:14:33] Recently I was privileged to be the guest speaker at a opening of an enlisted facility that houses enlisted marines at officer candidate school who train officers to be the future leaders of the marine corps. I worked for thirty years to get it. It's named Karl G. Taylor Hall, after Staff Sergeant Taylor. It's in his honor. It's a $17.5 million building, and I was the guest speaker. And his widow, who never remarried, couldn't come because she was too ill. She just passed away recently, too. His son, who was in the womb on 8 December [19]68, came, and he had been retired as a marine gunnery sergeant. His brother had retired as marine master sergeant, and he came. And when I thought that Taylor had a speech impediment from birth, what I learned the day we dedicated the building was that his brother, who was older than he was—when he was four—when Karl was

four and his brother was five, he—his brother was attacked by a rabid dog, and Taylor pulled him, the dog, off him, and the dog turned onto Taylor and crushed his face, causing the permanent speech impediment and the disfigurement of his face. [03:15:58] His sister, who revered her older brother, was there, along with her husband and her quarter—her—another marine who—Taylor tried to get his sister to marry one of two marines, and they were both present at the ceremony. The company commander who watched him run across the open rice paddy was there in a wheelchair. He had been shot in the back in January of 1969 and paralyzed from the waist down. The radio operator, who was one of the four people he sent back, was present and had watched Taylor go across the open rice paddy. And when I talked to the company commander and the radio operator and the family members, the common theme was, "Tell me what you think about him," and they all said the same thing. He was the greatest man they ever knew in their life. And he was for me, too. [03:17:00] So we have this putting on a pedestal. He could do no wrong 'cause he never did any wrong, so I don't know anything about his shortcomings. Don't care. The dedication of that building and understanding that we kinda closed the circle in honoring him for—in perpetuity to be—this

building to be named after him, and the impact that he had not only on me, shaping my life to become an officer, the youngest officer in the marine corps at age twenty, but guiding me for the rest of my life because, again, we flounder—my personality type flounders without heroes. We can't function if we don't have one. And we normally do. They're almost of mythical proportion. We have to have them in our life, and this has been the constant rock, if you will, of all the ebbs and flows of everything that's happened in my life because he's at the centerpiece of all of it, of "I can get through anything, no matter what, because of him." So I wanted to share it in that as I read it—I just read it to a group of people—the company that I'm consulting right now—again, for them understanding that you have no idea of the influence—like Jay Donathan, Ray Brown, the teachers here, my mentor, Karl Taylor—of what impact you have on other people. You never understand it completely until you tell them that you had impact. And I did not have an opportunity to tell him the impact that he had on me, but I can live the rest of my life of sharing with other people the impact that he had and what our responsibility is to other people. [03:18:42] And his obvious moment of truth and courage is unparalleled from a military perspective, of receiving

posthumously the highest award we give someone for heroism in this country. But it's all the lives that he's touched for generations because I've used his example to touch so many other lives. And I read this 'cause I, again, carry it with me. If I'm speaking to three marines or thousands of marines or whomever, this always is woven into the conversation for understanding that we're all human. We all make mistakes. We all have frailties. But we all also have opportunities to, in his case with me—absolutely changed the whole course of the rest of my life because he took the time to mentor me, to shape me from whoever I was up to that point to somebody that, in his mind, there was a future for, and it wasn't playin' baseball or football, [*unclear words*] all these opportunities lost, if you will, but it was something in there. And so in the conversation I had with him this morning, it was about comin' over here again and knowing that, at some time this day, that I'd have another opportunity to share his story and his impact on my life. [03:20:13] It's amazing of what I found over decades now of telling a story of how many people who knew him and how many people who have the same repetitive theme, that he was the greatest person they've ever been around. He was just a giant, physically, but more so in understanding husband, father,

teacher, coach, mentor, role model, evaluator, and the reason and purpose of life. And what are we all here for at the moment of truth? And his one [*clears throat*] utterance to me was [speaks with a lisp], "Lieutenant, do your duty." Pretty simple, but it has—and all these things that you've read about now, all these roles and responsibility, kinda bein' at the centerpiece or apex or—it isn't about me. It's about a gift. What do you do with the gift of life? What do you do with the gift of understanding? What do you do at the moment of truth? Are you in the game, or you out of the game? And it's always been easy to make the choice, again, not martyrdom or anything—is because I have this model to emulate because at his moment of truth, unhesitatingly got up to pay the supreme sacrifice and give his life for his fellow marines. So it's a great model to emulate forever. [03:21:38] So a week after officer candidate school at age twenty, my wife came to Quantico, and we were married in the Catholic chapel. It was a wonderful ceremony. Again, I was married by then-captain in the navy, John J. O'Connor, who was the chaplain at the base at Quantico, the Catholic chaplain who went on to become the chief of chaplains in the navy and the bishop of New York and then, ultimately, the cardinal of New York, the senior Catholic prelate in America.

And I maintained a relationship with him for all of my life because of the wedding that he performed. My father-in-law, the colonel that you saw a picture of, was very anti-Catholic. He was a born-again Christian Baptist, very religious man. Really had great problems with Catholicism. [03:22:39] Was somewhat of a racist. He was the segregated army. His wife was not, when we were living here, but the remarkable thing about our wedding was that I told Chaplain O'Connor that my father-in-law—I was just even amazed that he showed up at a Catholic wedding because he really did have—he was very religious and very Christian, born again, Bible study, Bible teacher, et cetera, but he really did have problems with the pope, Mary, the Catholic Church, et cetera, and it was gonna be a real sacrifice for him to see me get married. But he had respect for me, and he loved his daughter, and he was gonna come. Well, in this wedding ceremony, Chaplain O'Connor—that's why he was such a brilliant man—he said, "Don't worry about it, lieutenant. I'll take care of it, and I'll explain it." So he explained everything about the Mass, what was going on, by going over at every event, stopping what he was doing, and explained it to my father-in-law. "Now, Bill"—they're both of equal rank. One's a colonel in the army; one's a captain in the

navy. "Bill, this is it. This is why we're doing this right now. This is what's commonly misunderstood, particularly by Protestants, about this portion of the ceremony. This is what it means." And he just blew my father-in-law away in my background. I mean, he just absolutely blew him away. He could not get over what was happening. [03:24:00] And from that moment on, he embraced me, embraced my Catholic faith, embraced his daughter married to a Catholic. He's only wanted me to come to church with him, which, at the time, the Catholic Church—you wouldn't—you couldn't go to another—I mean, it was kinda one of those parochial rules or whatever. But I would always say, "No, but you can come with me," and he always would, whenever we went to Mass. If he was visiting or I was visiting him, he would go. But I said, "But I'll listen to your Bible study. You know, you can"—which I did on several occasions. But it changed his life from that wedding experience, too. [03:24:38] So anyway, from there—it was a wonderful ceremony, and you've got some photographs of it all. I went—I was in the basic school, which is a six-month school for shaping officers. And it was where I was with the people in the book and our class, which was TBS, The Basic School, TBS 5-67. We had the largest class 'cause we're in the middle of the Vietnam War

in [19]67. Five hundred and eighty-six of us. The lion's share went immediately to Vietnam afterwards. I did not. I waited for a year before I went back the second time. The—we had the largest casualty rate of both death and wounded in the Vietnam War of any class. We just had a reunion where we honor all of our dead at the wall in Washington. Jim Jones came. Ray Smith and I were all there. But it was a seminal experience because, again, as is outlined in the book, I was one of the few people, both as a lieutenant now and on the staff that had been to Vietnam. So everything that they're teaching I knew—either knew that it was false and wouldn't work in Vietnam or "this is right." And so most of the time going through there, I'm still the youngest guy at twenty. I'm not even twenty-one years old yet. My peers would turn to me, saying, "Is this the straight skinny? Is this"—and I would say, in class or after class, mostly in class, "Yes, this is it. I mean, if you do this"—or "Well, we tried that, but that won't work because"—and "It didn't work. It may work now, if you work out and refine it," and so on. [03:26:30] But anyway, it was a magnificent experience of learning and going through, particularly bein' so young and then part of all that. But again, the lion's share of people became infantrymen. They went to Vietnam. The number one guy in my platoon, number

one student, was killed. We had people that were traveling outta my unit in Vietnam not even getting to their first unit, attacked by the enemy, fighting with a Swiss Army knife, who were killed. We just lost a lotta great men. There were no women in the program at that time. I think it's in the forties how many were killed and then in the hundreds, of course, of the number who were wounded. [03:27:24] And I went to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, and then to armor school at Camp Pendleton for six weeks and then back. And then to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, for six months on the defense of the perimeter at Guantanamo. Became a company commander of a tank company, Second Tank Battalion, and then came back and then went to Vietnam the second time that we've talked about from there. But it was in those formative years—Karl Taylor—everybody knew my relationship to him at the time, I mean, even then, and he hadn't even been to Vietnam yet 'cause this didn't happen till 8 December [19]68. But just what a powerful impact he had on me and his family to this day.

[03:28:16] SL: So after you left Virginia, what did Cindy—did Cindy come back to Fayetteville or . . .

MS: No. No, she was with me. We—she was born—I'm in September, and her birthday's in November. So she went to

Camp Lejeune with me, and then we drove out to California to the tank school. I was twenty-one at that time. She was still twenty. Couldn't get a drink [*SL laughs*] out and when we're livin'—we lived right on the beach in Oceanside, California.

SL: Beautiful.

MS: Had one—oh my gosh. I brought—I thought I had some pictures of it, and I wanted to show you because it was an idyllic spot that we lived for six weeks. We go back there to visit it all the time. It's still there. The place is still there, right—I mean, the waves crashin' in, sleepin' at night, and it was a great experience and one of our fondest memories because that's where we had been married less than a month or less than six months. Anyway, then we went back to Camp Lejeune, and then she waited, you know, while I was in Cuba. And then when I went back the second time, we—to Vietnam, we were—the ship was out of San Diego. [03:29:36] So we moved to San Diego and lived in National City, outside. Our daughter had been born at Camp Lejeune, the oldest child, during that period of time, two years after we were married and kind of our—we're startin' our family and so on. So you know, now she's had the experience with me goin' to Vietnam as her boyfriend and now goin' back to Vietnam. My closest friend, Ray Smith, had gone.

She obviously knew all these people who had been killed. She had her own father, who had a serious head wound from the Korean War. And so she's starting to form her own opinions about war, its futility, what's this all about, et cetera. And she was a faithful wife and supportive and all that, but I mean, she really does have strong opinions about the need for diplomacy and so on. [03:30:30] So she was very supportive in my career as trying to change things to make things better and to—because she really, you know, was taken by the protestations, if you will, and the loss of life of many of our friends that she knew who had been killed.

SL: Everybody was.

[03:30:54] MS: Yeah. Yeah. But anyway, we went—I mean, I can track it all the way through to get—coming out of the second tour of duty in Vietnam, which we've talked about, on the *Saint Paul*, I was then assigned to Portsmouth, Virginia, which is in southern Virginia around Norfolk, where I was the officer in charge of sea school, which is the preparatory school for enlisted marines to serve as part of marine detachments on capital ships. It was an interesting tour of duty, somewhat highlighted in the book. Again, we're in the—this time, [19]70 through [19]72, the—lots of problems in the protestations in the war. Lots of

race issues in the military. Lots of bad people from the draft, which is still going on. In my case, the school was because of the handling of nuclear weapons on aircraft carriers. The criteria to get into the school was the second highest of any criteria that we had in the marine corps for an enlisted marine. Like, embassy duty was number one. You had to meet certain profile criteria. Well, because of the handling of nuclear weapons, I had, in essence, the second-best group of people, if you could—on the screening process. Well, the tragedy was, is that because of the profile of people coming in the military, over 90 percent didn't meet the criteria. I mean high school dropouts, convicted of crimes and all that kinda stuff. But it was a wonderful experience. I was goin' to night school to try to get credits. Always wanted to come back to Arkansas at that time. It was a great teaching experience. I left some of the reports of what was happening while I was there. And it was formulating in my mind again about the changes that I saw. We had two schools, one in Portsmouth, Virginia, for East Coast ships and one in San Diego for West Coast ships. But I was formulating in my mind at that time the—whether or not we really had a requirement for marines on ships. Could the navy do this? Was it really important? It was traditional . . .

SL: Yeah.

[03:33:22] MS: . . . and it was a—it had a great legacy, if you will. That's how we started leathernecks in the history of the marine corps, fighting with sabers on capital ships and leathernecks to keep them from—cutlasses from cutting their necks. And so it goes back to the beginning of the marine corps in 1775 on ships' detachments. But I really had a fundamental problem with the mission, and it was exacerbated by nuclear weapons being removed from ships later and then the role of the marines and eight-inch guns—battleships and cruisers go out, so there's no marines manning the guns—that—so by the time that I'm a general later thirty years later, I'm in the movement to remove marines from capital ships and suffering the slings and arrows again—[*SL laughs*] not "woe is me"—of people, traditionalists, that we always have marines on ships—"Navy having marines on ship. We gotta have 'em." And me saying, "They're really doing nothing on the ship anymore because there's no nuclear weapons. There's no gun mounts. All they're doing is polishing floors and opening doors for navy captains and their bell—their waiters, and it's"—still, the criteria was there, and by the all-volunteer force, you're getting these tremendously qualified young men, no women, that are so bored and so upset about

opening doors for—not disrespectfully, now, but just thought this was a useless job.

SL: Yeah.

[03:34:55] MS: And that my litmus test or the pulse, if you will, when I was a general was traveling around to the ships and speaking to the marines and getting their . . .

SL: Feedback.

MS: . . . feedback, which was, "Get me outta here, sir. This is bogus. It's bad." And so we no longer have them. I was instrumental in removing all—and the navy was in an uproar about it, and we were trying to sell the navy on preventive defense, using their people to man the machine guns for their ships' self defense and whatever it may be. And it was a challenge, but we got there eventually. And part of the *Cole* incident—you know, we wouldn't've had a marine on the *Cole* anyway. It wasn't that size ship. But it was in that period of time when we were morphing—it change—when the *Cole* was attacked in Yemen. But it was an amazing experience, again.

[03:35:55] SL: So I guess the marines being all volunteer—is that—that's . . .

MS: We're right in that cusp. Right at that time. It really—the—we suffer—all the services suffer with nonqualified people, if you

will, in the military up through 1975, [197]6, and [197]7. We really don't get to Nixon's edict of removing the draft and the ramifications of the Vietnam War and the slow—come out the other side—of a professional military force until the late [19]70s, early [19]80s, and it really doesn't come to fruition until Reagan is president. So there's this long period of time where we're in this—no money in the budget. This negative attitude, about the military because of the Vietnam experience, weaning ourselves from—into an all-volunteer force and having no money to do anything. I mean, during the Carter Administration, for example, in my thirty-five years, it was the worst period of time of all because there was no money in the budget, and we couldn't train. We couldn't do anything. And—but you still had all this residual effect. In the [19]70s, when General Wilson was the commandant, that person with the beesting in the photo thing there, it was so bad with racial tension and animosity, we were tryin' to reinvent ourselves. We did a lot of things that we later regretted, but we were tryin' to figure out, "How do you deal with adversity with people who, one, don't wanna be here, don't wanna follow orders without making it a race issue. That's soundin' like white person telling black marine what to do." [03:37:40] And it was tremendously challenging and difficult for

all of us who were leaders. I have many stories, a couple that I could share, but the—our challenge was not only with in dealing with the strife inside our units, where it was people physically beating one another because of the color of their skin, and the incredulity of that by a general who had gone through segregation, World War II, integration—"You're a marine. You do what you're told," and not comprehending this absolute metamorphical change of culture in America. And [19]68 Olympics—black power salute replicated throughout the army and the marine corps. I had a company at the time in that period of Camp Lejeune coming out of Guantanamo, before I even went back to Vietnam the second time, where race riot fights every night. We had a young black marine who got all the black marines at Camp Lejeune around him to raise the black power salute at evening colors. [03:38:52] And we had marines assaulted both ways, but Black Panthers, Huey Newton—there was a lot of infiltration of young men coming in the military to subvert the marine corps and the army that were paid by the Black Panther Party to come in. We had some of 'em in my [*laughs*] organization. We had this whole synergy of moot courts, kangaroo courts, where black leaders who were antiwhite, antimilitary, but when a black person would come in,

they would pull him off to the side and say, "Are you an Uncle Tom, or are you a black man?" And these young marines are just coming in to serve their country, having to make a choice amongst their peers or their fellow blacks, and it was just devastating. It was very disruptive. Involved murders, death, beatings. I mean, in a tank unit we have, you know, pick handles for—because of all the heavy work you do. I mean, they would just literally come at each other. And so to be a young officer,coming from Fayetteville, again, trying to hold all this together when your leadership believes, "Well, what's wrong with you down there? They won't do what you're tellin' 'em? Then you're a lousy leader." [03:40:16] And so what happened was it was a litmus test and another baptism of fire of all of us, that are kind of reflected in the book, who stayed in the military during that period, who bucked up, if you will, to know that, somehow, we gotta be a part of the solution to come out on the other side of this horrendous environment that we're in. [03:40:34] And I had a great story—I'll just—I'd gone—and I'm jumpin' ahead a little bit, but it's the residual—but from the experience at Camp Lejeune. Then I come to go back to Vietnam. Then go to sea school. It's just horrific there. The quality of people is bad. I come to Arkansas to get my degree,

which we'll talk about the professors and the impact. But then I—when I go back to the marine corps, it's—we're still not out the back side of this. It's still—tension is high. The quality of the young men—by then you had the residual of fraggings, which were notorious in Vietnam, where officers were—soldiers and, in some cases, marines that were fragged by—with a hand grenade by recalcitrant troops, you know, that refused to fight and things. We had all these kinds of things still going on. I had friends who were company commanders at Pendleton in peacetime that were being recipients of these—the—these lash outs by their troops for being—not dealing with their issues. And so the marine corps, in a reaction to that, had a famous period that we went through, which was called human relations training. [03:41:53] And here you have this authoritarian, hierarchical organization, the United States Marine Corps, unlike any on the planet. "Yes, sir. No, sir." And then we're in this environment wherein human relations training required that a colonel sit down with a PFC and call them by their first name. Instead of colonel and private, it was Joe and Bill and holding hands and "Kumbaya" in circles. And the backlash of that—this was brought to us by a wonderful man that I met. But the backlash was horrendous of the traditional marine leadership

and so on, of people resigning, getting out—"I'll not stay. I'll be damned if I'm gonna be called Bill by this guy from Newark," you know, or whatever. And again, it wasn't a matter of just race at that point. It was everything. It was just this—"To get through this, we're going to have to treat people with a different respect and dignity and, in essence, eliminate the military part of all this." So again, those of us who are down there at the little end are sayin', "This is nuts. It won't last, but we've gotta stay to get through it." And we're mentoring these colonels and generals, who're just incredulous to this, and they're not gonna go—even go in the room to sit there and say, you know, "Captain, you can call me Bill," you know. I mean, they're [*laughs*]—and it was just a—it was almost comical, it was so bad. [03:43:23] But I had a young, black marine from Kansas City who had fraudulently enlisted in the marine corps—we didn't know—he'd burned his junior high down in Kansas City because the teacher had got sideways with him, so he just burned the school down. And he came to my unit. And he was a handsome man, a light-skinned black guy married to a very attractive woman, but he was a hood. I mean, he was a bad guy. So we were gonna go train with the tanks to go on ship to make it out to sea and train and then make a landing on the beach at Camp

Pendleton as part of a training operation. Well, he didn't wanna go, this kid, so he goes up and starts the engine on his tank and then gets underneath it and pulls the drain plug on the . . .

SL: Oil.

[03:44:10] MS: . . . oil—crank—cank—crankcase, and of course, within minutes the engine seizes up, and so his tank is deadlined. He can't go. Well, I hammer him for destruction of government property, and we're gonna get him processed through all that. And then we have a procedure called request mast. He wants to see the commanding general, who's a brigadier general by the name of Bill McCullough, who I knew, even though I was a captain. So I'm a young captain dealin' with this guy who's a recalcitrant, bad guy. Really should never have been in the marine corps in the first place, and I'm dealin' with this guy. So the end of the state is is that he just did it to avoid going in the training operation. He request masts to get by me and my commander, who's a lieutenant colonel, to get right to the general. The law at the time was, he had the right to see the general. But there was one gatekeeper, a colonel, World War II vet named Wild Bill Gately, a magnificent leader, who I thought would've stopped it because he would've seen right through this facade. [03:45:11] This kid was a punk and

needed to be held accountable. Gately calls me on the phone and says, "Marty, I hate—I know you're gonna be upset with this, but I'm gonna let this kid see the general." And I said, "Sir, I just can't believe it. I mean, this kid is just a bad guy. This is wrong," and so on. So anyway, the tension is very high throughout the base, but in my unit, because this is kind of the emblematic case that's happening of—this whole thing has come to fruition, and I'm in the center of it again because I've got this [*SL laughs*] guy goin' . . .

SL: Yep.

MS: . . . all the way up. So we go—the rest of the tanks—put 'em on ship. My troops—I have to get 'em in school circle every day—"Sir, this can't be. This guy is a punk," you know. Even the black troops, sayin', "Sir, he's a bad actor. Just—he's"—I mean, and I'm sayin', "Just—it'll—let justice prevail here. We'll see where it goes." "Sir, 'Kumbaya'—I mean, calling you—I mean, do you think any of us would call you Marty?" [*SL laughs*] I mean, they're all there 'cause we're isolated on this ship. And I'm sayin', "Just—let's see how it plays out." [*Unclear words*] You could cut the tension with a knife. It was that bad. And some of the senior enlisted marines who were African American, who I had been with, they didn't know what to do. They couldn't

understand it because they had gone through this experience, and they had assimilated into the institution. They couldn't understand this generation comin' in. They couldn't understand black power salutes. I mean, they were part of the institution and loved the marine corps and loved bein' a leader in the marine—so this is like a big churn going here. [03:46:46] And it really was horrible and tense. Anyway, after three or four days at sea, we're makin' the landing and got all the tanks and landing craft utility with our water gear to—in case we dip into the ocean, the engine won't stop and all that—all the—it's called deepwater fording. So we're in the water, and we come up on the beach, and the radio operator comes over, and is breaking all procedures for radio, but says, "Captain Steele"—and there's witnesses, big throngs of people sitting in bleachers because this is a major deal . . .

SL: Yeah.

MS: . . . movin' across the—and you know, I'm lookin' up and talkin' on the radio and you never—you don't give names out over a radio, you know. But, "You need to leave your tank and report to the commanding general up in the bleachers."

SL: At the tower.

MS: Up in the . . .

SL: In the tower.

MS: . . . bleachers.

SL: Yeah.

MS: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

[03:47:36] MS: So my driver slams on the brakes. All the tanks—people pull up, and they're lookin' at me, and they're shakin' their heads, and they're—they wanna jump out because they think it's over, that my career is over, 'cause they're gonna hammer me because of what this guy said. Well, I go up—and another one of those moments in our lives, kinda shaping the future of the marine corps. The general, General McCullough was there, and he said—I reported and saluted, and he said, "Captain Steele, come with me." And at that mi—instant I'm thinkin', mmm, this could be bad. [*SL laughs*] This could go south. [*Laughter*] This could be not good. And I'm thinkin' about Fayetteville. I'm thinkin', of all people, everything that I've been through, all of what I've experienced in my life and racism, and this guy doesn't get it because he's outside the generation, and it's not anything to do with race or prejudice towards this guy. This guy's a bad actor. Well, sure enough, he puts his arm around me and says, "On behalf of the

commandant of the marine corps, General Louis H. Wilson, and all general officers and leadership of the marine corps, I wanna formally apologize to you for having to put up with someone like"—and he names the kid. Did I name the kid earlier? I still haven't named him, and I'm not goin' to. [03:48:52] But anyway, gives his name, and I look up at him and say, "Sir?" And he said, "I'm serious. When he came to see me—and you need to understand Colonel Gately knew that he'd reveal himself. But all I wanted to do was take him over my knee and spank him. [*Laughter*] And I've only been angry, Marty, two times in my marine corps career, and I'm not gonna tell you what the first time was, but the second time was with your marine. [03:49:22] I'm thinking about all we're doing here, school circles, that kind of a kid calling you by your first name and calling me by my first name and all this thing we're goin' through and how ridiculous that is to, somehow, we accommodate this guy. And it's not about the color of his skin. It's about good order and discipline and that we as a institution have to get through this period of racism and be the model for society, not a part of tryin' to figure it out and get on the same level. And I apologize to you." And I said, "Sir, what are you gonna do?" And he said, "Well, we're gonna get rid of him. I'm

gonna get him outta the marine corps. We're gonna create a program to get him out of the marine corps expeditiously 'cause we can't have that kind of a guy. He's a recalcitrant." I said, "Sir, he hasn't done enough bad things. He just did"—and he said, "We're gonna get him outta the marine corps." And what we did was we created what was called the Expeditious Discharge Program. And shortly thereafter, General McCullough retired. General Mize, who you saw a photograph of there, my mentor, became the commanding general, and I was asked to be his aide-de-camp because I'd gone through all this. So I'm gonna leave tank battalion to go up to be the aide, to be the mentor, for the general about this condition and be his right-hand man. [03:50:38] And that was another seminal event in my life. Didn't wanna do it. Didn't volunteer. Went up for the interview. He asked me, "Do you wanna be my aide?" I said, "No, sir, I do not. I'm—I wanna be back in tank"—"Well, it's really not your choice, captain, but I'll think about it and let you know." He called me at home that night and said, "I've made my choice. I'll see you tomorrow morning at seven thirty. You're gonna be my aide." I went in, he said, "I—this'll be the most remarkable experience of your career in the marine corps, and it will be for me, too. And just trust me on that. We'll

establish a relationship that you'll remember for the rest of your life, and so will I, but I need you to help me command this division. And because of your experience and what General McCullough told me about you, your character, the case," and he named the kid, "that case, which is gonna change the whole marine corps, where we're going here, 'cause we're gonna be now expeditiously discharging thousands of marines 'cause General Wilson has told me on the phone, 'Charlie'"—his name was Charlie Mize. "'Charlie, I don't care if it's just me and my driver left in the marine corps, but we're gonna get rid of all these people, and we're gonna rebuild the institution from this day forward, and we're gonna get them out 'cause we can't succumb to this. We gotta change it.'" [03:51:53] So it was off the case of this kid, and we had about 19,000—18,500 people in the division. That's a lotta people. But in the next twelve months, we discharged over 19,000 people outta the marine corps with expeditious discharge. We kept thumbing through 230 record books a day, and they were expeditiously kicked out for malfeasance or behavior. And we started shaping the institution again, and I was in the middle of it. And General Wilson came out—immediately he came to me and said, "You know, you're part of all this—the start of it with the case"—and

he named the kid. And I said, "Sir, I know." He said, "But I really thank you 'cause we all thought it was your generation that didn't know how to lead, and we learned it had nothin' to do with you. It had to learn with where we were in our society. So thank you for bein' here in the marine corps and stayin', and we're gonna rebuild the thing." [03:52:56] When this jam—young man was told to get out, he came into my office and threatened my life. He threatened my wife's life. We had two children at the time. He knew exactly where we lived. He told me that he was gonna kill us all or have us killed. I had the FBI guard my wife and my kids. They walked to school for over a month. I had a guard out of my—outside my house for a month. The NAACP came down to take him off the base. It was a major incident in the—at the time, and he was expeditiously discharged. And it took a while before they believed that he wouldn't bother me and my family and hurt my family. But another memorable thing from my wife—again, incredulity for her, knowin' what we went through here, and here she's got guards guardin' our kids at school and her over a race issue. It's just flipped. It's on its head, and I'm—and she said, "If the"—and she knew the kid's name, too. She said, "If he only knew what you did in your life to get here. I mean, do you think"—I

said, "Of course, he wouldn't. He wouldn't. But he's just a punk, you know. Just—he's a criminal and so" . . .

[03:54:04] SL: Well, so, also I guess a typical image of the Vietnam War is that it was—the soldier population was overwhelmingly black, wasn't it?

MS: Mh-hmm. Well, percentagewise, I would say no. That's a perception. I mean, I think the marine corps reflected society, about 18 to 20 percent. Something like that. But you had this—the media—whatever—and the army may've been a little bit higher, maybe not a true reflection of society. But no. I would say no. But—and again, that started, and it was impoverished people. The elite, you know, were not being drafted. They were gettin' deferments and . . .

SL: Right.

[03:54:51] MS: . . . and so it was poor people that were fighting the rich man's war. And all that was mumbo jumboed into this thing. True, but you know, I would never say that preponderance of—were African American. I—it just . . .

SL: Okay.

MS: . . . never happened that way, and we just weren't—we weren't organized that way. But the issues were—again, you had white racists, too. Don't get me wrong here.

SL: Yeah, sure.

MS: But believe me, there were a lotta people that had come into the marine corps—I had a kid in my unit at that time who just looked like he'd been stitched up, hundreds and hundreds of stitches, from knife fights when he was growin' up, and they were all racial related. And he was a white supremacist. Antiblack. And he shouldn't've been in the marine corps either. So it was cut both ways, and it was bad. But it was just a—it was a very traumatic time. It was—again, I hearken to my point about it all is, is that those of us who stayed—most people got out. I mean, they just did their time and got out. But the core, *C-O-R-E*, of individuals who stayed in the army and the marine corps, particularly, and weathered that storm of all of that discontent, became the future leaders of the marine corps. And so all these issues of substance, if you will, about rapes on Okinawa and whatever they may be, they paled to insignificance or a minor thing that could be easily dealt with if you just understood where we'd been from. I mean, this pales to insignificance in relating to twenty whites and twenty blacks with pick handles beatin' each other to submission and bein' in the hospital because of the color of your skin. [03:56:36] Or during this period of time, we had a marine was cut from ear to ear

by—he was white—by three blacks for a dollar because he was white, and they almost killed the guy. And he lived, and we went to see him in the hospital, the general and I, and his first statement was, "General, they can't keep a good guy down. I mean, we'll get through this racial tension." But you know, he wanted to—his trach was cut, and so he was speaking—I mean, really in bad shape. Lucky to be alive. But you know, his comment about the dollar was it had nothing to do—it was just pure race. He was a white guy in the wrong place at the wrong time, on the base, now. It was not out in town. They just jumped him. And again, it—I don't wanna sound—it was cut both ways. It was just really bad. But the anger was predominantly with the blacks because of the reflection of society and what we were goin' through as a society with tryin' to be treated with dignity and equality. And they really rebelled against authority is what happened. And any kind of authority. It didn't matter who it was. We just happened to be the authority at the moment. [03:57:44] And it was how we dealt with all that, and you had to deal with it head on. I mean, you really did have to—"It's not about race here, marine, it's about your failure to obey the law. I mean, you've committed a criminal act here, destruction of government property."

Whatever it may've been. "You've assaulted another marine based on the color of his skin." And it cut both ways again. We'd hold the white ones the same way. But it was just not avoiding it and strapping it on, if you will, to address the issue head on. And some people couldn't do that, getting back to the point, and they left. And many of us learned to do it, and it really steeled us, no pun intended. [*SL laughs*] But it hardened us in understanding what was significant and what was not, what was important and what was not. And so you—all these subsequent issues down the line for the next twenty-five years, they were all, in retrospect and reflection, in comparison to that period. And there's no way that, no matter what the issue was, that it would compare 'cause that was our baptism of fire to get through that, and we decided to stay. So sometimes we'd even joke about it, you know. I mean, this—then you'd tell the poor person, officer, who's sayin', "Sir, I got a real problem, and it's 'Fuzzy Wuzzy' said somethin' to 'Humpty Bump'." And sayin', "Well, wait a minute. Let me give you a real problem." And then they go, [*laughter*] "Okay, I don't have a problem." And I say, "Well, you really don't have a problem. Just go get 'em in a room and tell 'em what we're gonna do here," and I—that stayed with me until I retired in 1999. It was all related to that period

in the mid-[19]70s.

[03:59:27] SL: I mean, there were . . .

MS: Late [19]60s to mid-[19]70s.

SL: . . . cross burnings on . . .

MS: Oh, I—we had—one night in the desert, I was training at Twentynine Palms with my tank company, and there was a cross burning. It was right in the middle of the compound, and it was this kid with the stitches that I'd talked about. The—and my executive officer said, "Sir, there's a cross burning out here. We're gonna have a riot." I said, "No, we're not. We're not gonna have a riot. Go out there, XO, and douse the fire. Put the cross out." He said, "Sir, they'll jump me," and I said, "Nobody's gonna jump you. Just go do it. If you want me to do, I will. But I'm comin' out soon as you douse it to deal with it." And so he went out and doused the flames out, and I said, "Gunny, get everybody out here." And I knew who had done it because he was a bad actor. [04:00:14] And I said—and I knew that I was gonna deal with him later about it. But you know, "This is where we are. This is what happened. There'll be no incident here. [*Unclear words*] respect, and I'll—we'll run an investigation and find out who did it." And within thirty minutes, I knew who did it and had him in, admitting to me that he had

done it. And I mean, I held him accountable for it, and we punished him for it. I'm saying, you know, it's good order and discipline, you know. And he didn't care. He didn't—he would admit it because he was a racist, you know.

SL: [*Laughs*] He was proud of it, probably.

MS: He was proud of it. "Yeah, let's get it on. Bring out the brass knuckles. Bring out the knives. It's our moment. Let's"—'course, the kid never shoulda never been in the marine corps in the first place. [04:00:54] And so my issue with him was, "You know, I can't get you outta here right now, young man. You shouldn't be in the marine corps, but you know, we're gonna hold you for it. I'm gonna punish you for this." And of course, the rest of the unit saw that and it—there were no more incidents, and he was punished. And you know, I said, "You're lucky that, you know, that tomorrow morning we don't wake up, and you're dead. You know, that's what's gonna happen to you if you keep pullin' these kinds of stunts." [04:01:21] And he said, "I'll take a lot of 'em with me, sir." And I said, "You don't get it, son. You don't—that's not what this is about. This is a military organization. Go back to the block." He was from Florida. "You can go back to Florida to pull this stuff. Not in this place. You know, you're not takin' anybody with you 'cause

they'll get you, and you won't even know what hit you, you know. You'll be done. And my responsibility is to keep you alive until I can get you outta the marine corps because you don't really belong here." And so we dealt with it. I mean, it—so cross burnings, I mean, everything you can imagine. Nooses in the barracks. I mean, just everything you could possibly—it was chaos for a small unit leader. And some—again, like I said, they didn't wanna be a part—didn't know how to deal with it, and some of us, it was trial and error. We'd kick 'em in the grandstands, and you'd make mistakes, but you dealt with it. And it's how we were hardened by how to be a leader. Pat—compassionate, I mean, not authoritarian. My nature is get to the bottom and try to get everybody involved in the solution. Save everybody. Save the world. Save all these people from themselves, even when they're doin' dire [*unclear words*] bad things. [04:02:27] And that's my nature, and I'd go to a fault to get people to admit their culpability, but it still came out on the other end of bein' a better organization and the—you know, today. I gave a speech in Orlando, Florida, a month ago, and the first person came up to saying, "Sir, I was in your unit, and it was the best experience I ever had because you did everything that you've been tellin' us to do today in this speech about

ethical behavior, and you're a living example." I said, "I wish we woulda had time for Q and A." He said, "I was gonna stand up and just talk about that I've known you for thirty years, and what you're sayin' is how you lived your life is what we should be doin' in business. Strappin' it on."

[04:03:09] SL: This whole—well, the incident and then the solutions that the leadership brought about and bringing you in to, really, an administrative con—almost a consulting position.

MS: [*Laughs*] Yeah.

SL: This is a—this is now another kind of moment in the road for your career.

MS: Yes.

SL: Now you're in a kind of a different place.

MS: Well, I am. And again, there were so many—that's a great observation. General Mize, who—and I'll kinda close—he became such a powerful force in my life, and we were so close in our communication. Here he was. He was a Naval Academy graduate. He was from Georgia, so he grew up in the South. Couldn't understand what was goin' on here, but extremely gifted. Not a racist by any stretch of the imagination, but he grew up in a different time.

SL: Sure.

[04:04:11] MS: He's—he grew up in segregation, and he was a—fought on the battle of Okinawa. He won a Navy Cross in Korea. Made the landing at Inchon. He—his company and him put the flag up in Seoul, and he won a Navy Cross, shooting North Koreans goin' up the steps to put the flag up on the capitol in Seoul. Fought in the frozen Chosin Reservoir, came out with frostbite, survived that experience, had two tours of Vietnam, spent thirty-five years in the marine corps, and this is his last year. And he's seein' all this crumbling—his institution that he's—reveres and loves. And here's this captain that—we had so many incidents, so many issues where he would go around the room to his staff, and he would always tell me this. He said, "Marty, I'm gonna ask you every time what your opinion is, so get ready for it. But I'm not gonna ask you first. I'm gonna ask you last." [04:05:08] So we had these heady meetings about all these issues of substance. It didn't matter what they were. And he'd go around the room to all of his colonels; his chief of staff, who was a colonel; his assistant commander, who was a one-star general. And at the end, he would look to me and say, "Captain Steele, what do you think?" It didn't matter what it was. And I would have the formulation of my personal thoughts, knew where I was—knowing who in the room was way out from

where I was, and then it was my moment of truth. And so what happened was is that I became—you talk about a path. I became so accustomed to that requirement to step it up, just like Fayetteville High, just like Springdale football game, just like Little Rock restaurant—that he wanted me to gather my thoughts, be ve—unemotional about it, be very objective but speak with my experience and my best recommendation. Not just what I thought, but "What can we do about it to fix it?" And so, so many incidents—some are recorded in the book but there—just went on and on and on about it. Embarrassing experiences, wonderful experiences. [04:06:18] We once—we had a movie for the two hundredth anniversary of the birthday of the marine corps, which is 10 November. So this is 1975. We came 1775. This is the big one. And so the commandant, General Wilson—again, a Medal of Honor recipient from Guadalcanal [*laughs*] commissioned a movie to be made that was gonna be shown at every marine corps birthday celebration. And it was in the middle of all of this stuff on race.

SL: Yeah.

[04:06:46] MS: And so this guy, who's still alive, by the way, put this movie together and it—the theme of the movie was basically this: marines and former marines are traveling across the

country. By happenstance, they're meeting in a snowbound Flagstaff, Arizona, or somewhere. And it's snowbound. You can't move on the night of the marine birthday. And the—so the film is all the characters. A rock star—[19]70s, [19]60s, former marine from Vietnam but now a rock star. So he's got everything goin' on . . .

SL: Right.

MS: . . . here—the suit. [Motions up and down body with hands] A black guy, sideburns. That's it—Afro—meeting at this place. A marine on active duty that's having a permanent change of station, moving from one place to another, and he's—just happens to be there on 10 November. And so this story unfolds about this same accommodation to—we're—you know, all of this stuff, and it just is horrible. Just horrible. And we're in a filming-screening room in this small theater where it's the producer/director . . .

SL: [*Laughs*] Oh gosh.

[04:07:57] MS: . . . the general, and I'm in the back of the room. So I'm watchin' the general's head as he's lookin' at this movie. And what had happened was the commandant of the marine corps said, "Charlie, again, you're gonna be the decider of whether we're gonna show this. I don't even wanna see it yet."

So my boss has got the responsibility to decide whether this thing's gonna be shown on the two hundredth anniversary of every ball—every birthday celebration throughout the world in the marine corps. So I'm watchin' him, and I can see from the back of his head, and I'm [*SL laughs*] all the way in the back of the theater, and it's small, but it's still—I'm in the back, and I'm sayin', "Oh my God. He's gonna have a heart attack." And so you've got marines—first of all, which was the start—marine on active duty with sideburns, which we don't cut—it's right here at your eye. [Motions with finger from eye to ear]

SL: Yeah.

[04:08:43] MS: So that's the first thing bad. And I knew he was [*SL laughs*] goin' nuts 'cause we're tryin' to get 'em to dress right and look right, and they don't wanna do that—and piercings and all that stuff is just in the—it's—we had pseudofolliculitis. I don't know if you know what that is, but that's bumps that are predominantly on African Americans who—so they were not shaving because they were complaining about what we would call acne, but it's pseudofolliculitis, the ingrown hair. And so they would get no shaving chits for days, three or four days, and then they had to shave, and then they'd bleed because of all the zits that would break out. Well, we were goin' through that, of

no shaving for blacks, and it was really a—so you had one of those guys in there, [*laughs*] so it was just—so anyway, the movie . . .

SL: We're gonna—we're runnin' outta tape.

TM: Yeah, we are.

MS: Are you?

SL: So—but I wanna finish this.

MS: Yeah. No.

SL: And we're gonna kind of repeat a little bit of it.

MS: Okay.

[Tape stopped]

[04:09:34] SL: Okay, we're on tape five, Marty, and we were talkin' about the screening of a film that was celebrating the two hundredth year of the anniversary of the marine . . .

MS: Birthday of the marine . . .

SL: . . . marine corps.

MS: Yeah.

SL: And you're sittin' in the back of the room, you're watchin' this film, and it's not very well-conceived.

MS: No. I mean, I think it is well-intentioned, and as we were talkin'—it was probably very expensive to make 'cause it was extremely professionally well-done. There was no—these were

Hollywood film marines that—you know, they were stationed in Hollywood. They were advisors to Hollywood filmmakers, et cetera. They were, you know, the person that said, "No, the ribbons are wrong," and all that. I mean, we had all those movies starting to come out now, antiwar, right in that period of time, if I remember right. [04:10:22] I'd have to get the sequence of that. But anyway, they coulda been later, but anyway, so it was well—I think that the producer/director marine was well-intentioned. He thought he had somethin' here that was gonna show how we had embraced the challenge and that we were really gonna be holistically movin' forward to get through this. But it just—inappropriate for the birthday celebration of the marine corps. Inappropriate in that it's—it was outta context, and for someone outside tryin' to figure out, "What—what's all this about?" And then, obviously, very inappropriate in that it was picturing active-duty marines who were not appropriately dressed, appropriately—their hair and everything was just wrong. It was wrong. And it was pandering to the situation, not addressing, you know, where we were going to go forward addressing this issue. [04:11:21] That—and that was what's kinda the sickest part of the whole thing. It was kinda—we've succumbed to the problem, you know, instead of

lookin' for the solution that's gonna get us out the other side. And we were right in the middle of these discharges [*SL laughs*] that I was speaking about. So we're expeditiously taking people who had committed minor offenses, multiple minor offenses, and expeditiously saying, "You're going home with an other-than-honorable discharge from the marine corps. You've only been here less than six months. You have a four-year enlistment, but we've taken this money that we've invested in you, but you're still leavin' because you don't fit into our culture." And of course, a lot of them, once they were in—this is—the draft is over now, but they're—the economy's bad Viet—post-Vietnam, and they're lookin' for a place to work, and then they can't handle the discipline of the marine corps, and they're sure not buyin' in, so they're causin' all of this discontent, discord. I mean, it's just chaos. The whole thing is chaos. So anyway, at the end I'm thinkin', "Well, is he gonna say anything to this producer, or is he gonna defer to me first?" So I'm watchin' the tail end of it. It was probably a fifteen- to twenty-minute movie because you're showin' this during the cake-cutting ceremony, so it can't be a, you know, full-featured thing. It's fifteen to twenty minutes long. And I'm thinkin', "He's not gonna say a word to this guy. He's just gonna ask

me." So I'm gettin' [*laughs*]—gathering my thoughts, [*laughter*] and it was one of those wonderful, wonderful leadership moments again for me because he had trained me and taught me and mentored me. He—the movie—the lights go down, the lights go up, the thing is over, and he stands up immediately. And the guy is beaming with pride about this. [04:13:07] "Well, General, what are you gonna tell General Wilson?" I mean, like he was gonna go to the phone immediately and say, "What a great flick this is." And he looked up at him, he said, "Well, Colonel, I'll defer to my aide, Captain Steele." [*Laughter*] And he looks back at me and the guy—and the colonel's thinkin', Captain Steele? You mean, there's been somebody else in this room? You know, I mean, he knew that I was there but—and he said, "What do you mean, sir? What—no, what do you think of it?" And he said, "You heard me, Colonel. I'll defer to Captain Steele, and he'll make the decision or—on this." [*SL laughs*] And so I'm lookin' at him, and I said, "Well, sir, I personally believe, in as succinct a way as I can state, that although well-intentioned, this movie would be inappropriate because of"—and I go through this litany of things I've said, with particular emphasis on the active-duty marines, of being outta uniform, and that I believed that it would not go well on the two

hundredth anniversary of the marine corps because it would be misunderstood by everyone and particularly people outside the marine corps who don't understand the issues of what we're going through right now, of trying to rebuild our institution based on our value system: honor, courage, and commitment. [04:14:19] And he looked up, and he said, "Well, there you have it, Colonel. It won't be shown." [*SL laughs*] And he said, "Sir, wait a minute. You're deferrin' to him? I mean, we've spent"—and he, you know, he said, "You heard it. I'm gonna call General Wilson and tell him what happened here, and I'm gonna tell him—he knows Captain Steele, and we're not gonna do this. It's—thank you for your effort, but this won't be shown in the marine corps on the birthday." [04:14:45] So he got in the car, and he used to have a—he sat in the back right, and the driver was a wonderful kid from Wausau, Wisconsin, that I still stay connected to—the driver—Nordic, blonde hair, blue-eyed stud marine. [*SL laughs*] And he wasn't in the room, and so General Mize used to tap his fingers on the glass when he was thinkin', just kinda [moves fingers back and forth rapidly]—and I'm sittin' in the back left seat, and the driver's drivin' us the five minutes back, and he says, "God, that was bad, wasn't it?" [*SL laughs*] And I said, "Sir, it was so bad I just couldn't believe it."

But I didn't know why he just came to me, and he said, "Ah, he—I didn't wanna embarrass the guy, and all I would've said was somethin' that was not near as good as the way you said it." [*Laughter*]

SL: Not as nice.

MS: But—yeah. "But we'll call General Wilson. I'd like you to be on the call if General Wilson wants to ask you any questions about it." I said, "I don't think he's gonna ask you any questions about it, sir—just—I think you're just gonna say that it's not recommended and—'cause I really do believe that General Wilson probably has seen this thing." And he said, "Nah, I tell you, he hasn't. He hasn't seen it. He's relyin' on us." And I said, "Sir, he woulda—there's just no way he would buy this. I mean, if you're worried about it"—and he said, "Marty, it's done. It's not gonna be shown." So he called General Wilson in a very—minute conversation. "Well, sir, we've reviewed the movie as you've asked us to do, and my aide was with me, and we've made a—we make a recommendation to you that it not be shown, that it's inappropriate." And the commandant said, "It's all you need to say, Charlie. Thanks." And that was it. And the . . .

SL: That's great.

MS: Yeah.

SL: That's great.

[04:16:18] MS: So it wasn't shown. So what—again, the ending of all this is that General Mize was—I thought that he could've been the commandant. He was a little older, probably in his mid-fifties. He had thirty-five years in the marine corps. But I believe that he was such a profoundly gifted man with such a tremendous combat record that he could've been a—the commandant. But they wanted him to go back to Okinawa to do the same thing to the division on Okinawa that he had done in First Division, getting rid of all this riffraff. And then from there go to Washington to be a three-star and then whatever may happen from there. And he had a son who was sixteen years old at the time. He had four children, but his youngest child was a sophomore in high school. And the commandant had told him, "You'll go to Pendleton for two years to get your son through high school and stability." And he said, "General Wilson, not—it's not that you owe me anything, but I really don't wanna leave my son right now 'cause he's at this very formative stage," 'cause the chaos was everywhere. I mean, drugs in Southern California.

SL: Sure.

[04:17:27] MS: I mean, this stuff was—it was a nightmare. [*Laughs*] And he said, "I'll retire." So he didn't take the assignment. He retired, and then his replacement came in, whose name—was named General Edward A. Wilcox, a magnificent man. Totally opposite from General Mize. Totally opposite. He had been in Washington. General Mize was slim and trim and five foot seven, 135 pounds soakin' wet, raw-boned Southern gentleman, Georgia, and General Wilcox was a portly—he'd gone to law school at GW. He was a Washington guy. Absolutely had a 50-pound brain, he was so smart. [*SL laughs*] And he was his successor. So [sniffs] we—I had done this for everybody—done interviews to create who was gonna be the aide-de-camp because they—all the generals—there was the Fourth Division, which was the reserve division there; the base commander; and the assistant division commander, so that's three other generals. But I was involved in the selection of all of their aides, so I would interview lieutenants and captains and then make a recommendation. And so for the time I was with General Mize, I had done this three times, and they had always bought my recommendation as to who should be the aide. They'd interview 'em, but then they would pick the one . . .

SL: Yeah.

[04:18:48] MS: So anyway, we're gonna go through the same thing for my relief, and it was time for me to go, and so another one of those moments again. I interviewed ten captains and then picked three—recommendation for three to be interviewed for—with General Wilcox. And I had 'em in priority order and why I thought they should be the aide because I thought that they could complement General Wilcox and his style and so on. And I had gotten to know General Wilcox and his wife, Dorothy, very well in this short interim time frame. But I was ready to move and move on and—so anyway, we go through this, and I pick the priority. [04:19:26] And so he gets through the interviews, and then I go, and I say, "Sir, have you made your decision yet? I'll get them on the phone so you could tell them. Or do you wanna think about it?" I mean, General—he knew that I had not volunteered to be the aide to General Mize. He knew everything that I've shared with you, all the incidents. He knew the relationship I had with General Mize. He knew what role I had played. He knew everything. And he said, "Yeah, I've made my decision." And I said, "Okay, sir—which one, and I'll call him on the phone." He said, [*SL laughs*] "You." [*Laughter*] And I said, "Sir, I'm not a candidate. I mean, I've"—I'm lookin' at him. He's smilin'. I'm smilin'. I'm sayin', "Sir, I've done this. I

mean, you can only do this once, in my opinion. You can only go through this once, and I've had mine with General Mize, which was a tremendous experience." He said, "Marty, I've already talked to General Mize about it. I want you to stay for six months to be my aide, and then we'll send you to the advanced armor school at Fort Knox, Kentucky, with the army. But I need you just like he did, but I need you even more than he did. And I want you to be my aide." And I said, "Sir, I, you know, I just don't know how"—he said, "Just like it was—the experience—was it everything that General Mize told you it would be?" [04:20:37] And I said, "Sir, it'll have an impact on me for the rest of my life. I mean, I now know how things are decided, how this organization is run at the highest levels. I mean, I get it, and I'm privileged to have done that and that I was a part of the process." But it's euphemistically the aide-de-camp aiguillette. It's called the Loafer's Loop. [*Laughs*] And I said, "You should only wear that once for one general because you get too heady about it, you know. You think you are somebody." And he said, "Well, that'll never happen to you." And I—so he said, "Trust me. We're so opposite that you're gonna learn so much about different styles of leadership between General Mize and I. And it'll be a great relationship. My wife likes you and likes your

wife." And so I said, "Sir, I guess I really can't say anything." He said, "No, no. It's done. You're it." [*Laughter*] So I said, "Okay, sir." [*SL laughs*] And I said, "But you know, if at some—we get sideways, you know, fire me gently, you know, that you're"—and he said, "Don't worry about that. We"—and so, sure enough, General Mize in his wisdom and General Wilcox in his wisdom, it was a perfect—another growth period for me. Totally opposite styles of leadership, decision making, with one common theme, trusting my judgment and my input. And we established this phenomenal bond with one another and with his wife, that at the end, after six months, the school was opening in Fort Knox, Kentucky, to go to the advanced armor school, and you know, when I went to see him, I said, "Sir, you know, stupid me again. You were right, and General Mize was right. I mean, this will hold with me forever, what's happened between you and me and the relationship." And he said, "I know, Marty, but you know, we're not as smart as we think we are in some things but you—it's more visceral that I get it about who you are. General Mize did—your contributions—the reality is, is that you had more impact on him than you'll ever know, and you have had more impact on me than you'll ever know." [*Clears throat*] And I said, "Yes, sir." And he said, "Just trust me and I—way outta

line here, but just like General Mize told you, someday you're gonna be a leader in this marine corps." And you know, I'm in my twenties. I'm a captain. He said, "Someday you will be a leader in this institution. Trust me on that. Just keep doin' what you—being who you are, doing what you do, and never change from that. Just keep doin' it." [04:23:13] So anyway, I went to Fort Knox, Kentucky. And shortly thereafter, within months, he had a massive coronary while running and died. And by the way, the aide that I picked to be my successor the second time was the same one that I'd picked six months earlier, and he said, "We don't have to go through the process. The guy you picked can be the guy. Just tell him to come down here tomorrow." I said, "Well, you need to tell him, sir." And he said, "No, you can tell him." [*Laughter*] So anyway—so the end of the story is this: General Mize moved to Falls Church, Virginia. He retired, and I had tours in Washington, DC. My wife and I stayed connected to he and his wife. [*SL sniffs*] He had a son who was a marine who became a general, like his dad, who retired later as a two-star, too, David. He had two daughters. But we stayed connected, and we worked his parties. I was a lieutenant colonel, working on acquisition of the main battle tank, and he had a dinner party one night with a group of retired

generals, and he asked my wife and I to come to help serve drinks and enjoy it because he said, "Marty, you know all these guys. They're all my—they'll love to see you again." And so I said, "Sir, we'd be honored." So we're over at—he had a beautiful home in Falls Church. [04:24:30] He was—got into the construction business and makin' custom homes and really was a success at it. And his wife was a—Martha Ann was a wonderful, gracious lady. It was nothing but class. And so we go, and we're talkin', and I mean, I never had separated from 'em, so it was just like havin' a drink and gettin'—it didn't matter what the subject was. It could be anything. But the doorbell rings, and he said—you know, I started to get outta the chair, and he said, "Good. Would you go to the door and get it?" And I said, "Well, sir, do you want me to?" And he said, "Just like old times, Marty. Just like old times." So I go to the door and open it, and it's General McCullough that I had not—who I had not seen since the—he retired as a—when I was a captain, fourteen years before—twelve years before. And he looked at me, and he said, "Marty, you must be a lieutenant colonel by now." And I said, "I am, sir." And he said, "I was only mad twice in my life in the marine corps, and the second time was with"—and he named the kid's name. [*SL laughs*] "All I wanted to do was put

him over my knee and spank him." And then I looked up, and I said, "Sir, it's amazing." And he said, "You never forget that, and I thank you for stayin' in the marine corps to get us through this. Scotch and water." [*Laughter*] And he came in, and General Mize looked at me, and he said, "How was that moment?" [*SL laughs*] And General McCullough looked at me, said, "Charlie, it's exactly as I wanted it to be." [04:26:00] And so that's the way it was. And then I—he—Clinton promoted me to one-star in the Oval Office. General Mize promoted me to two-star in a theater in Washington. He was—I brought him out—I mean, he was retired, but he did the ceremony. And then when I was a three-star, which he never was a three-star, he was my counselor/advisor on all these issues. And he died of blood leukemia while I was—in [19]98, [19]99 time frame, and I was a three-star general. And within minutes of his death, his widow called me and said, "Charlie never wanted to tell you this, but he wants you to do his eulogy at his funeral." [*Clears throat*] [04:26:46] And I said, "Mrs. Mize, I'd be honored." So we had a funeral. There were 3,500 people who came to his funeral at the Naval Academy Chapel. Think about that. Three thousand five hundred—and not midshipmen from the Naval Academy. These were all the people that he had touched in his

life from World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the First Marine Division, his friends from the Naval Academy, the school. And I got to—privileged to address his family and his remains and the 3,500 people about what impact he had on me, and then we all went down—he's buried at the cemetery at the Naval Academy in—right on the—overlookin' the Severn River. And we put various things down inside of his remains, a bottle of whiskey, and I mean, each family member did it. But it was my wife and I and only his immediate family, and we all put artifacts in of our remembrances of him. But another one of those things, again, about bonding; who we are; what do you do with the opportunity you have; where you are in your life; its impact on you. And it was another special relationship that I had that just held me and—to this day. Just—but another one of those amazing closing of the circles [*SL sighs*] that just doesn't happen unless you kinda live your life to make it happen.

[04:28:32] SL: Okay. So now, you know, you're in advance tank school . . .

MS: Yeah.

SL: . . . and just here in the past minute—couple of minutes you [*TM coughs and clears throat*] click off one-star, two-star, three-star general.

MS: Yeah.

SL: So I know that just doesn't happen.

MS: Yeah.

[04:28:50] SL: I mean, what is it that—how does one become a general, first off?

MS: Well, I mean, it's a very—in the marine corps, it's a very—we have the lowest number—the total force—and the highest relationship. In other words, officers to enlisted—like, the air force, it's two to one, officer to enlisted; the army, it's, like, seven enlisted to one officer or something like that. [04:29:18] The marine corps, it's like fifteen or sixteen enlisted to one officer. We just have this real low—and so it's a pyramid, and in my case, it was a unique situation that General Mize had shared with me that the tank community had picked a general when I was a young officer to be a one-star—he'll remain nameless—but he never made it past one-star, and he didn't kinda fit in to the community of infantrymen, if you will, and aviators and so on. But General Mize had shared that it'd be very difficult for a armor guy to make it because it's so small. So it's even more—because we cap out in the marine corps of command at lieutenant colonel. There is no regimental or brigade command for armor full colonel, unlike the army. There's tank divisions for

generals in the army that are armor and brigades for—but anyway, we cap out. The last command you can have is a battalion. So it just—it's very unique, and I think in my case, it's kind of what you've read—it's that these various moments being in these kinda critical jobs and being an anomaly to this historical approach that infantrymen and aviators and some artillerymen lead the marine corps. And I was an anomaly as an armor guy and always looked at askance. Not "Woe is me" askance, but "Gee whiz. I mean, this guy's kinda unique with his background and thought process. And he's an armor guy on top of that. What's this all about?" But—so it—who knows? [04:31:04] We have a system in the marine corps that I was very much a part of later. It's—nine generals get together, and it's unanimous. You have to have nine votes. It's secret, so I can't really share. I've been on many boards. But it can't be 8 and 1. It can't be 7 and 2. It has to be all nine unanimous. So it's a very grueling process. You're pickin'—each year the number fluctuates 'cause it's based on what we—how many we have in Congress—what our allocation is. But you know, there's 250 or 60 colonels, maybe more than that, and you're pickin' 6 or 7 people to be a general outta that group. So the reality is of the 250, without exaggeration, 100 of them could be a general

and are deserving of it. So it surely was the case throughout my career of the quality of the people we have. And it's just what happens inside that process in the room of your credentials, reputation, and how you're perceived to be able to be a fu—not just a one-star, but a future leader, and what your role's gonna be in the marine corps. Where do you fit? What kind of a job are we gonna give you? What are you gonna do? And so on. So it's a very, very exhaustive process, and obviously to get nine votes from people who may—in some cases, they may not know you at all and you—each general in the room has a case file, like, of 250. If you had nine—nine divided into 250, whatever that number is, you have 20—25, 30 cases. [04:32:49] And you're briefing them each, and it's a—everyone gets a briefing, and you're—the first round is, you know, who's—who you're discarding that really doesn't have it, which was—but it's very tough, and what happens is it just comes down and down and down until you're really into the last twenty guys to pick eight spots, and that's—it's a root canal at that point to try to figure it all out.

[04:33:17] SL: So does that happen with each star?

MS: Yeah.

SL: Wow.

MS: It happens at one-star and two-stars. At three-stars, it's different. All three-stars get together. It's only [*SL laughs*]—and it's a one-time deal.

SL: Yeah.

MS: And it's a very secret meeting, normally over food. [*SL laughs*] No alcohol.

SL: Yeah.

MS: And you have—I don't know what the number is—twenty-five . . .

SL: Candidates.

MS: . . . twenty-five two-stars maybe, I don't know. A pretty low number, and you're picking 2 or 3 outta that. [04:34:00] And everybody briefs a case, and there's a recommendation. And then there's a—it's nominated from the commandant to the secretary of the navy to the secretary of defense to the president to the Congress. And you have to go to hearings, so it's a little bit—at three-star and above, it's much more complicated. Much more complicated. [*Clears throat*] And obviously, I've been involved in that, too, because . . .

SL: Yeah.

MS: . . . I was a three-star, but . . .

SL: Yeah.

MS: . . . those are all—I really can't go much beyond that, but it's, again, your credentials, reputation—by the time you get to three-star, you're—you choke that pyramid down because there're very few respon—billets of responsibility in the marine corps for a three-star. And you're really looking at people that you know can do that kind of a job. [04:34:53] [*Clears throat*] [Pauses] And again, my—General Krulak has a great line that he's had all of his life. His father was a three-star, and his father was one of the most famous marines who ever lived. His name was Victor Krulak. His nickname was "The Brute." He was very small—probably five foot tall. Maybe five one or five two, maybe. General Krulak is five foot six or seven in his own right, but his dad was tremendously short. But it won't—a phenomenal marine of notorious reputation, both good and bad, at bein' a tough guy [*SL laughs*] like Napoleon. [*Clears throat*] [04:35:39] But his father was a three-star durin' the Vietnam War. A remarkable man. He just passed away within the last year, living into his nineties—all—magnificent mind. But anyway, his father was nominated to be the commandant and didn't make it and retired [*coughs*] shortly thereafter. So the—when General Krulak became the commandant, unlike his father—very sensitive to that whole experience of two- to

three-star, and then three- to four-star, and the ramifications of all that and what it did to peoples' psyche. So his line was, "No matter who you are in the marine corps, at the end of the day, we'll always break your heart." Where you think that you deserve something—if you make that cut to be a general—if you don't make two, some—you know, you've been betrayed, or they didn't get you, or two to three, three to four, it doesn't matter. And I used to tell him, "I think that's wrong," because I disagreed with him on it. That—"How could you feel betrayed?" I mean, becoming a general in the marine corps is such a privilege, first of all, and if you don't make two-star, the fact that you became a general in the first place is enough and that you should never be bitter or feel that your heart's been broken. [04:37:06] And the same way about, you know, becoming the commandant or the commander in chief in the Pacific, it's just—it's a privilege to wear the uniform and, obviously, a greater privilege to be named one of the premier leaders of this institution, which is, to me, second to none. And we—when I was in—I think we had about seventy generals total, which, again, is a myopic number in relationship to the four hundred in the air force or—I don't know what they are. I mean, just dwarf us in the army. Dwarf us. The navy admirals dwarf us. So it's a

very unique group of people.

[04:37:43] SL: While you were gaining stars, what were you doing? I mean, I . . .

MS: Well, I mean, it's interesting.

SL: . . . I was looking at the . . .

MS: Again, I could go to each of those tours [*laughs*] of duty but

the—and there were seminal events in all of them. When I went to the advanced armor course, no marine had ever finished number one. It was always army. And I finished number one in the school. And we had four or five marines. All of us had done extremely well, but I was the distinguished graduate, which was the title for the number-one guy. And we had a two-star army general, who's still alive, who will remain nameless, who was the guest speaker at the graduation. And it was outdoors, adjacent to the Patton Museum, named after General Patton at Fort Knox, Kentucky. [04:38:32] And it was in August in a sweltering, absolutely stifling, hot day. And we're sitting out in the sun and the, you know, the dais is up there, and part of the gifts of being the distinguished graduate were a cavalry sword, an Army cavalry sword, which, you know, has been on my mantle. I gave it to my father. Got it back after he passed away—a silver bowl and a pers—a subscription to *Armor* magazine or somethin'. [*SL*

laughs] I don't know what it was. But anyway—but the silver bowl and the cavalry sword were the two major items. But when I went across as the last guy, as the distinguished graduate, sweating profusely, not from the tension of the moment. It was just so hot. And the general was sweat—all of us were just miserable and tryin' to get to water and get this thing over with. Anyway, I came across the stage, and I had really worked hard. Had great army instructors. We had a wonderful experience. It's a magnificent school. I've been back there several times over the years. I mean, it truly is a special place. But what had happened was—again, it wasn't anything about my intellect. It was about that I had so much more experience. I'd had—I'd been in tanks in combat. I'd had—commanded two tank companies, an amtrac company. I had been an aide to two different generals. [04:40:07] I mean, I'd been around, and most of my peers had half the time in the marine corps and none of the command experience. No combat experience—I mean, relatively few. Some of 'em did. But anyway, they just didn't have it. So it was that which was—enabled me to be able to get through the academic rigors of it, which is very, very difficult. I mean, they—it's a very tough school to get through. Anyway, I'm goin' across the stage and the sword and the bowl and all

this kinda goofy thing, and this general, [*SL laughs*] who's a hard core, I mean, raw bone, six foot two, physical, bulging forearms, grizzled lookin' guy, square jaw. I mean, a ma—again, he'll remain nameless. I know his name as well as my own. And I reach out to shake his hand. Remember, now, I'd just come from bein' the aide to two magnificent generals so this guy in his army—I'm not disrespectful, but I'm not intimidated by this guy. [04:41:07] Well, the first thing he says to me is, "This is a disgrace to the United States Army, that a marine is the distinguished graduate." And I look up at him, and I'm thinkin' he was joking and then gonna say, "Congratulations, Captain," you know, "good on you." But he's not. He's not jokin'. And I'm holdin' his hand, shakin' his hand, and he's tryin' to let go of my hand, and I won't let go. And I'm grippin' on his hand, and he's got these huge forearms, like Popeye. And he said, "Captain?" And I said, "Sir, what did you just say?" Still holding onto his hand. He said, "You heard me." And I said, "A disgrace to the United States Army?" I said, "Just think about—do you want me to repeat that to all of my peers and classmates, 99 percent of 'em who are in the United States Army who are cheering right now? That applause right there is not for you. It's for me and the performance here and the relationship

that's been established." And he just looked at me, said, "Let go of my hand, Captain." And I said, "I'm not gonna do it, sir. I'm not gonna do it." And he said, "I'm ordering you to let go of my hand." He's just gripping and tryin' to get remove—I said, "Sir, listen. This is a special moment for me. I mean, I've worked very hard here. They respect that. I'm not gonna have you ruin it by that comment." He said, "Well, I don't care what you think, Captain. Let go of my hand." And I said, "Sir"—and he said, "Are you expecting an apology from me?" And I said, "Yes, sir, I am, and I'm not lettin' go 'cause you're not gonna ruin this moment." "Captain, I'm ordering you to let go of my hand." And I said, "General, it ain't gonna happen. I'm not gonna let go of your hand." And he looked at me, and he said, "I guess this is a Mexican standoff." And I said, "You can call it anything you want to, but it's not gonna happen, sir. I'm—I didn't fall off the truck last night, and you're not gonna ruin this moment. And you're not gonna embarrass yourself and the army here by makin' this statement." He said, "I'm sorry. I just"—and I let go of his hand. "Thank you very much, sir," and walked off. So end of story. Told the people, and they said, "Well"—they were very upset. Told a couple of army people in the class and—"Oh, he's such a turkey." [04:43:20] Anyway, later I go to the Naval

War College as a lieutenant colonel. He's a four-star now, [*SL laughs*] and I'm—he's the guest speaker at the—that's ten years—fifteen years later—twelve years—and I go across the stage. And he's standin' there. He said, "Oh my God. Not you again." And I said, "I'm not the honor graduate today." And he said, "And I'm not gonna say what I said what I said last time, Colonel. Congratulations." And I said, "Well, sir, you remember." He said, "Of course I remember." I said, "Well, we got through that day, and it's not as hot today, is it, sir?" And he said, "No, it's not, Colonel." Anyway . . .

SL: [*Laughs*] That's a good story.

MS: Yeah, it is.

SL: Yeah, that's a good story.

MS: Yeah, yeah.

[04:44:03] SL: So [*clears throat*] in the—I was reading some of your stuff on the recommendation that you—was written up for you. It sounded like to me you had all this Southeast Asian—almost diplomatic corps . . .

MS: Yeah.

SL: . . . relationships with . . .

MS: Yeah.

SL: . . . with so many Asian leaders.

MS: Yeah. Well, what had happened kind of in that period, I went from—immediately from Fort Knox, Kentucky, to go to Okinawa, and I was a commander there of a—an operations officer. We had lots of issues in the Asia Pacific. This is still kinda the—we still had race issues and so on. This is [19]77, [19]78. I was over there when Elvis died. And I understood what was going on, coming—having been in Okinawa as an enlisted marine several years before. Now being involved, we had issues about our presence on Okinawa. And left there and then went to Detroit, Michigan, and eventually went back as a colonel. And there's a lotta things that have happened in the interim, but I'm getting master's degrees in—I have one in public administration. While I'm in Detroit, I go to the War College and get a master's degree in international relations and a master's degree in international security affairs. So my practical experience in Asia and my formal education have gone from being an undergraduate history degree from the University of Arkansas, which we still haven't talked about . . .

SL: Yeah.

[04:45:40] MS: . . . and the powerful impact of that on me in the history department here, to this formulation of thought in reading and in the profession of really studying the art, if you

will—not so much the art of war but, which I did, and maneuver of tanks and all that, but really more about the dip—art of diplomacy and where it broke down and the failure of diplomacy. And by then I'd studied the heck out of what happened in Vietnam with all—had written—and I—here, I'd taken courses in the Civil War, World War II. I mean, I really had studied it a lot. I took a course in Greece and Rome—I mean, as a Latin student in—from grade school at St. Joseph's to high school, all three years. College, I studied Latin here at the university when I was back in school, and all of that was Rome and empire.

SL: Yes.

[04:46:38] MS: And so I'm—all this is formulating deep thoughts in my head about empire and the role of empire and responsibilities attenuated with empire and what do you do with empire and what don't you do with empire? So when I go back as a—to Korea in [19]88 as a colonel, and I'm way—jumpin' way ahead now, but I'm in this key position as the director of operations for the Combined Forces Command, which is about 850,000 South Koreans—army, navy, air force, and ROK Marine Corps, and US Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps. And I'm the operations officer for—if the war broke out on the Korean peninsula, I'm the orchestrator as a colonel of how we're gonna

fight the North Koreans. And it's in the middle of the preparation for the Seoul Olympics in 1988, which is Korea—if you're not—up to that point, you know, Korea had just been a backwater little thing, and they had put so much energy as a country into coming out to the world with what had been accomplished since the armistice in [19]53 to the Olympic Games in [19]88. And lots of tension on the peni—Korean peninsula with the North Koreans because of the recognition of the South. [04:48:01] There was—many, many stories but succinctly said, we were not sure that the North Koreans wouldn't disrupt the games with an incident of international proportions. We were not sure whether the Chinese or the Soviets would be involved, excuse me, involved in it, and so the tension was very high, and I was prepared. That's the critical element here that is reflected in some of those writings. I really understood it, grasped it, the war plans that we had out on the islands in the Yellow Sea. I was—understood the Japanese mentality, who had suppressed the Koreans and almost destroyed their culture during World War II. Having lived in Japan, I knew both sides of that. I knew where South Korea was or the Republic of Korea. And immediately I was in a position—my—I had a general in the ROK Army, a one-star, who could

speak fair English, but I knew that he had—he was a great leader, and he was—he eventually became the head of the ROK Army as a four-star. I mean, I was [*unclear word*]—and then my military leader was a—was the "Lonesome End" from West Point, Bill Carpenter, who was a two-star army general. And the commander was a man named Menetrey, the Army commander. And Bill Carpenter was the big version—he was a end. I don't know you remember the lonesome man, but he changed college football. He was the guy that didn't wi—go to the huddle to throw passes, and . . .

SL: Yeah.

MS: . . . he played with Pete Dawkins.

SL: Okay.

[04:49:38] MS: He was an All-America when Dawkins won the Heisman Trophy, and Bill Carpenter was on that same team and was an All-American on that team. I think they won the mythical national championship. Anyway, he—another person in my life—we had this symbiotic relationship. He was all army, and the marine corps at that juncture was a minor-league player in Asia. We were still doin' tanks, two on the ridge, three on the bridge and—but we were written into the war plan to fight the plan if the North attacked the South. And in my humble opinion,

we were not prepared to do that, to fight what's called echelons above corp, and corps are fifty thousand people or theater-level war. We were more used to these small wars and small fights and "give me a little piece, and I'll control it. Leave me alone," and jointness had come in in [19]84. [04:50:42] That was by direction of Congress and that we had joint specialty officers. You had to be familiar with army, navy, air force, and marine. You had to serve in a billet. You couldn't become a general unless you had done that. They were grooming people through jointness to understand the holistic . . .

SL: Picture.

MS: . . . approach, the whole picture. [*SL clears throat*] And I was at the forefront of that, obviously, in that time frame—partic—you know, end of the job and in this crisis du jour because there were many incidents, some of which I still can't speak about, that the North was doing a lot of saber rattling. They were creating incidents, floating people down the Han River with bullets in their head with notes, making—pulling out their artillery pieces out of the caves in the North. They massed thousands of troops across the demilitarized zone. And we really just didn't know whether they were gonna upset the Olympics. Well, what happened in that experience was that because of my

background, education, passion, commitment, relationship with General Carpenter and the CINC, I became the spokesperson for the command to the government of Korea, Republic of Korea. And the president was a president by name of Roh Tae-woo, and the tension was so high and the—you know, they had to put on the show to get to the Olympics game, but we used a euphemism that I debrief 'em on a fairly regular basis and the—all the generals were there, Korean generals and US generals and admirals, and the room was filled with 'em. And I was the talking head 'cause I was the head of operations. And the president of the country was there, and it was in a secret place that no one knew and all that. But my line was—and we bought it, and the CINC said, "Marty, that's a great line. Stick to it." [04:52:26] And I would tell them what was happening in real world and what we were doing to prepare, but my line was this: "Will Carl Lewis," who was the premier runner, "run the hundred-meter dash in the Seoul Olympics if"—and then I would name an incident if it happened, "If the North Koreans do this." And it—stony silence in the room, and the president would look at me and say, "No, we'll execute the war plan, and we'll attack." So the next day, we'd tell him what we were doin', and, "Will Carl Lewis run the hundred-meter dash if"—and I'd give

him another scenario. And he would say, "No." Sometimes—he spoke—he understood English, understood me. Sometimes he would speak in Hangul back. [04:53:18] But I knew the difference between what he was sayin' and what he wasn't sayin'. But normally it was always we'd execute the war plan, and the Olympics wouldn't go. And so we were building a defense of major proportions to be able to respond to anything that the North Koreans did with a goal of having the Olympics go off successfully and posturing ourselves that the North would never even consider it, and then negotiating with the Chinese behind doors and the Russians—"Don't screw this up. You know, don't"—so it was a big deal all the around the world. And the closer we got to the Olympics, the more the tension was, but the more I could see in the president that, you know, we were gonna—this was gonna go down so—I can't remember the exact day, but one day I made a—in the briefing and the president there and everybody's there, and I said, "Will Carl Lewis won—run the hundred-meter dash if"—and I gave the scenario, and he said, "Yes, he will. We will do the Olympics." And so everybody—it was a sigh of relief, [*SL laughs*] and we've done our job, and so the entire Olympic period, the two weeks, it was a wonderful thing for my son, who was a senior in high school

then, and he was a wrestler, and he warmed up all the Olympic wrestlers. They got outta school the entire time. So he—all of the US Olympic wrestlers, he worked 'em out before their matches. And so it was a big deal for him. I guess he was a junior in high school. And—but I was worried because I knew all the plans of what—you know, if somethin' happened and—what we'd call a terrorist act today. But if something would happen, I mean, we had all the plans and all the execution and all the people that I've worked with, many of whom, because of the experience, became generals in the army, became generals in the marine corps. They were all lieutenant colonels and colonels, and I mean, we really had quite a professional group of people. And it was the only game in town. I mean, this is before the demise of the Soviet Union. [04:55:21] We were still in Europe, but the threat in the world was an attack from North Korea. I mean, there wasn't anything else. This was it, so all eyes were on it. So what happened was, the Olympics were successful, and then General Gray, the commandant of the marine corps, one of the greatest warriors and one of our great commandants of all time, came over to visit in Korea. And we had a major operation of a field training exercise in the Republic, wherein the United States—you're confined to bases and don't

get out, and most of it's—I just lost the term, but it's really not people there. It's just—you're saying that that unit is out there, but there's nobody . . .

SL: Right.

[04:56:03] MS: . . . really there. If we have a word for that, I can't remember it right now. But anyway—but in the Korea, when we had this exercise . . .

SL: Virtual, maybe?

MS: Yeah, but that wasn't it. I know that.

SL: Yeah.

MS: But it was like that. It wasn't imaginary either but somethin'—I can't believe that I can't remember. But in Korea when they had this exercise, it was—everybody went out. So you'd have six hundred thousand soldiers all across the Korean peninsula, up near the DMZ, moving, destroying farmland, driving tanks through people's gardens. I mean, just—it was all real, and there was no jokin' around. And of course they paid tremendous reparations every year for the destruction of property. But there was this maneuver of all the force, and it was assembled to the north of our readiness, and it was a reinforcement of the protection of the military in the south, positive reinforcement of the—they could—we could handle anything. But it was a major,

major event. And again, the issue for the marine corps was we were on Okinawa, we had a responsibility in the war plan, but we only sent a token response force to kinda playact in the exercise. And we were, in my words, again, we were an embarrassment because we didn't understand fighting at that level and that how reliant the Republic of Korea was on the role of the marine corps to win the fight against the North if they attacked, and that we were gonna need all these marines on Okinawa, thirty-five thousand, and people from the United States, Camp Pendleton, to get there as quickly as possible to win because we had all the statistics of the data of the horror of war. Two million—a million North Koreans and a million South Koreans clashing in one spot on the globe, you're gonna have a lotta carnage.

SL: Yeah.

[04:58:02] MS: And we had to step it up in the marine corps, and we were an embarrassment. And General Carpenter, God love him, used to tell me, "Marty, you know, you really—it's a minor-league performance in a major-league game." And I picked up that euphemism to say to the leadership of the marine corps, including General Gray, "We really are an embarrassment here, sir. I mean, we just don't get it yet that we have to bring

the force from Okinawa. We have to expend the money. We have to get 'em on the ground. They have to participate in the training. They have to assimilate in with the army units from the Republic of Korea. We've got to train at this level in command and control and communication. We gotta bring our best people here. Our generals need to get at this level." And General Gray looked at me, and he said, "Marty, are you telling me that there really are six hundred thousand people out on the ground, that I'm"—whatever that word—virtual. And I'm saying, "Sir?"

SL: Simulate.

[04:58:58] MS: Yeah, simulated and whatever. I said, "General, there are." And he said, "Incredible," 'cause he'd never been exposed to it before. And I said, "Sir, I want you to visit 'em. I want you to see. I want you to get the picture. I want to show you what we're doing and all of its ugliness of minor-league ball player in a major-league game, how we're perceived by the commander here, the army commander, by my boss. And it's not about embarrassment to anybody. We just have to make a institutional decision. Are we gonna get into this thing? Because they don't wanna tolerate us any longer and being reliant on us when we don't practice with 'em because it's real

here. This is not a game. We don't say, 'For exercise purposes, we're going to do this.' Everything is if it did happen. Everything we do here is if it did happen. In fact, if you were on Mars and looking down, you'd think it was happening because there's no word of simulation here. This is real to these people, real to this president, real to everybody." [05:00:01] And an answer to your question of twenty minutes ago, that was Marty Steele's coming-out party inside the marine corps. I had the audience of the number one guy in the marine corps, who really didn't know me very well. He had met me in the desert a year before when I was talking about training at that level in 1986, [19]87, and [19]88, and now he has moved me from—he knows that I get it. The marine corps is still kind of working it—because it was his vision, too. Maneuver warfare was what he was known for, bringing that in, fighting at that level—but knew that it was only him, if you will, saying, "This is where we need to go," but the institution was not there. But the guy who not only got it from him, but the one who was doing it was this one colonel in Korea, that I got it, understood what his vision was, General Gray, and understood what it was gonna take to get us to play in the game, literally. Figuratively, that it wasn't a game, and then get the unified commander in Korea to embrace the

role of the marine corps. And it—and General Gray probably could speak to this far better, but the proof of the pudding was that the tour was two years. I came back. It was very successful. The North Koreans didn't attack. [*Laughs*] I had this tremendous relationship with General Carpenter, who wrote those kinds of things there about my expertise. [05:01:35] And there are many, many stories I would share with him. He was the finest soldier I've ever known in my life. But I go to Quantico, Virginia, to be the deputy at what's called the Marine Corps War Fighting Center, which is to take that experience and go to this center wherein we're gonna start institutionalizing all of this, to write the documents for it, to write the requirement for the matériel to do it, et cetera. And I'm gonna be the deputy there. I wanted to command an expeditionary unit, be on a ship, and never—no tanker had ever done it. And General Gray asked me what I wanna do, and I said, "Of course, you know what I wanna do, sir. I wanna command a"—we called 'em MEUs, Marine Expeditionary Unit. He said, "Marty, it'd be a waste of your time and talent. I'm not gonna do that." I said, "Sir, it's just sometime a tanker's got to do that." And he said, "Not gonna be you." [*Laughter*] And he was very blunt about it, but he put me in there. And sure enough, the day I get there,

the very first day, is the day—again, another thing in history—answering your question—Saddam Hussein invades Kuwait. It's that day. First day. [05:02:40] And there General Gray is, the commandant of the marine corps, sitting at my desk on my first day of duty at Quantico at five thirty in the morning with his feet up. He had made the pot of coffee, and I looked at him, I said, "Sir?" And he said, "Did you hear the radio?" And I said, "Yes, sir, I did." And he said, "Marty, I'm down here. You're gonna be the guy that builds the plan to get the marine corps to fight the way we should be in Korea to fight in the—against Saddam Hussein. And I'm gonna give you all the people to build the plan. Anybody you want. I'm gonna leave you alone. You're gonna report directly to me, and you're gonna make all the recommendations because you understand it, and you're the guy." And I said, "General"—he said, "You'll get anybody you want." And I said, "No, it's not that." And he said, "It's—you're gonna report directly to me." And I said, "Sir, I got a two-star general across the hall who's my boss. I got a three-star general a block away, and you're gonna have to tell them that because they're not gonna buy that that I have direct access to you." And he said, "I'll tell them." And I said, "Sir, you've gotta promise me"—'cause he was notorious about not doing those

kinds of things. [05:03:48] But he—I said, "You gotta promise me you're gonna do it." And he said, "Your commandant has to"—speaking in the third person—"Your commandant has to promise you, Colonel?" And I said, "Sir, this'll be ugly. I mean, to get the people that I know that can do this, we're—how long do you you want?" He said, "I'll give you thirty days to put this thing together." And so the very first day—I mean, my boss come to me—"What's General Gray doin' here?" And I told him, and I said, "Sir"—and I'd know—had known my boss for years, way back as a major. And he said, "I'll support you, but the three-star," who'll remain nameless. He's dead now but—"he'll have a hard time with this, that your direct access to the commandant." And I said, "Well, are you gonna buffer it?" And he said, "Not me. That's General [*SL laughs*] Gray's call." So I said, "Well, it's gonna be ugly." And it was for a day or two, but General Gray—I called him on the phone. I said, "Sir, you still haven't told the general." He said, "I know. Is he givin' you problems?" And I said, "Sir, he's apoplectic. Who the hell am I? He doesn't know me from Hogan's goat. I never met the guy before, and here I'm doin' this, and I'm sayin' I want Moe, Larry, and Curly, and all these people to come in from all over the country and to be here within forty-eight hours, and we're cuttin'

orders and doin' all this stuff, and they're reporting to me to form in this sequestered room for thirty days, that I'm gonna feed 'em bananas and candy bars to put this thing together to shape how we're gonna fight Saddam Hussein? And we haven't declared war with the guy yet, you know. We're"—and he said, "We're gonna be in front of all this." Well, anyway, it worked, and we put all these people together, and we built and made 101 recommendations, everything from language school to getting tanks to the battlefield early 'cause it was gonna be an armor battle. And we didn't have the M1 tank yet to—everything you could possibly imagine, a hundred and one recommendations. [05:05:37] And the second incident, again, is that continuously throughout that—didn't sleep probably three or four hours a night, maybe. Had tremendous people involved in the effort. Many of the leaders that I had all became generals because of what they did there in that event because they got exposed, just like I did, and then I had to brief the commandant of our progress in, you know, each day, week, and then made the recommendations. The briefing was supposed to be forty-five minutes of the recommendations, and it lasted nine hours in front of all the leaders of the marine corps, every general we had in the leadership position, about twenty-five

generals, three-stars, and the commandant. And I was the talking head [*SL laughs*] for that briefing—getting to, again, your question—and it's what all we had done, and I briefed the whole brief, and they bought all 101 recommendations. And it was how to implement all of that to get it done expeditiously. Yeah, I had one on the tank—again as a tanker. There was acrimony about, "Was he just doin' that one because he's a tanker and wants to get the new tank in? We've got a plan that's gonna get it in later, but is he just doin' it to get it there because of—he's a tanker?" [05:06:55] And General Gray took a break once to—for a head call, as we call 'em, to go the bathroom, and he was—he's sayin', "Marty, I—you know, the room is—they're buyin' in, but they just wanna know, and you gotta look me right in the eye, is the tank thing because you're a tanker?" And I said, "Sir, I'm embarrassed that you asked me that question. I mean, if you believe that after all this, do you think I'd come up with that to—because I'm a tanker? This is to fight T-72 tanks and beat this guy on the battlefield. We don't have the right tank, and the only way we're gonna beat 'em is if we get the M1-A1. The army's ready to give 'em to us. I've already made arrangements for it. We were gonna get 'em anyway. They're gonna give 'em to us now. We can get people trained and make this happen."

And he said, "That's all needed to hear." And I said, "Sir, I'm still embarrassed that you asked me that." [*SL laughs*] [05:07:47] Anyway, all that happened. And then if you remember, it was called Desert Shield/Desert Storm.

SL: Yes.

MS: Yeah.

SL: Remember watchin' it.

MS: Yeah. So the second major iteration is we had General Boomer, a tremendous marine, friend of mine. He—they went over to Kuwait to—in—under Desert Shield to prepare to fight. We had no one in the marine corps who really had ever planned or fought echelons above corp, understood the role with Schwarzkopf, what our role was gonna be, this massive movement of men and matériel, five hundred thousand-man army and marine corps, and what our role was gonna be. We'd just never had anyone do it, except me in Korea. So General Gray sent me over there to train General Boomer's staff of how to fight echelons above corp, and I picked the people I wanted to go with me and—lotta acrimony over that, of his staff. "Who is this guy from Quantico, a tanker, coming over here to tr—teach us? We're the"—and it was another seminal event in my career, to get to your point, wherein I had the skill set to be able to not

offend the generals in General Boomer's staff, knew that I—the petty envy would exist with my peers, colonels, who all wanted to be generals, some who knew me, some who didn't, but all envious of—"Who's this guy from Quantico? Quantico is a staff place, not a war-fighting place."

SL: Right.

[05:09:18] MS: "Coming in with these recommendations that he's made that all the marine corps is following in step, now comin' over to tell us how to prepare to fight. Who is this guy?" And the critical element for me was General Boomer, who to this day is one of my closest friends from the experience because I had a meeting with him early on. I said, "Sir, you know, I'm gonna—I—I'm embarrassed that I'm here, but I do know what I'm doin'." And he said, "I know your reputation, Marty," but he said, "You know, I don't really know what I'm doin' because we've never—none of us have ever done it." I said, "You've gotta be the guy that allows me—what I don't want is tomatoes thrown at me or this kibitzing in the back of bullshit. You know, I don't want any of that. I need you to buffer that because I'm gonna tell you how to do this. I mean, I'm gonna train your staff, and I know how to do it, and I'm—I've got people that now understand it. [05:10:12] And if you hang with me, we can get

everybody on board for you to be successful at all this." And he said, "Trust me. You've got my confidence." And I said, "We're gonna need to debrief on a regular basis. I'm gonna tell you the body language I'm gettin' from people that are pushin' back because their pride's gonna be hurt, and I'm not gonna be pontificating or giving sermons here, but it's gonna be a—it's gonna be tough sledding. And I understand that. I don't like that but"—anyway, so what happened was—this was in September/October time frame of Desert Shield. They went—we went in August—October—yeah.

TM: Can we break for tape?

[Tape stopped]

[05:10:52] SL: This is tape five. Is that right?

MS: I think—yeah, or maybe six. I don't know.

SL: And we're . . .

TM: We're starting six.

MS: Yeah.

SL: We're starting six?

TM: Mh-hmm.

SL: Oh, this is tape six. We're talkin' about Desert—or Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

MS: Yeah.

SL: And you're puttin' together the plan and about to execute . . .

MS: Yeah.

SL: . . . Desert Shield.

[05:11:14] MS: Yeah. The plan is the role of the marine corps and its need for everything from equipment to training regimen and so on, and that's one thing that's been done, and we're implementing that. The decision's been made by our magnificent commandant, General A. M. Gray, to do those things, and now we're in country with the war fighters who are gonna execute Schwarzkopf's plan, but how to integrate in the marine corps to be successful on the battlefield, and training their staff in command and control communications, understanding everything from sortie generation rates, airplanes flying, fixed-wing marine aviation, naval aviation off of aircraft carriers, the role that they will play with General Horner's aviation plan, and how we'll fit into what turned out to be the left hook, and the role of the marine corps to go straight up the gut, across the ditches, and then the role that we would have from the northern Arabian Gulf, if you will, Failaka Island, and where Kuwait is and the Shatt al-Arab, which is the border with Iran and all of that. So it's a very, very Herculean effort and—but we had magnificent people, again, in the juncture of time and

history, the irony of who was there was truly remarkable, who—from General Gray back in Washington, which, again, as service chief his responsibility is to provide the men and equipment, not to get involved in the tactics. And so the rub as reflected in the book was that General Gray in sending me out there was violating Schwarzkopf's domain, if you will, and people were offended by that. I mean, what's General Gray? He's a real bull in a china shop but revered by marines. Revered by marines, and I'm one of those who revere him. And we were out of our lane. And so it was very dicey that—here you're comin' from Washington to talk about training marines and how they're gonna fit in General Schwarzkopf's plans. And my early first experiences with General Schwarzkopf, talking about what we were doing—I mean, he was kinda like, "What are you doin' here, you know? What's all this goin' on?" And unsettled about it. Courteous to me. I mean, I was kind of in a no-win position here, comin' out there as a colonel. [05:13:50] But we had tremendous marine leadership, both on Schwarzkopf's staff—General Neal; a gentleman by the name of Johnston, who became a general, a three-star in the marine corps; all these people were just magnificent. And then Boomer's staff: General Keys was a two-star. General Krulak was a one-star who

became the commandant. I mean, all these people were the future leaders of the marine corps, and the Department of Defense, for that matter. And General Boomer was this very solid man at the top. Had the great presence of mind to understand. He was a tremendously effective listener. Had no ego, which would've been so destructive if ego woulda gotten away. And he wasn't meek and mild. Don't get me wrong. He was a [*laughs*] tremendous marine leader, but ego was not one of his shortcomings. So he was kind of a puppeteer on tryin' to balance between having Schwarzkopf not upset with General Gray; me, to a much more lesser degree, keeping his generals in the field informed and trained and educated; not having them upset about General Gray. General Gray doesn't care. He's a bull in a china shop. [*SL laughs*] He wants me to drive the thing. And so it was really a very, very dicey situation. [05:15:13] But what happened was [*clears throat*] after the training portion of all this—and I went back and debriefed General Gray and told him what success we had and what the issues were. Talked to General Boomer in my debrief to make sure he knew exactly what I was gonna tell General Gray and what my observations were about his staff on who I thought were gonna carry the load and who I thought couldn't in crises.

And very open and candid. I wouldn't mention names now, but I gave him the list of names. I just said, "I just don't think they can do this at this level for you. But these are workhorses and this guy"—and, of course, the irony is, he knew it, and I knew it, and he already knew it, but he was just—he was hearin' it from somebody coming in from outside. And a lotta those—most of those people who were the thoroughbred horses all became generals later. I mean, they just kinda—they were colonels or lieutenant colonels, some of 'em very close to me. I mean, they were just thoroughbred horses. [05:16:17] One guy who became a two-star general, a very close friend of mine, was with me in Korea, and I told Boomer—he was only a lieutenant colonel, and I said, "He's the most savvy guy inside your staff because he knows what I know 'cause he did it in Korea with me, and you gotta rely on this guy. And he'll—he doesn't care if there's a colonel or ten generals between you and him. If you ask him, he'll"—and he obviously did that and became a two-star general himself. I mean, just an absolute stud. [05:16:46] But I came back and briefed General Gray, and then his next move, which was another embarrassing thing, he formed a small team of people with one of his closest generals, who was a two-star who later became a four-star, a major leader in the unified

command plan. But he put him in charge and then me as his operations officer and sent us out to go on the USS *Blue Ridge*, which was Admiral Arthur's naval command ship. [05:17:21] So here again, Washington, DC, inserting itself into awkward, awkward Schwarzkopf—awkward [*SL laughs*] Boomer, awkward—whose guys from Washington. And General Gray didn't care. And the two-star who became a magnificent four-star, he had the courage to be able to deal with it, but it was a very, very dicey thing. Admiral Arthur embraced us because he knew that we knew what we were talkin' about, and he didn't know how to do this from a naval perspective. He was an aviator. The role of aircraft carriers in all of this. The role of marine forces from the sea, which he was responsible for with Boomer and the connection. So we were a tremendous group of people. My assistant became a three-star general. He was a lieutenant colonel. His assistant is currently a three-star general on [*SL laughs*] the marine corps. So all of these guys—you know, we had this cadre of people that were so profoundly gifted that they became the leaders of to—and one of 'em is still one of the premier leaders of the marine corps today, and they were young pups in this caldron of politics and Washington and Schwarzkopf and Horner. And I could go on and on and on

about my dealings with General Horner. I had to go around to each of the carriers before the ground war started because they were kinda out of it. Horner—there was politics involved with the role of the navy aircraft and the role of the air force aircraft. And the navy was kind of useless because it had to go from the sea to the target, and the planning of the air force staff would put them where they had the tank with another refueler, and they couldn't generate enough sorties to have any influence on the preparation of the battle space and in the fight. [05:19:30] And their guy, who became a four-star admiral, who was in Riyadh at that time, moved from Kuwait, and everything's in Riyadh with Schwarzkopf—he didn't understand it either, and they were just—they thinkin' they were doin' good, but they were really non-players. And it was political but not malicious. I mean, I—you have to really get inside General Horner and Schwarzkopf's head. It just was, in my opinion as a colonel, the—not the greatest use of our assets in that we were underutilizing tremendous resources, and I felt it was because of ignorance and maybe some politics in internecine warfare between the services of who's—who was gonna do this. [05:20:13] So the next major incident for me was going to each of the carriers—I didn't go to the ones in the Red Sea—but each

of the carriers in the northern Arabian Gulf to brief all the battle group commanders that they really needed training—immediate understanding of close air support, 'cause they were trained to shoot MiGs down. I mean, and there was no—gonna be no air. They were gonna have to avoid his air defenses, but they really needed to have their weapons and bombs to get down close to the ground to provide support for both the marine corps forces goin' through the ditches and the army's left hook, and they needed to learn how to do that in short order. And this was all—the intensity of this was just remarkable. It's all taken place in days, not months. And you know, the—for me, again, the experience was the diplomacy of dealing with admirals in the navy, admirals on these ships who were oblivious to all this, and "Who are you? Where are you from, and why are you here?" And Admiral Arthur and General Boomer had to grease the skids to have them—"This guy's gonna come out and tell you what to do." And it was lonely, [*SL laughs*] let me tell you. [*Laughter*] And it was awkward except the fact that it was right, for one thing, and I knew what I was talkin' about. [05:21:41] And it was changing the mindset of these people in the navy and these battle group commanders and pilots. I mean, I was down to the individual pilots. And a lotta guys who went on to be admirals

when I was a general were—that's where I met 'em, on that experience of changing them within days of what their role would be. And then I—at the end of that, and we're still out there. We're not liked by anyone. This—still this little eclectic group from Quantico led by this one two-star who—I could name him, again, but he's a remarkably gifted guy. Well, I should name him. His name was General Sheehan, Jack Sheehan. Tall. College basketball player guy. Tremendously brilliant man. Gifted. But he was Gray's henchman, if you will. He went on to be a four-star commander in the marine corps and in joint forces. But amazingly talented guy, and he was impervious to all this ridicule, and he didn't care. He had an iron will, and he knew we were doin' what we were there for and tested me a couple times just to see if I would stand up to him. He was very domineering in a conversation because his intellect was so high, and he could crush you with his—and he tested me before he even went, and I came back at him, I said, "You know, sir, I think you're just pimpin' me, aren't you?" And [*laughter*] he said, "What do you mean, Steele?" And I said, "That's the dumbest thing I think I've ever heard you say. I mean, why are you—you kiddin' me? We're not gonna do that." And he said, "That's what I would do," and I said, "You wouldn't do that.

That's stupid. We're not gonna [*laughter*] do that." And you know, he would make some comment about who—you know, "Who do you think you're talkin' to?" And I'm sayin', "Sir, I think you're really—you are jokin', aren't you? You're—this is—you're kiddin' me, right?" And he'd finally say, "Well, I haven't really thought about it that much." And I said, "Well, that's obvious, and [*SL laughs*] you know, this is—that—we would never do that. We'd never do that, and this is why," and I would tell him. And I won't get to the specifics of what he was sayin', but anyway, we became close, and he respected me for it. [05:23:54] And I left the ships and then went to Riyadh to brief General Schwarzkopf and General Horner on what was goin' on. By then there was some tension between Admiral Arthur and General Schwarzkopf—not tension between Boomer and Schwarzkopf, but the tension was that the—what's the navy really gonna do here? And I was bringin' the plan of how to get the navy more involved with its aircraft and that they were needed in this fight. [05:24:23] If this guy put up a fight, we're gonna need everything we have to beat this guy in the—so I—before G-Day, maybe one or two days before we started the ground offensive, I briefed 'em both. Schwarzkopf was tolerant of me. By then he knew we were gonna win, if you will. Horner

was respectful, and he just didn't understand. He could not understand who this guy is from Washington, DC, that's comin' out here to do all this. And—but he was not abusive. And he said, "What—just what do you want? What do you really want from me?" And I said, "Well, I'm here for this purpose, sir. I need you to support the navy in sortie generation rate and to integrate naval aviation into the fight on G-Day to fly close air support and not—because we don't have enough in the marine corps, and you are gonna be supporting the army on the left hook. And I gotta get you to embrace the navy, and you haven't done that. They're out there in la-la land. You've got 'em goin' halfway across the—all the way to the other side of Iraq. They're not in the fight. They're just—and you—I'm askin' you to change." And he said, "Okay, you got it. We'll do that." And I said, "Thanks," which they did and—but it was—you know, it was tough. It was not easy. And so that experience—and goin' back to General Gray in [19]86, teaching about I had embraced maneuver warfare in the desert; the Korea experience in [19]88 with the post-Olympics [19]89; the reality of echelons above corps in war-fighting at that level; the 101 recommendations to get ready to—for the fight for the marine corps; training Boomer's staff how to fight; being with this small, eclectic group

of people, outsiders, to assimilate in to help [*SL clears throat*] naval forces do the feint on Failaka Island to hold the Iraqi divisions down so they can't get back in the fight to fight the marines in the ditches and the army's left hook. We held seven divisions down with what we [*SL laughs*] did in the plan. It all came and happened, and we won in a hundred hours or whatever it was.

SL: Yeah.

[05:26:49] MS: And so it was a great relief. That photograph is when I got back to see my wife. I had tremendous personal relief of what had happened and how it had happened in our awkward role in all of this, which was just out—not in any textbook, not—it was way out there, unprecedented. Knew that I was gonna carry the baggage of being part of that group with Sheehan from Quantico and Washington forever, for the rest of my life, that got involved in this. General Gray would soon no longer be our commandant. [05:27:26] He was replaced by General—magnificent guy, too—Carl Mundy, who didn't understand any of this—that, you know, if you will, Big Daddy Gray, who had put his arm around me, was gone, and I'm gonna be hangin' out, you know, [*SL laughs*] for career purposes if I was thinkin' about that. But the irony was I wasn't thinkin'

about it. I was able to compartmentalize it, that we had the relationship. There was a moment in time I was asked to do something. I was able to do it. It resulted on success in the battlefield. We won a decisive victory. I had a major part to play, and I can handle the ramifications of that as a man later on with whoever is offended by it because it worked.

SL: Yeah.

MS: And . . .

SL: It worked well.

MS: But it [*TM coughs*]—and I had a great . . .

SL: Arguably, the best-laid plan . . .

MS: In history.

SL: . . . in history.

MS: In history. Yeah.

SL: Really.

MS: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

[05:28:22] MS: And Boomer came back, and we had lots of conversations about it. He was in parades in New York, and [*SL laughs*] you know, there was a great welcoming back. Confetti. Schwarzkopf marchin' down Fifth Avenue and all that stuff. But we all knew really what had gone on about makin' it happen, and

I mean, everybody was truly magnificent in it, and it really was one of those lifetime experiences in war, if you could pull it all together. And Norman Schwarzkopf's a phenomenally gifted man. Has shortcomings, true, but he was—he really is a talented guy to put this coalition together, all these foreign countries and all their little pettiness, and you know, he could handle all that—take care of them and know—but knew exactly how the fight was gonna go and who was gonna do what and a tremendously gifted guy. But anyway . . .

SL: Well, now . . .

MS: I . . .

SL: . . . do you wanna—[*TM coughs*]—how did we miss the [19]72—you comin' back to Fayetteville and . . .

MS: Well, we—I—we just went by it. I mean, what happened was is that I left the Sea School in Portsmouth, Virginia, on this marine—startin' to see marines not aboard. And I went to night school, and it's a quick, great story. [05:29:42] I needed to get my degree 'cause now I'm—this is my career, and I'm competing against people who have college degrees. So I'd been goin' to night school at East Carolina University when I was in Camp Lejeune; Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia, when I was in Portsmouth, Virginia, and the requirement was that I

needed to apply for what was called the college degree program, and it was for active-duty officers who didn't have their degree. And they—you had to have sixty credit hours to apply to get in. And the goal was to select the people that they thought had a future to go matriculate, but do it as expeditiously as you could to get 'em back into the force. So you weren't gonna be takin' twelve hours a semester; you were gonna be comin'—they were gonna pay you your salary. You're on active duty—it's where the hair thing is funny today. But you're still in the marine corps. They're payin', in my case, a captain's salary, but you're there to get in and get out and get back and have the credentials of a sheepskin, of a degree. [05:30:44] Well, you had to apply to at—three school—have three applications accepted, and I knew that I would—there was only one place I—it was Arkansas. And so I went through this kind of jumpin' through my hoops to go to Miami and Colorado, and I don't know what. But anyway, it was just Arkansas. So you—normal—the normal procedure was—again, it's just hilarious to think about this, and my wife laughs at this story. And all my friends do, too. I'm in June or July, and I'm applying to get to Arkansas in August. [*SL laughs*] And they—the requirement is I'm in June or July, and I should be applying to get to

Arkansas . . .

SL: In the spring.

MS: No, the following August.

SL: Oh.

MS: A year . . .

SL: A year out.

MS: Fourteen months later. A year out.

SL: Yeah.

[05:31:34] MS: So I'm outta the book again doin' bad things to the [*SL laughs*] system, and I'm in—and I have fifty-six hours. I don't even have sixty hours. And I'm takin' a four-hour biology course at Old Dominion University. Got a great professor, a woman who I—and I'm—I've got an A in the class, and I know it. But by the time my application hits, I'll have the grade in, so it'll be fifty-six—the application hits sixty while they're reviewin' 'em, and then I've gotta deal with this—"Is this a typo? You mean August of 1973, not [19]72?" So anyway, the guy calls me on the phone. He said, "I'm sure this is just a typographical error, Captain. One, we understand that you're gonna get the biol—your last four hours"—he didn't know what I was takin'—four-hour course. "But you mean the following year, don't you?" And I said, "No, sir, I"—I was talkin' to a major—"I mean, this

year." He said, "Well, that's—did you read the order, Captain?" And I said, "I read the order, sir." And he says, "Well, you know, when your grade comes in, you're gonna make it, but you're gonna go a year from now. What are you doin' this"—and then I said, "Well, first of all, it's Arkansas, right, sir?" And he said, "Yeah, you're gonna—we'll take you to Arkansas." Dean Fairchild . . .

SL: Yeah.

MS: . . . was the guy who I'd known his daughter and he . . .

SL: Yeah.

[05:32:49] MS: Yeah. He's the one who approved me to come to Arkansas.

SL: Is that Kay?

MS: She just died. Her father.

SL: Yeah.

MS: Just passed away within the past month or two.

SL: Okay.

MS: Yeah. I didn't get to come back for the funeral. But anyway, she was a high school classmate of mine. So [*laughs*] the guy says, "Okay, I'm ready for this. What's the reason?" And I said, "Well, here's the reason, sir. I grew up in Fayetteville, Arkansas. That's where the university is. But we're predicted to win the

national football championship, [*SL laughs*] and we have a quarterback"—just lost his name—that played for the Bills.

SL: Ferguson.

MS: Huh?

SL: Ferguson?

[05:33:33] MS: Yeah, Joe Ferguson. [*SL clears throat*] "And I get two football seasons if I go now. [*SL laughs*] And we're gonna win the national championship." And he says, "Damndest answer I ever heard in my life. Can you and your family move and get there in time?" Said, "Hell, we'd be there tomorrow if you tell me I have to be there tomorrow." He said, "Done. Approved." And so [*laughter*] within forty days I'm showin' up to Fayetteville on somethin' that's supposed to be a year out. We play Southern Cal in the opener in Little Rock. Get thumped 31-6. I'm in the stands. I'm laughin' at my wife, and I said, "There goes the na"—Southern Cal won the national championship that . . .

SL: Yeah.

[05:34:16] MS: . . . year with John McKay. And we go 6-5 or . . .

SL: Yeah.

MS: I mean, it's just horrific. And I'm laughin'. I'm sayin', "I hope he doesn't call me from—sayin', [*SL laughs*] 'What national

championship were you talkin' about?'" But I came, and I took eighteen hours a semester. I'd had, with the exception of a couple of fine arts courses—I took the architecture course from the Cutty Sark guy that did all the designs here—the redheaded guy who's dead now. He did Cutty Sark commercials on magazines. We mentioned him last time.

SL: Fay Jones?

MS: No.

SL: No?

MS: No, the young guy. He died prematurely.

SL: Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, yeah. I know who you're talkin' about.

MS: Redheaded . . .

SL: Lambeth.

MS: Yeah, Lambeth.

SL: Yeah.

MS: Took a architecture course from him.

SL: Which was great.

MS: Yeah, oh . . .

SL: All of his courses were great.

MS: Yeah, yeah.

SL: Slideshows.

MS: Those slideshows.

SL: Played a lotta Beatles.

MS: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SL: Yeah.

MS: Played the Beatles, and you had to pick—that was a Mies van der Rohe and all this at the end.

SL: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

[05:35:01] MS: Yeah. And I got to know him very well. Remember, I'm twenty-six. I've told Frank I'm not gonna play football. I've got a wife and two children. I'm livin' in what we called the devil house out on I-45. I make a deal with my wife that I'm gonna close the library, which was just brand new here. "I'm gonna close it every night," which was midnight back then. I don't know how late it stays open now, even if that late. "But on the weekends, I'll not open a book, and we'll be family and party and have all of our friends," who are, you know, twenty-six, outta school, and so on and . . .

SL: Yeah.

[05:35:31] MS: And my wife said, "That's a plan." So I—Jim Chase is the chairman of the Department of History, Willard Gatewood . . .

SL: Oh!

MS: . . . Evan Bukey; Hudson, who was the head of the graduate

school but taught me Civil War; Reeser, Greece and Rome. David Edwards, Russian history; Sloan—the list just goes on and on.

SL: Yes. Uh-huh.

[05:35:56] MS: Donovan, who's deceased now. I took every course that Gatewood gave. So I'm takin' eighteen hours, and I've got nothing other than history courses except these few—I think I took a music appreciation course, took a Latin course, gave the—whatever you do to get outta speech class by givin' a speech. Didn't have to do that. Got the credit. And I'm just studyin' history, and I'm, I mean, died and gone to heaven, just walkin' in to Jim Chase, poli—American political parties; Willard Gatewood, Southern history.

SL: Yep.

[05:36:34] MS: Sloan, Edwards, English history, and Vizzier taught . . .

SL: Oh, yeah. I had her, too.

MS: . . . reformation. "The Protestant Reformation." Henry Tsai, Chinese history. The English guy—I just was with him the last time I was here, and I've lost his name just now. I apologize. But—so what's happening with me in the classroom at Arkansas—gate—Watergate's goin' on; I'm gettin' pilloried; two

tours in Vietnam; Reagan's a crook; liberal academics. [*SL laughs*] I'm standin' my own because I get it, you know, and I'm mature, et cetera, et cetera, and I'm havin' the time of my life. I'm studyin', reading voraciously in here, focused totally. I made one B, and I can't even remember what it was in, but I made a—eighteen hours of 4.0 first semester; eighteen hours, 4.0 second semester; twelve hours in the summer at 4.0; and then eighteen hours to—and I graduate in fifteen months with eighteen, eighteen, eighteen, and twelve. And all those history courses with all those guys, and it's—in the week—on the weekend, it's George's drinkin' beer with 'em. Played football with 'em. The only time the history department's ever won the flag football championship [*SL laughs*] at the university, and I'm on the team, and [*SL laughs*] Edwards is on the team—Sloan, Donovan.

SL: You outran everybody.

[05:37:56] MS: Yeah, yeah. [*SL laughs*] I mean, we beat the hell outta everybody. Beat the Greeks. I mean, they—and that's what they remember.

SL: Yeah, of course.

MS: They—that's what—when we go to dinner now and . . .

SL: Forget the A's.

MS: . . . that's the first thing . . .

SL: Straight A's.

MS: Yeah, the [*SL laughs*]—yeah, they forget what you did here. It's we won the football thing. We never did again. [*SL laughs*] Kennedy is the one that I couldn't remember.

SL: Kennedy.

MS: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SL: Is it Bill?

MS: Doctor to me, but . . .

SL: Yeah, yeah.

MS: . . . but he—English history with him.

SL: Yeah. Uh-huh.

[05:38:20] MS: And he played, and Donovan played, and Edwards played; Sloan played; Bukey played. We—all these guys played. Gatewood didn't play, and Chase didn't play, but all these pro—younger professors were playin', and we just had a grand time playin' in intramurals and beat everybody. I—we never lost a game, and it was just [*SL laughs*] tremendous, and the classroom was tremendous, and the blue books, and the papers. And my nature, again, is—we didn't have computers back then, but I had a Corona electric typewriter and . . .

SL: Yep.

[05:38:48] MS: . . . spendin' all night writin' papers to hand 'em in and worried whether it was gonna be good enough and gettin' feedback. You know, "It's the best paper I've ever had in my class." I mean, and it was unabashed. They were sayin', you know, "Your depth of understanding, of putting all this in writing, your skill set"—and so it was a—another one of those things that—because of my relationship with Jim Chase, which is to this day; Gatewood, to this day; Bukey, all of these guys, I'm still very close—but it was a wonderful experience because it was just beyond the classroom, for one thing, but I embraced what they were sayin' and made a contribution to the meaning of what they were saying. I mean, it was not regurgitating back the dates and times from a history point. It was, "What's the significance of this event in history?" And you know, I—so many wonderful stories—Reeser, who came from California here, taught Greece and Rome. I took, early on, I took his Rome—his course, and you know, they made a comment about, "You won't—he doesn't give A's. Nobody'll make an A. I mean, you won't make an A." And I said, "Well, wait a minute. I—that's not the problem, but wait a minute. If you earn an A, you don't get an A?" "Well, you—nobody earns an A. You can't get an A from Reeser. It just doesn't happen." I—so I went to him. I

said, "Dr. Reeser," and he said, "Oh, I know—can I call you captain or Mr. Steele?" I said, "Well, please don't call me Mr. Steele. It's—Marty's fine, Dr. Reeser. [05:40:25] You won't give me an A if I earn an A?" And he said, "Well, nobody's ever earned an A." And I said, "Well, that wasn't the question. If I earn an A, will you give me an A?" And he said, "Don't feel bad at the end, [*SL laughs*] but if you earn an A, I'll give you an A." And of course, the end—I've got the only A he ever gave, and he made a big speech and said, "I've never given an A here in my life, but this is the only guy that's ever earned an A in my class." [05:40:50] And it was that way with many of the professors, and it wasn't—so it was—I mean, I was workin' my tail off here, just studyin' and lovin' it, but I embraced the whole experience. Just—there was nothing bad about it and football and basketball and—I mean, I wasn't in the Greek system, so I had no distractions. I had a wonderful wife and kids. We were partyin' on the weekends and havin' all my friends—there was no issue of who you are, I mean, as a human being. You're tryin' to grow and, you know, have—my college experience—I was a nontraditional student, if you will.

SL: Sure.

[05:41:24] MS: And it was just a phenomenal, phenomenal

experience for me and—as it was for them, as they've later said. And it's held with us to this day, and it's why I'm—I love the university so much because of that experience here. And . . .

SL: Well, it was very life affirming for you.

MS: Oh, sure.

SL: Big turnaround from the way you left.

MS: Oh, absolutely. I mean, again, I—the irony is that, wherein I wasn't ready and prepared and performed poorly academically the first time around, there was no doubt in my mind that I was not only prepared, I was gonna blow their socks off because I was mentally, intellectually, and committedwise—I knew what I needed to do. I mean, I remember writin' a paper on Indians—Western history—Western—I think it was Sloan or somebody. I don't remember who the professor was, but I wrote a paper that I had read twenty-seven books for this one paper. [*Laughter*] And it was all in the bibliography.

SL: Yeah.

[05:42:28] MS: And so the references and the footnotes were—I don't know how long the paper was, fifteen, twenty pages. I don't know. But I probably had [*SL laughs*], you know, seventy-five footnotes for, you know—and I handed it in and [*unclear words*] it back and they—you know, he laughed. He

said, "You read every one of those damn books, didn't you?" And I said, "Every page. Every page." And he said, "This is just a tour de force. You know, this thing needs to be published. You need to get a doctorate in history. I mean, this is"—but that's the way it was. I mean, it was just so much fun.

SL: What a great time.

MS: Yeah, it was just so much fun.

[05:43:01] SL: So eighteen, eighteen, and twelve? Is that . . .

MS: In the summer and then eighteen the . . .

SL: And then eighteen again.

MS: And then—and I graduated in December. Didn't get to go to graduation. Immediately had to get out to Camp Pendleton in the middle of that stuff that I—we've talked about a lot. But I had the privilege to be the first distinguished graduate of the Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences. They—because of Dr. Chase, and they gave me an award here, and Dr. Chase spoke, and Frank spoke, Frank Broyles. [05:43:31] But it was a major event, again, being honored that way as a distinguished graduate of the Fulbright College. And Chase's remarks were—he had written it—my fitness report—my—that went into my records at headquarters are really about the impact that I had on the professors here and the student body by my character

and my presence. And it was, you know, just as much as a learning experience for them because of Watergate and what was going on and their views and so on. But it really is one of those special reports 'cause it's written by someone not in the marine corps, the chairman of the Department of History, and it's so profoundly—I don't know if you know Jim Chase.

SL: Yeah.

[05:44:18] MS: He is the seminal expert on political parties in America. I mean, he really is. And he had such a—he's a Virginian—this tremendous oratory skill. I mean, he and Gatewood could . . .

SL: Gatewood.

MS: I mean, they would just—you know, you're just mesmerized every time they open their mouth. [05:44:34] And this oratory about them. I mean, they could be in the Roman forum, you know, holding court, both of 'em. But when he puts it to pen—both of 'em, for that matter, but Chase wrote this thing. It—it's one of those things that just knocks your socks off when you read it about what he was sayin' about me and my academic performance here. And the whole theme was, "Is it nature or nurture? Where do we get such people that commit themselves to the military that give back?" In this time of war and—you

know, this is—Vietnam's still goin' on, the Giap invasion and everything, and it was, "How do you get these kinds of people that do this?"

SL: Right.

[05:45:20] MS: So it was a—it really was just a tremendous validation and tremendous experience. Years later, of course, when I had three master's degrees, I was debating whether to get a Ph.D., and I called Jim Chase and saying, "Should I go get a doctorate in history or political science?" And he said, "Why would you wanna do that?" [*SL laughs*] You know. [*Laughter*] I said, "Well, I don't know. Do you need to do that?" And he said, "You don't need to do that. Don't waste your time doin' that, you know."

[05:45:48] SL: Come back and play touch football.

MS: Yeah. You know, this was [*SL laughs*] years later, but that was—but it was a great response. "Why would you wanna do that?" [*Laughter*] "I don't know. It's there, I guess, to do." But anyway . . .

[05:46:02] SL: Okay. So now we've kinda hopscotched around just a little bit. You've mentioned that—you've mentioned two children . . .

MS: Yeah.

SL: . . . in this chronology so far.

MS: Yeah, a daughter, Diane, who was born in . . .

SL: California.

MS: No. She was . . .

SL: No?

MS: No. She was born in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina . . .

SL: Okay.

MS: . . . in between—right—two years right before I went back to Vietnam the second time. Then our son, David, who's a marine today, just got back from his second tour in Afghanistan, he was born in Portsmouth, Virginia, right before we came to Arkansas to go to school.

SL: Okay.

[05:46:40] MS: So after Pendleton, which we've talked about; the advanced armor course, which we've talked about; Okinawa, which we've talked about briefly goin' back there. Then I went to Detroit, Michigan, to be at the tank automotive command as the only marine on the army's staff. And I was responsible for buying 775 tanks in the marine corps. So that was my first exposure—another great experience—to industry. It was Chrysler Corporation initially, then General Dynamics. And my responsibility was to approve the quality of each tank that we

bought. And we bought all of our M60A1 tanks during that period of time. We were—the tank plant was running 24/7 because of Israel. We were makin' tanks for Israel, the army, and the marine corps. Japan had taken over the automobile industry. It was collapsing. Detroit was collapsing. Chrysler Corporation, Lee Iacocca, were tryin' to save it with the K-cars. It was collapsing. This was [19]78 through [19]81, and I'm in the middle of the acquisition of main battle tanks. Tremendous experience as a major in an army command. It's chronicled in the book, Another seminal thing. Quality control was down, corruption, payoffs, inferior products, discovering inferior products, discovering that premature failure. I was the only uniformed person on the engineering change proposal board, and I'm working with industry, and we're—I'm evaluating that—the primary sight of the tank is for the tank we're buying, and what I expect to be ten thousand tanks in the Army has been manufactured not meeting specifications; that it's involving corruption at the highest levels. Our engines were prematurely failing because of a problem with the air filtration system, not the engine manufacture but a dust ingestion problem that was prematurely failing the engines with less than fifty hours. The armor, which was not made to standard, which you could hit it

with a ball-peen hammer and crack the side of the tank.

[05:49:12] SL: Now who's president at this time?

MS: Jimmy Carter.

SL: And is this—are these the tanks that stalled in the desert?

MS: Later, you mean, or . . .

SL: Yeah, when he was going after the hostages and . . .

MS: Yeah, some of 'em. Yeah.

SL: Yeah. Okay.

[05:49:26] MS: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And the—another major challenge in my young life at—I had an engineer, God rest his soul, named Elmer Wesela, *W-E-S-E-L-A*, who was a brilliant man, a worrywart, but knew this—something adrift. This was all bad. And he had—he was an engineer. He had no skills other than being a—an engineer with a heart this big [uses hands to indicate size] and passionate about the manufacture of the tank. But he came to me and said, "This is, I think, bad. I need your help." And so anyway, we went on a quest which lasted the entire time I was there, which was three years, of tryin' to fix this problem, which elevated to President Carter because we're in the middle of the Cold War with the Soviet Union. The estimate is it's in all the tanks in Europe of that vintage, M60A1s. The army is now creating a different sight, a

sophisticated sight, that can see at night with Texas Instruments and Hughes Aircraft. It was called an M60A3 tank, but we still had these residual tanks out there in huge numbers. And the marine corps is buyin' 775 of these things, [*clears throat*] and I get technically involved, which is not my expertise. I'm a history major. But I get so technically involved in the manufacturing of a tank, which takes ninety days to make one tank. And I get so connected to the workers who are puttin' 'em together 24/7. I'm in there at three in the morning, the—you know, the graveyard shift, and I'm wearin' my uniform, and the workers are embracing me that, "Yours are gonna be right, Major, but these aren't." And I'm hearing all the smut, all the junk, all the crap that's going on and—from bearings to second-source materials, all these things that are Greek to me up to that time. I'm watching payoffs, envelopes bein' passed, and it's a—at that juncture it's my view—not naïve, but my trust in American industry, what's going on in the—in my country, it's shattered because of this corruption in the manufacture of the main battle tank.

[05:51:50] SL: Did you get any threats while you were . . .

MS: Oh yeah.

SL: . . . uncovering all this stuff?

MS: I—my life was threatened again. Oh yeah. Oh yeah. I mean, it's a long story. It's chronicled—but the, you know, condensed version of it—it really is in my community in the marine corps. It is what separated me from everyone else. It's why a tanker eventually went on to be a general because of what happened in that period of time, [19]78 through [19]81, and subsequent to that. [05:52:13] But I went out to the units in the marine corps, to the commanders, and said, "I believe that you've got this problem." And I went to North Carolina first, and the commander there said, "I don't think so." And one of his company commanders, executive officers, said, "We don't have a problem here." And this was the premature dust ingestion and the failure of the engines. Wonderful guy. He just died, by the way, the commander. And it wasn't blocking me. It was just saying, "I don't think we have the problem," because nobody understood it, understood the significance of it, what was going on. I had no idea what the heck was goin' on in Detroit. But we went out to inspect the very first vehicle, and it was filled—the clean air filter system, which is not hygienically clean, but I mean, clean, was filled with mud eight inches and the fir—next time you woulda turned on the engine, it woulda seized up 'cause mud woulda been directly . . .

SL: Ingested.

MS: . . . injected into the cylinders, and it would've seized up the engine. And so that gentleman—that—he was a young—I'm a major. He was a young lieutenant then—became my executive officer later because of this event. But he said, "Oh my God, you know, I thought I was good, and I'm not. You've just"—and then the sights, what was basically the reticle on the sight, the crosshairs, were so—their tolerances were one ten-thousandths of an inch of shim stock, and they were manufactured by major optical companies in America that we all know that remain nameless. But they were not being made to standard because the tolerances were so high, you couldn't make them to the specification and make a profit because it required so much milling in—the standard was correct. There was nothing wrong with the standard, but you couldn't do it for the price of the device.

SL: What the bid was. Yeah.

MS: Yeah, yeah. What the bid was. So the slop was so great that you'd fire a round—you'd aim in on the initial round, and you could—you'd hit somewhere, but the gun would recoil, and the slop was so great that the next round could be fifty yards over the head. Well, you think that the reticle hasn't moved, but it's

just floated up and down inside this device. And in my vernacular, it was that you couldn't hit McDonald's from across the street, and this was the primary sight of the main battle tank. The primary sight, the principal sight. [05:54:549] So I went out to Twentynine Palms with Elmer Wesela, this—and I was able to inspect a device, tear it down to its—and know immediately that it was a—it didn't meet the specs, and it was bad. And I would get the commanders, you know, write a message and all that stuff in advance and—before I'd go out. And they knew I was comin', but they all didn't want to admit the problem. I mean, "We don't have a problem here. We're good and our"—you know, 'cause it all would—the infantry community of the marine corps would say, "The problem is you're not training these people correctly, and you're incompetent as a commander." In the army, it was even worse in that you had seventeen tanks in a company then. If the company commander didn't qualify on qualification, which was called Table Eight Gunnery, which was the qualification of the entire tank through its gunnery at graduation exercise, if you didn't qualify, you were fired. So what I knew was there was no way that anybody could be qualifying with this thing. They had to be gundecking it, cheating, pencil whipping it, whatever you

wanna call it, because it just would not work. [05:56:00] And so what we had was a conspiracy to protect individuals' careers from the lowest lieutenant all the way to the highest general inside the army, who were all saying—they were pencil whipping this thing with the ten thousand tanks—that we could hit the target. And then in the marine corps, which again, we had no generals in armor. We just had these lieutenant colonels tryin' to prove that they could compete with the—you know, two on the ridge, three on the bridge, and "I can support by fire," and so you had all this dynamic going on. [05:56:34] Everybody in denial. And me—again, not martyrdom—at the tip of the spear of this crises of conspiracies. You know, this is like some bad movie that—"Is it real?" et cetera. So anyway, I talked to this—I saw one that wouldn't hit McDonald's from across the street, and I went out to the tank commander of the tank that it belonged to, and I got him inside the tank and closed the hot—hatches. It's a 110 degrees outside. It's about a 140 inside the tank. And I had the gunner and the commander there. No driver, no loader, just two guys. One sergeant and one corporal. And up to this point, we've had denial all across. Nobody's got a problem. Nobody's got a problem. And I'm knowin' this thing is so bad. I mean, it's one of the worst ones I've seen, and I just

say, "Can you hit the target with the primary sight?" "Oh, yes, sir. Sure. But"—I said, "Listen to me. This is our moment of truth. I'm out here. You don't know why I'm here, but I gotta hear the truth from you because I believe we've really got somethin' goin' here that I can't really speak to you about right now. But you're going to have to tell me the truth. You're good, and you're a great marine, and you'll win on the battlefield. [05:57:51] But that's not the question. Can you hit the target with the primary sight? And don't answer me until you've both agreed what the answer is." And I'm lookin' at the gunner, which is—he's the one that looks through the primary sight. And he looks up at the commander and goes back and forth, and I'm sayin', "Okay, I got the answer, but you're gonna have to say it with your lips." And the gunner says, "You're in charge," to the commander. And the commander looks at me, he says, "Sir, we haven't used that piece of shit in three years, and we're usin' Kentucky windage. We're just guesstimating, and we've learned how to deal with it by using our alternate sight and lookin' out with the tank to see where the target—where it is in relationship to the target. If it hits the dirt in front, then we've just made this adjustment." And I said, "You're gonna change history, young man. You just are the first people to admit that we have

a problem that it will be of national and international proportions, and I wanna tell you how proud I am of you." He said, "Sir, we—none of these sights are any good here, and the fact that it's so damn hot inside this tank"—and I said, "Well, I didn't coerce you, right? You're"—and, "No, sir, you didn't, but"—I said, "Well, you're changin' history 'cause that's all I needed." [05:59:08] So I would go back to Rock Island, Illinois, where the army manufactures—gets the delivery from the manufacturer, and they go through Rock Island, Illinois. And they're blessed by the civilians there, and then they're delivered to Detroit to be assembled and put onto the tank. So the first choke point inside the government is in Rock Island, Illinois. And I go there. My army boss, two-star, said, "Army's still in denial. We don't have a problem." I go to Fort Knox, Kentucky, in the interim before Rock Island, and I give a speech, and I have all these heads goin'—shakin' their heads—all army. I'm the only marine in the room. And a colonel, who's stationed in Germany, who's in the audience, comes up to me and says, "Major, you'll get no one to admit this in the army, but you're on to it, and we don't have the moral courage because it's our careers," unlike in the marine corps 'cause we didn't fire a guy if you didn't qualify in the marine corps, but the army did. He

said, "I wouldn't be a colonel today, but trust me, you're on to somethin'. You'll never get me to admit it publicly. Nobody in this room is gonna admit it. Eventually we'll support you, but you know, our answer to this is the next-generation tank, which won't have that sight." [*SL laughs*] And I said, "Well, we got ten thousand of these things out there waitin' for the Soviets to come across the German plains here, you know. And that's the tank we're gonna have to fight with." Said, "You're never gonna get anybody in the army to admit it." [06:00:39] So I go to Rock Island, Illinois. I've got all the civilians and a two-star army general there. I've got the evidence from the kid. I've got the sight with me that's slop in it. I've got the civilians who are the selection people that write off that it's good. It comes from the manufacturers, which we had two manufacturers at the time. You know both companies, but they're gonna remain nameless. And then it's delivered to Detroit for assembly, final assembly, or installation. And they're all in the room, forty-four people in the room. And I make the presentation, and the general says, "Major, we don't have a problem in the army with this issue." And I said, "Well, sir, I'm not"—and he said, "You've given your brief. It's over. You may have a problem in the marine corps, but the marine corps have been a bunch of blowhards for as long

as I've been in the army, and it's all about the media in the marine corps. I would say that you have an issue of training inside the marine corps, but we don't have a problem here." And I said, "Well, sir, if I prove to you that you do have a problem, will you help me fix it?" And he said, "We don't have a problem. You heard me, Major." [06:01:51] So it was ugly, and I went out and did some things inside the army to prove it. Went back. Same thing. Pretty rude in the meeting with the general this time. "What are you back here for?" And it was all takin' place in a short period of time, and I knew where the corruption was. And the kid sittin' next to me—I'm sayin', "In my view, sir, this is so deep that people are involved—civilians here are proving these devices that—they're takin' money from the manufacturer here. And I'll go so far as to say someone's drivin' a new car here." I didn't know. I just was thinkin' it was—had to be that deep 'cause the numbers were so high, so many thousands of these things. And the guy next to me, a civilian, was—started havin' dry heaves, and he got up and left the room. And the meeting was over, and I went into the bathroom. He was throwin' up in the—and I said, "It's you, isn't it?" And he said, "My Mercedes-Benz is parked in my driveway." And I said, "Will you come clean?" And he said, "You're gonna

have to get me." I said, "You're gonna go to jail. You're gonna go to jail, and do you wanna go to jail 'cause I'm pushin' this all the way?" And said, "Well, I'll do anything to avoid goin' to jail, but"—said, "Well, you gotta come out here now." And he said, "How do I do that?" And I said, "Get a good lawyer, but you gotta come out." Well, then I had threats on my life at that point and I—the FBI was called in. I had to guard my family again. This is the second time within five years that my family's being guarded. My wife was pretty upset about it, saying, "Is this really worth it?" 'Cause I was out there alone and the army, my boss, army two-star boss, he said, "Marty, you really are on your own with this. You're just—we're not gonna go down this path with you." And I said, "Sir, I just need your—to back me up when we discover"—and he said, "Can't even guarantee that. Can't guarantee that." And I said, "Well, sir, I'm gonna do it because I know it's right again, and I've got all the evidence now," and so on and so forth. [06:03:57] But long story—I—we proved that it was right. I—my boss in Detroit, two-star, wonderful guy named Oscar Decker—at the end we repaired all ten thousand. They were all called back in to meet the specs. Tens of millions of dollars. It got to President Carter. He was aware of it. We did it as quietly as we could. And the first seven

hundred that were fixed were marines [*SL laughs*]—marine sights, which was the deal, and the—and my boss said, "What do you want out of it?" And I said, "I don't want anything for it." "We're gonna write you up for a major award." And I said, "An army award? I—sir, I don't—it's not about awards. It's about—I mean—but I would like to go back to Rock Island to have that general assemble all—people in the room that were in there when he said what he said about the marine corps and me and apologize. That's the only thing that I would like." And he said, "We'll make that happen." [06:05:02] Then I went back, and he did. He apologized in front of everybody. In time, you know, the problem was fixed. There was no—and media thing—it wasn't—didn't get blown outta proportion or anything.

And . . .

[06:05:19] SL: Well, it pointed to a very real [*TM coughs*] vulnerability . . .

MS: Oh yeah, for our country . . .

SL: . . . for one thing.

MS: . . . and national security.

SL: So it's a security thing. Yeah.

MS: Yeah, it was a national security issue . . .

SL: Yeah.

MS: . . . in the war, yeah. And in the book, when the author went to—General Decker's still alive—he was still hesitant to say anything and the plausible deniability of saying—I don't know what the words are, but they're—doesn't remember it being that serious, you know, as an issue. But it was—what happened inside of the army was the recognition by the leaders in the armor community of what I had done. They clearly understood it. They didn't get painted with a brush. They didn't get accused of pencil whipping and all the things they'd done for quite a long time, years, because it was quietly handled, and so everybody saved face, and then we got ours fixed, and it became quite a knowledgeable stir inside the—in the marine corps about what had happened with both the engines and the air-induction system and the primary sights. [06:06:31] That—what happened then was I became the subject matter expert about tanks in the marine corps, the use of tanks, the manufacture, the make-up. And when I left Detroit in 1981, I went to Quantico to be a student at Command and Staff College. I was a commander of summer officer candidates. Again, what I had been in the past, having gone through there, but I'm now commanding them as a major. And then I go to our Marine Corps Command and Staff College, where my papers are about

tanks and the employment of 'em and why we need the—not the one we bought just now, but the next generation of tanks, the M1A1 tank, which is exponentially superior to the one we had. [06:07:22] I mean, there's no comparison. Most of it's technical and classified, but they're night-and-day difference. It's a Model A Ford and a Ferrari.

SL: Yeah.

MS: That comparison. And anyway, the commandant at that time in [19]81 was a general by the name of Robert H. Barrow, magnificent leader of the marine corps, a hero in the Korean War. Knocked out, I think the number was thirteen, Soviet tanks, T-34s, by himself with a bazooka-type device. Had no regard for armor whatsoever [*SL laughs*] in the marine corps. He thought that we could do it all with TOW missiles and was very open about it.

SL: Yeah.

MS: The tank was too expensive, too big. "It's not the marine corps. We don't need 'em. That's for the army. We can do this with this missile." And, well anyway, he came to visit, [*SL laughs*] which all commandants do, to address the class one time a year, you know, makin' the circuit and all that. But the—this incident or issue had raised to such a degree that the director of the

school and the commanding general at Quantico wanted me to have an hour alone with the commandant, and I'm a major, to talk about tanks and why we needed an M1A1. They weren't gonna be in the room, and I'm surprised to—even to this day that General Barrow said, "Okay," and he allowed me to talk to him alone after his address. And we went in the back and—again, unheard of. I'm outta my—you know, it just doesn't happen for a major to get an hour with the commandant to talk about something like that. And the reality was that he didn't really care, you know. But whatever—all the stars were aligned cosmically. [06:09:05] And so at the end of my presentation, which was informal yet passionate about why we needed a tank, even though he didn't think so, why we needed the M1A1 tank and why it was going to help us win on the modern battlefield, which was not in his vision, you know, maneuver warfare, 'cause that came with his successor.

SL: Right.

[06:09:28] MS: Successor. I mean, it wasn't part of the marine corps then. But he had a—it was just a classic response that I've given to marine audiences over the years. He was from Louisiana. Southern drawl. I can't do justice to it. And he said, "Major, that decision will not"—they all speak in third person.

They never say "I." "That decision will not be made by your commandant—this commandant. That will be made by a future commandant. Good luck." [*SL laughs*] And that's it. He got up and shook my hand and left. And I looked at him. I said, "Now, sir"—said, "I may see you again," as he turned around, "but it won't be a decision while I'm your commandant."

SL: That's respectful.

MS: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

MS: Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

MS: And it wasn't. It was down the line that . . .

SL: Down the line.

MS: . . . we had it down the line that . . .

SL: Yeah, he knew what he was talkin' about.

MS: Yeah, he knew what he was talkin' about. Yeah.

SL: Yeah.

[06:10:18] MS: Yeah. So anyway, the—back to Pendleton or—I mean, you know, I went to Washington to be on the other end of the tank after school. So I'm the acquirer of the tank. I was the guy in the field buyin' 'em and puttin' 'em, and then I'm the guy running the program from Washington as a lieutenant colonel

soon as I left there. And I'm doing it in Washington and then briefing the tank story to all the leaders of the marine corps over and over, why we need the M1A1. The commandant changes to P. X. Kelley, who was the new commandant. Magnificent guy, again. All these guys were just phenomenal people. Tremendous ability to listen. We had the failed business, remember, in the desert—in the—in tryin' to get our people out of Iran.

SL: Hostages.

[06:11:08] MS: The hostage rescue thing. That failed. We're lookin' at this light-armored vehicle, a wheeled vehicle that could be helicopter transportable in lieu of a tank, and the marine corps' focus is of buying the light-armored vehicle, and that's the guy next to my desk. And I'm the M1A1, and we're tryin' to figure out how to do 'em all. And General Kelley—it's a compart—it's a cooperative agreement between the army and the marine corps on buying LAVs. They're gonna buy the lion's share of 'em. And then while I'm in the middle of all this, we're buyin' 774 was the number—I don't know—but LAVs, and it's still bein' done back in Detroit. That's where it's gonna be done. But General Decker, from my time there, calls me up and says, "I hate to be the messenger but I—I'm not gonna tell the army chief of staff, but I

know that you can tell General Kelley, but the army's gonna bail on this, and we're not gonna buy the vehicle, and we're gonna leave you hangin' out there buyin' these LAVs, and you gotta let your boss know." And I said, "The chief of staff of the army isn't gonna have the courtesy to tell him?" And we were goin' through the budget decision right at that point. [06:12:24] And he said, "No, I'm the messenger, and it's to you 'cause you're the guy."

SL: You can get it.

MS: "You can get the—to the message." I said, "Boy, this is not gonna go over well. [*SL laughs*] This is a bad thing." And he said, "It really is, Marty. I'm embarrassed for the army, but we're bailin' on you." So you know, I don't know what the numbers were. They were gonna buy 5,000, and we're buyin' 700. Or they're buyin' 10,000, and we're buyin' 700. So if we're the only ones buyin', just think of what the unit . . .

SL: Cost.

MS: . . . cost is gonna be.

SL: Yeah.

MS: It's just gonna go . . .

SL: Sure.

[06:12:53] MS: . . . through the roof and all of the tactics and

everything, the training and everything—it's a cooperative arrangement with 'em, and it's ugly. And so I called—I told my boss, which was—who was a one-star, who immediately walked me to a three-star. The one-star's now deceased. The three-star just passed away but they—this was their moment, sayin', "We'll go with you, but you're doin' all the talkin' because [*SL laughs*] you're the one that talked to the general." And wonderful experiences, again, way above my pay grade, if you will. But my three-star said, "Why don't—we'll call the commandant right now, and don't tell him what you need to tell him, but I'm gonna tell him that you need to come over to see him, and he needs to take about fifteen minutes with you. You don't wanna tell him this on the phone, Marty. Tell him face to face." [06:13:40] So he called the commandant, and I knew the commandant, and he said, "Lieutenant Colonel Steele's here. He needs—he has some information, sir, that I really do believe you need to see him, and I can get him over there in the next ten minutes. Can you block your schedule just to have him come in to talk to you?" And he paused on the phone, you know. He was on a squawk box, and he said, "Really, Hal?" And he said, "Yes, sir. Really." So General Kelley, God love him, he said, "Okay. Marty?" And I said, "I'll be there in ten minutes,

sir." And so I went up, and they're waitin' for me, and I walked in. [06:14:15] And I said, "Sir, I don't know where to begin, but I'll go there to the end. I just got a call from my former boss at the tank automotive command that the chief of staff has not told you yet, but the army's gonna bail on the program, and they're gonna do it tomorrow," when the final decision was bein' made. And he said, "Ah, no way." And I said, "Sir, this is it. This is that noncall that we all dread, but trust me. He wouldn't've called me if it's not gonna happen." He said, "They wouldn't do it. He wouldn't do it." And I said, "Sir, I—please. We've really gotta figure out what we're gonna do. I mean, I'm gonna put a team together about how we're gonna deal with all this because it's really gonna impact"—he said, "I just can't believe what happened." I said, "Well, I mean, you can preempt it and call him now if you want to, but he'll know that someone's told you, and he'll trace it back, and I mean, it's gonna put my guy in a box—who told me. But this is gonna happen, sir." So you were talkin' earlier—politics, diplomacy, highest levels—that—I mean, way bel—you know, I'm just too young to be involved in all this kinda stuff. But sure enough, he told him the next day.

SL: Good.

TM: Great. Change tape. [*Clears throat*]

SL: New tape.

[06:15:27 End of interview]

[Transcribed and edited by Pryor Center staff]