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Headquarters - Building 1, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina  
Interviewer: L.J. Kimball  
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L. J. Kimball: Okay Joe, where were you born?

Sgt. Rameriz: I was born in Stockton, California, December 1950.

L. J. Kimball: What date?

Sgt. Rameriz: December the 20th, Christmas baby.

L. J. Kimball: Which means that you never get as many presents as everybody else gets.

Sgt. Rameriz: That's right, I was always an underprivileged child.

L. J. Kimball: Tell me about your family.

Sgt. Rameriz: Well, I am the oldest of five. Three brothers and a sister. Born and raised in Stockton, CA. Dad was a farmer and myself and the boys helped farm during our younger years until I was old enough to graduate from high school. I spent a year in college and then on to the Marine Corps.

L. J. Kimball: What was family life like when you were growing up. Was it pretty hard for you or fairly comfortable? Was your father a disciplinarian?

Sgt. Rameriz: Family life was pretty tough. Father was a WWII Veteran who had some war injuries and so the only job that he could take was as a cab driver so we did not have much money. The money that we earned was from working in the fields with my father and whatever farming he could do and then he paid us whatever we could market.

L. J. Kimball: You spent your childhood in Stockton?

Sgt. Rameriz: Yes.

L. J. Kimball: You went to school there?

Sgt. Rameriz: Right.

L. J. Kimball: He would augment the family by working in the fields to sort of make ends meet.

Sgt. Rameriz: Right.

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L. J. Kimball: Which high school did you go to?

Sgt. Rameriz: Franklin City High School.

L. J. Kimball: When did you enlist in the Marine Corps?

Sgt. Rameriz: In 1968.

L. J. Kimball: Was that right after graduation from high school?

Sgt. Rameriz: Well no, about six months later I started the local junior college.

L. J. Kimball: And you went from the junior college to the Marine Corps.

Sgt. Rameriz: Yes that's right.

L. J. Kimball: What motivated you to join the Marine Corps?

Sgt. Rameriz: I was not mature enough to finish college, the grades were not what they should have been and I was wasting time and money, and I wanted to get out and see the world before I settled down. Everybody in my neighborhood either joined the Marine Corps or you did not join anything. It was a Marine Corps town period.

L. J. Kimball: Okay and you put your name on the dotted line and they sent you to where?

Sgt. Rameriz: Boot Camp in San Diego.

L. J. Kimball: San Diego, a Hollywood Marine?

Sgt. Rameriz: That's right.

L. J. Kimball: How long was Boot Camp?

Sgt. Rameriz: 12 weeks then.

L. J. Kimball: This was in 1968?

Sgt. Rameriz: Right.

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L. J. Kimball: After the Boot Camp experience, did you decide that you made a mistake or that was what you really expected.

Sgt. Rameriz: Well, I remember that I did not know much about the Marine Corps other than I wanted to be a Marine. I remember being bussed down to San Diego, standing on the yellow footprints and in my first couple of days there thinking that I had made the biggest mistake of my life because I thought that it was going to be like it was for the next four years, because that is what I had enlisted for. I had no idea about anything, so I thought that the way that it was in Boot Camp was the way that it was going to be all the time. In fact, I remember the first time, they took us down to a little exchange to buy stamps and they gave us a credit for \$50 and I asked "where did that money come from?" and they informed me that we got paid. I did not know that we got paid as a Marine and I did not care. It wasn't much back then, it was a couple of hundred dollars a month but to me it was better than nothing.

L. J. Kimball: Better than your previous experience.

Sgt. Rameriz: Right. Be a Marine and get paid too, I couldn't believe it.

L. J. Kimball: So you graduated from Boot Camp in 1968. Did you have any choice about your occupational specialty?

Sgt. Rameriz: No. Towards the end of Boot Camp, I was informed that I was going to be an infantryman and I was also informed that on graduation from Boot Camp, I was not going to get any leave and sent straight to Camp Pendleton for infantry training. I would go through what then was called Staging Battalion and I might get some leave after that before I was shipped to Vietnam and this basically what happened.

L. J. Kimball: What was Staging Battalion?

Sgt. Rameriz: Staging Battalion was 6 weeks of just final preparation before shipment to Vietnam. It was shots, wills, some additional advanced infantry training. It was just a final wrap-up before you launched.

L. J. Kimball: Now from the Staging Battalion, did the entire battalion deploy or did you deploy as individual replacements?

Sgt. Rameriz: No we deployed as individual replacements.

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L. J. Kimball: And you did not know who you were going to join until you got there.

Sgt. Rameriz: Had no idea.

L. J. Kimball: Who did you join?

Sgt. Rameriz: Well, I did not join anybody. I go into Okinawa and was sent on a ship that was floating in Tonkin Gulf and ended up floating out there for an amphibious assault that never took place. We were out there for about 75 days, went back to Okinawa for some more training and then floated again and I spent my entire year that I was supposed to be in Vietnam, going back and forth between Okinawa and the Tonkin Gulf for an amphibious raid that never happened.

L. J. Kimball: You were not assigned to any particular battalion during this period?

Sgt. Rameriz: I was but I can't remember which one it was.

L. J. Kimball: Third Marine Division though?

Sgt. Rameriz: Oh yeah. One of the most frustrating times of my life.

L. J. Kimball: I can imagine. So you went back to the west coast from Okinawa.

Sgt. Rameriz: Right. I went back to Camp Pendleton. I was sent back to the same infantry school I graduated from a year ago. I was a Corporal then as an instructor in the O311 MOS [Infantry].

L. J. Kimball: What year was this that you went back to Pendleton.

Sgt. Rameriz: This was in the early 70's, February of 1970 I believe it was.

L. J. Kimball: How long did you stay at Pendleton?

Sgt. Rameriz: Two years as an O311 Instructor. Then I went from there, I got a set of orders to San Diego.

L. J. Kimball: In 1973?

Sgt. Rameriz: In 1972.

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L. J. Kimball: In 1972 you went to San Diego.

Sgt. Rameriz: As a drill instructor.

L. J. Kimball: Okay.

Sgt. Rameriz: I spent three years as a drill instructor, left there in 1975.

L. J. Kimball: Now, when you went to San Diego, did you have to go through DI School before they let you work.

Sgt. Rameriz: Yes.

L. J. Kimball: Okay, and when you left there were you still a Corporal.

Sgt. Rameriz: No, when I graduated from DI School I was a Sergeant. Anybody that graduated from DI School back then was meritoriously promoted to Sergeant. So I got there as a Sergeant. After my first year, I was meritoriously promoted to staff sergeant as a drill instructor. I spent two more years there and then was transferred back to Camp Pendleton as the Company Gunnery Sergeant of Alpha Company, First Battalion, Fifth Marines.

L. J. Kimball: Okay and what year was this?

Sgt. Rameriz: 1975.

L. J. Kimball: You are now Alpha 1/5 as the company gunny.

Sgt. Rameriz: Yes. I was promoted that year to gunnery Sergeant and spent another two years with Alpha 1/5 and then was sent to Okinawa to Alpha 1/4.

L. J. Kimball: And this was when in 1977?

Sgt. Rameriz: Yes in 1977.

L. J. Kimball: All-right. You are still a Gunnery Sergeant?

Sgt. Rameriz: Yes, still a Gunnery Sergeant. I spent three years in Okinawa, sorry I spent a year in Okinawa and then got orders to recruiting duty. I reported to recruiting school back in San Diego.

L. J. Kimball: What year was that?

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Sgt. Rameriz: That was in 1978, as soon as I finished the one year tour in Okinawa. Then I went through Recruiter School and was assigned as a recruiter in Fort Worth Texas. I remained on recruiting duty from 1978 until 1989.

L. J. Kimball: Eleven years? All in Fort Worth area?

Sgt. Rameriz: Fort Worth, Dallas and New Orleans. I started out as a recruiter, was promoted to a regional NCOIC and then I was sent to New Orleans, Louisiana with the 8th District Headquarters as the NCOIC of the contact team. The contact team was a traveling team of experienced recruiters who helped other recruiting stations.

L. J. Kimball: When did Mrs. Rameriz come along?

Sgt. Rameriz: In 1982.

L. J. Kimball: Is that when you were married or when you met her?

Sgt. Rameriz: I met her a year before that in 1981 while I was still on recruiting duty. I married her a year later and had our first son a year later and our second son a year after that and that has been it.

L. J. Kimball: Two sons and no daughters?

Sgt. Rameriz: No daughters.

L. J. Kimball: Is it unusual to stay on recruiting duty for 11 years?

Sgt. Rameriz: Back then it wasn't. Well, back then if you were successful, it was very difficult to leave recruiting duty. They called it the Career Recruiting Program for those selected Marines who were having a great deal of success, they were retained. In some cases, it did not matter if you wanted to be retained or not. In my case I didn't but I could not get orders any place else so I stayed there.

L. J. Kimball: Did you get a different MOS?

Sgt. Rameriz: Yes, after you had been there three years, you picked up a secondary 8412 [Pronounced Eighty-Four Twelve] MOS.

L. J. Kimball: And your primary was still 0369 [Pronounced: Oh Three Sixty-Nine]?

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Sgt. Rameriz: Yes still 0369.

L. J. Kimball: And you are still a Gunnery Sergeant?

Sgt. Rameriz: Well, in 1982 or 1983 I was promoted to Master Sergeant and then in 1986, three years later I was promoted to Master Gunnery Sergeant.

L. J. Kimball: Did you have a choice or did you have an interest in becoming a First Sergeant or Sergeant Major?

Sgt. Rameriz: Well once you are on recruiting duty you are going to be a Master Sergeant, you are going to be a Master Gunnery Sergeant. You do not have a choice any longer and that's really the driving reason why I did not want to stay on recruiting duty because I had always wanted to be a Sergeant Major but I was kind of caught between a hard place and a rock in that I was good in recruiting so I could not leave it and I had too much professional pride to not do well so it was a nasty circle that I was in and once caught in it, I was going to be a Master Gunnery Sergeant.

L. J. Kimball: I have this vague recollection, I don't know if they were talking about you or somebody else about some wild war experience in Vietnam where you were in a patrol and everybody else got killed, was that you?

Sgt. Rameriz: No.

L. J. Kimball: Because I was thinking, the first time you were deployed back to Okinawa and the second time the war was over so it must have been somebody else they were talking about. And then, what was it in 1988 that you got orders for Lejeune?

Sgt. Rameriz: Yes. I got orders late in 1988, reported in April 1989 as a Master Gunnery Sergeant. I was assigned to, well let me back up. Before I got those orders, I talked to my monitor and he told me that I was going back to Okinawa again and I told him that I was getting ready to retire and I would rather retire someplace else rather than Okinawa and he said that my choice was either Okinawa or Camp Lejeune. Having never been to Camp Lejeune, I chose Camp Lejeune because at least it was in the United States. So I accepted those orders and reported in 1989, was sent to base as the Operations Chief for then Training and Operations I guess it was and timing is everything. I arrived at the time when there was a Colonel Carroll who was the Chief of Staff who was reorganizing all the training department to try to create more continuity



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for training facility development and so I was made the Operations Chief of the Training Resource Management Division which is a division whose sole purpose in life is to maintain all the training facilities so that trainers could satisfy individual and collective training standards.

L. J. Kimball: Okay, so you were the Op's Chief for TRMD and did you remain there until you were retired?

Sgt. Rameriz: Yes. I retired in 1991, went back out to Texas where I spent a lot of time recruiting and made a lot of contacts, set up a very nice job, took that job and that is why I retired right at 20. In the meantime though, TRMD was being primarily civilianized because they needed continuity to link up with the long-term fiscal budgets and just before I retired I applied for one of the positions but still went to Texas to take the other job. While in Texas, I had been there three months and I got a call that I had been selected for the job at Camp Lejeune that I had interviewed for. At that time though I turned it down because I was happy with what I was doing in Texas.

L. J. Kimball: I ran your selection board. I believe we did most of our contact by telephone.

Sgt. Rameriz: Right. You telephone interviewed me, John Charles called me a month or so later and told me that I had been selected and I told him that I appreciated it but that I was ingrained here, etc. Well, shortly after that, the job I had in Texas I received a promotion and this took me into a situation where I was now having to travel all the time. I was made the Regional Director of the Southeast Region of ITT so I had from Florida to Texas. The only way I could do the job was to be on an airplane Monday through Friday, literally. My wife and kids having just spent 20 years of that type of business revolted on me. So, I called John Charles back, this was I guess two months after I had turned the job down and asked him if they had filled it yet and luckily they had not. I asked if the offer was still open, it was, I accepted the job and reported here in 1991.

L. J. Kimball: I don't recall, you might have already mentioned this, but what job was it?

Sgt. Rameriz: It was as the GS 11 Range Facilities Manager. So I reported in 1991 and assumed that position. I had that position until 1995 at which time I was promoted to GS 12 and the Deputy Director of Training Resource Management Division. Then, last year, they civilianized the Directors position from a Lieutenant Colonel's Billet to a GS 13 Billet and I competed

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for, was accepted and promoted to it. That takes us pretty much up to date right now.

L. J. Kimball: Where do you live around here?

Sgt. Rameriz: I live out in Brynn Marr, in Jacksonville.

L. J. Kimball: Well, looking back on over your experience in your 20 years as a Marine, do you classify yourself a Hispanic?

Sgt. Rameriz: Yes.

L. J. Kimball: Did you experience any discrimination do you think due to the fact that you were Hispanic during your career?

Sgt. Rameriz: No.

L. J. Kimball: You never saw it at all?

Sgt. Rameriz: No.

L. J. Kimball: During your career, did you come to any conclusions or develop any perceptions with regards to black Marines, did you see them any differently or did other people see them any differently than any other Marine, or did you observe some prejudice.

Sgt. Rameriz: Well I occasionally would see a young Marine, who because of prejudices that he/she was raised with had some prejudice towards blacks, but they were young Marines and for the most part kept it to themselves. I cannot recall ever seeing a Staff NCO or officer who displayed any prejudice and I certainly did not have any because I was raised with a mixture of whites, Mexicans and blacks. I can tell you that in my earlier years in the Marine Corps in the early 70's, I saw a lot of racial issues and a lot of racial unrest but I do not know if I would classify open prejudice. There was just a lot of what we used to refer to as black cliques who were black Marines who would form groups and isolate themselves which occasionally caused problems because we could not get them to form the cohesive team that we always wanted.

L. J. Kimball: You were probably aware during this period in the late 60's and early 70's that there was a lot of racial unrest at Camp Lejeune, did you experience anything like that in the West Coast?

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Sgt. Rameriz: I was in Okinawa during that time and saw that it was terrible in Okinawa. I was at Camp Hansen with Fourth Marines and a little town outside of Hansen was what we called "kinville" and we actively had to patrol that area at night just to protect the Marines from themselves because of some of the racial unrest that was going on.

L. J. Kimball: Was this in 1971 or 1972 that you were in Okinawa.

Sgt. Rameriz: Both.

L. J. Kimball: I was up at Schwab with the Ninth Marines at that time.

Sgt. Rameriz: Is that right?

L. J. Kimball: I had a company up there.

Sgt. Rameriz: You can remember it was pretty bad.

L. J. Kimball: It was a terrible period and I have talked to a lot of my contemporaries and Marines who were in at that time. It was just so difficult to put up with that situation that they got out and the Marine Corps lost some very quality people because they just did not want to deal with the lack of support in being able to handle the racial situations as they developed.

Sgt. Rameriz: Well, I did not even consider getting out because the Marine Corps at that time was the only thing that I had, but it certainly was frustrating. One of the frustrating things was attempting to find other Staff NCO's or Senior NCO's who would still act at Senior Staff NCO's and NCO's and would not cower down from some of the cliques that were being formed. That is what we had, we had cliques. I mean, I remember my Marines standing in the line to eat chow and have to be there an extra 30 minutes while Marines went through these rituals of handshakes and knuckle knocking. I remember one time, I had enough of it and I walked into the middle of the line and I said "that's enough, stop, turn around, grab your trays and get in line." I probably had four black Marines circle me, but nothing came of it and nothing happened. I guess they were just wondering what I would do and they backed down and got in line.

L. J. Kimball: Alright. You are back here now in the late 80's, early 90's and the Marine Corps decides that there is an insufficiency in the training ranges at Camp Lejeune and it eventually results in the acquisition of GSRA [Greater Sandy

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Run Area]. Can you start at the beginning and give me a rundown of that acquisition?

Sgt. Rameriz: Well, it started with the Marine Corps hiring a BDM Corporation to conduct a land and training requirement study.

L. J. Kimball: BDM? What is that?

Sgt. Rameriz: I am not sure what it is.

L. J. Kimball: It is a civilian firm?

Sgt. Rameriz: It is a civilian firm, yes. This was in 1988 just before I had arrived and the mission of the study was to take a look at the all the training facilities at Camp Lejeune to determine the suitability for satisfying individual and collective training standards. First time it had been done. The study was completed in 1989 and published in early 1990 and the bottom line finding of the study was that the base needed 10 additional live fire ranges just to meet the minimum documented training standards and that is when I arrived and my tasking was to identify where these ranges would go. There was no place aboard the base that could accept that much additional live fire range territory, so we began looking, there was a Lieutenant Colonel Bruce Reed here at the same time and we began looking for additional turf and found the Greater Sandy Run Area to our immediate left and 90% was conveniently owned by the International Paper Company. So, we initiated an acquisition. Now most of the legal aspects of the acquisition were handled at Headquarters Marine Corps. We here were talking to some of the land owners who would be effected and with the hired environmental assessment contractors.

L. J. Kimball: Just briefly talking about the Paper Company, was this is a friendly takeover or did you have to condemn the property to get it.

Sgt. Rameriz: The International Paper Company was a friendly takeover.

L. J. Kimball: Okay, continue.

Sgt. Rameriz: They had been planning Plantation Pine for years and because of the soil types, it just was not working for them.

L. J. Kimball: Plantation, is that a Loblolly?

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Sgt. Rameriz: Right.

L. J. Kimball: Continue with the locals and the other 10% of the acquisition.

Sgt. Rameriz: Well, the locals were around the identified borders of the area and I believe there were 65 families, if I remember right, that we needed to negotiate with and purchase their property to complete the acquisition. So, Bruce Reed handled primarily the discussion with the families. Along with real estate agents from the Atlantic Division Engineers who had the lead on the real estate issues. Then, myself and a couple of others worked all of the environmental issues on the internal portion of the properties.

L. J. Kimball: Environmental Impact Statements, that sort of thing?

Sgt. Rameriz: Right. The effects of Military training to that pristine . . .

L. J. Kimball: Wasn't EMD [Department of Environmental Management] in existence and wasn't that their function to write environmental impact statements as opposed to an operations function?

Sgt. Rameriz: EMD at that point in time was a very small nucleus of what it is today. There were maybe 10-15 people total to write an environmental assessment of a purchase of an acquisition that large was way beyond their capabilities. So, Headquarters Marine Corps hired a contractor to conduct the environmental assessment and then we were assigned as consultants and what we were consulting with them on was primarily the military training that would take place. They hired other consultants that were environmentalists who would then assess the impacts to whatever species would be effected.

L. J. Kimball: There is another story maybe you can clarify, that the Marine Corps was spending millions of dollars a year sending the 10th Marines to Ft. Bragg to fire. Now, was one of the rationales to try to keep the 10th Marines at home to fire and save the transportation cost back and forth and because the Red Cockaded woodpecker had raised its ugly head in the local firing areas.

Sgt. Rameriz: Well, the Red Cockaded woodpecker is saturated throughout Camp Lejeune proper, it does not exist in the Greater Sandy Run area. It wasn't so much the 10th Marines that would save training dollars as it would be the Second Tank Battalion and the 2nd LAR [Light Armored Reconnaissance] Battalion. The tankers were the ones that were having to spend huge amounts of money to travel Fort Knox and Fort Benning for training.

L. J. Kimball: So that was a definite consideration, being able to keep the units at home to train so they would not have to send them somewhere else.

Sgt. Rameriz: Absolutely. That was cost justification. When we did the cost assessments and analysis, it was the dollar saved by training at home that justified purchase.

L. J. Kimball: Let's talk briefly about the local citizens that had to be displaced. Did you eventually get them a price that made them happy or once again did the Government have to seize their property?

Sgt. Rameriz: What was negotiated with each family was, we offered an FHA appraisal plus 10% plus their moving cost, 80% of the families took that and ran. The other 20%, half of that we eventually negotiated a little higher purchase price and they accepted and left. Then we had the last 10% who were not going to move regardless of money offered and those properties had to be condemned through court actions. There were a couple that we ended up backing off of a purchase because there was so much family history ingrained into the area, or there were a couple of properties that we backed off of because of studying their properties as part of a purchase analysis, we learned that there was some sort of environmental contamination. As an example, one of them was an old Texaco station and we found that the area was just saturated with petroleum products that were just dumped on the ground I guess from oil changes and/or whatever. So we informed that property that we were going to out-parcel them.

L. J. Kimball: Which is what?

Sgt. Rameriz: Out-parcel is that they can stay where they are at and we would move our boundary just inside of their property.

L. J. Kimball: Did it get down to the point where you had to drag anybody off of their property or did they eventually leave before the law stepped in?

Sgt. Rameriz: We never had a situation where we actually had to bring the law enforcement officers out to remove a homeowner. We had to inform that that was the next step on a couple of occasions, but it never got that far.

L. J. Kimball: Did you meet any significant community resistance in that area to the development of a range there?

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Sgt. Rameriz: Not initially. In fact, my view of the public reaction in that area was positive because of the potential for construction dollars and labor dollars that would come in. It wasn't until we had completed the development now the live fire ranges are active, that the community reaction changed somewhat because of the noise issues. The noise issues that we had now prior to us opening the facilities two years ago, this was a nice quiet area, a small little community of Verona Loop who could hear the noises of Camp Lejeune but barely on a certain night when the stars were shining, etc. But one morning they woke up and they hear tanks firing just a couple of thousand meters down the road and it was a rude awakening for many of them and we received initially a rash of complaints and claims of structural damage.

[Phone rings.]

L. J. Kimball: Tape One, Side Two. Okay, as a result of their disenchantment with finding that the live fire ranges actually had live fire on them, what actions did the communities take?

Sgt. Rameriz: Well a handful of citizens, I'd say 5 families, were so disturbed that they contacted the Onslow County Commissioner, a gentleman by the name of Tony Padgett who in turn spoke with General [Ray] Smith, then the Base Commanding General, who in turn contacted our Division, TRMD and basically told us to look into it and determine the validity. We hired civilian contractors who had expertise in noise monitoring and brought them to Camp Lejeune to monitor with their noise meters the tank firing and qualifications to get an actual feel for what noise levels these families were actually receiving and if we were in fact causing structural damage because it was our intent that if we were we would cease fire. We would change the weapons allowances. However, when the noise data came back it indicated that the noise levels were not high enough to cause the type of damage that was being presented to us. We informed the citizens of that and in a nutshell stopped reacting to the calls. Within a week, the calls went from 20-25 a week to 1 a week within a week of our no longer reacting to their complaints. The calls, like I said, reduced from 20-25 a week to 1 week and we average now about 1 call every other week. We have purchased noise monitors, hand-held noise monitors ourselves so that we do not have to bring contractors in and whenever we do get a complaint, we have contractors and Marines on site in the Greater Sandy Run where I go out and take a noise level reading. There are certain thresholds that we go by and if the sounds exceed a certain threshold we will actually cease fire but we have not found that case yet.

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L. J. Kimball: How many acres were acquired in the end in GSRA?

Sgt. Rameriz: 41,100 acres. Increased the bases property up to 152,000 total.

L. J. Kimball: When was all this land finally acquired?

Sgt. Rameriz: Well we started the acquisition process in 2/91 when the MilCon [Military Construction] dollars were approved and completed the process in 10/92 and when I say completed the process, it had actually been through the Condemnation Court and had dealt with the 10% reluctant to leave.

L. J. Kimball: The firing area out there, were the ranges open incrementally or at one time the whole area was open?

Sgt. Rameriz: No they were open incrementally and that is because they were in construction incrementally. We received and have been receiving amounts of money each year for a development phase. So the development of Greater Sandy Run began in 1994 and won't be completed until 2005.

L. J. Kimball: So the simpler ranges were open sooner, or did you start with the most complex range.

Sgt. Rameriz: We started with the most complex range, we call it the Multipurpose Range Complex. It was a 10½-million-dollar range by itself and we built it because our greatest training deficiency is tank infantry in a live fire and maneuver scenario and because that was our greatest deficiency. So, that is the one we chose to construct first.

L. J. Kimball: And that was the first one opened?

Sgt. Rameriz: Right.

L. J. Kimball: And when was that opened?

Sgt. Rameriz: Just over a year ago so I would say 8/97 so it has been a little bit longer than that.

L. J. Kimball: Now did this require an enhancement of the T/O [Table of Organization] for TRMD ranges?

Sgt. Rameriz: It required it but we never received it.



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L. J. Kimball: How could you possibly operate all those complex ranges without personnel augmentation?

Sgt. Rameriz: We hired contractors. We asked for manpower assuming initially that we would assume all the maintenance and operator responsibilities, so we put together a requirements list assuming that we would operate and maintain with either Marines or Civil Service. We were going nowhere fast in getting any allocation. With the reductions that were going on, we were asking for increases but they just did not match up. However, there was an understanding even at Headquarters Marine Corps that there was still additional personnel requirements to operate and maintain these ranges but instead of people we received money to hire contractors and that is in fact how we operate the ranges now. If you were to go to the SR-10 range, the largest ones that we have that we opened, as I said, in 1987, you would see Marines training and shooting, but up in the towers controlling all of the target systems are contracted civilians.

L. J. Kimball: Have you had any problems with civilians running the ranges open?

Sgt. Rameriz: No, the civilians that we hired were all former Marines.

L. J. Kimball: The acquisition of the 41,000 acres at GSRA, that made Camp Lejeune bigger than Camp Pendleton didn't it?

Sgt. Rameriz: By a few acres, yes.

L. J. Kimball: I guess the only Marine installation that is larger than Camp Lejeune is now probably Twenty-Nine Palms.

Sgt. Rameriz: Right.

L. J. Kimball: That makes us bigger than Fort Bragg too doesn't it?

Sgt. Rameriz: No Bragg still has about 10,000 acres on us.

L. J. Kimball: Is that because they include Camp McCall which is an outlying facility?

Sgt. Rameriz: Right.

L. J. Kimball: Looking back over your career with the Marine Corps and of course your right in the middle of the Marine Corps now also, working here, do you have any observations about the quality of the Marines, has it changed, improved?

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Sgt. Rameriz: Oh absolutely. From the time I came into the Marine Corps, there was a wide variety of quality of Marines. You had some really good Marines and you had some really bad Marines. Probably a lot of folks who should not have been allowed in the Marine Corps. But then the situation was different as well. When I was assigned to recruiting duty, I can tell you definitely that initially in the late 70's the Marine Corps was one of the easier branches of the services to join. It was not hard. Then, halfway through my tour about four years later we noticed that the criteria began to tighten up to a point that when I left the Marine recruiting duty, the Marine Corps was by far the most difficult branch of the service to qualify for. No comparison.

L.J. Kimball: In what sense was it the most difficult?

Sgt. Rameriz: Highest test scores on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery. As an example, the other services required an aptitude test score of 31 and I know that does not sound high but when you make all the comparisons, the Marine Corps required 50. The other services required a GT score of 90. The Marine Corps required 110. The other services permitted some police record. The Marine Corps would allow nothing more than a traffic violation. The other services permitted some drug usage. The Marine Corps permitted none, no tolerance. So as a recruiter it was tough and I had a lot of other recruiters from other services standing at my door to take those that we could not accept. A lot of services made livings off of the Marine Corps and then when I left recruiting duty and came back to a Marine Corps base, I began to see the fruits of those labors because the Marines, the young Marines that I saw were just no way near what I saw in the early 70's. I mean, the Marines now days are just good, qualified, young men. They're intelligent.

L. J. Kimball: How about physically? Are they better physically than in years past?

Sgt. Rameriz: I don't think there is much difference physically.

L. J. Kimball: You look back upon Guadalcanal, Pelelieu, Iwo Jima, and just the toughness that it took to survive and you wonder if today's Marines have that toughness even though they are probably smarter and bigger and on a PFT they might score better, but I just wonder if there is the toughness there.

Sgt. Rameriz: They are mentally as tough. I have often wondered that myself. I remember young Marines that were my peers when I came into the Marine Corps may not have been the most intelligent but you just knew instinctively that in a combat environment that you wanted him covering your back. In today's

Marine Corps where you have bigger, better, smarter, I assume that you probably have the same quality young men but they, I don't know.

L. J. Kimball: Have you seen anything that the Marine Corps has lost since you have been with the Corps? For example, do you feel that the Marines have the same esprit and unit cohesion that they had in the past?

Sgt. Rameriz: I think more so from what I have seen. I think that because, well, when I came in the Marine Corps you had your operating unit and then you had another organization within your organization to keep all of your problem children and those problem Marines sometimes caused so many problems that it was disruptive to the whole organization. I do not see that anymore. So, I would say that to me, the teamwork is better than what I saw when I came in.

L. J. Kimball: How about the quality of the Staff NCO over the years?

Sgt. Rameriz: Well, the cycle that I saw when I first came in, the quality of the Staff NCO's was outstanding. Then, post-Vietnam it was absolutely terrible. I had Staff NCO peers that I was embarrassed by. I really can't tell you what happened other than it was post-Vietnam and a lot of good Marines either became officers or left because they were frustrated. Then, in the late mid-80's I guess, I began to see the Staff NCO ranks recover to a point now I think that the Staff NCO ranks are outstanding.

L. J. Kimball: Were you around and did you have any feelings from when we went from the open squad bay to the motel-type barracks? Did you think that was a good idea?

Sgt. Rameriz: You mean from the squad base to the individual rooms?

L. J. Kimball: Right.

Sgt. Rameriz: No I don't. I think the squad bay was the better idea because you could build unit cohesiveness, you could build teamwork and trust.

L. J. Kimball: How do you feel about women Marines.

Sgt. Rameriz: I don't think they have a place in the Marine Corps.

L. J. Kimball: What is your dealing with women Marines that you find them in your estimation deficient as Marines as a general statement?

Sgt. Rameriz: As a Marine yes. Did they have the skills to work some of the occupational fields that were reserved for women? Sure they did. Did they have the mental toughness? No. Did they have the mental discipline? No. That is where we were lacking and I am talking about women overall. There is always exceptions to the rule and I have seen some women Marines that were literally outstanding, but for the most part, in my opinion they are a problem.

L. J. Kimball: This is an opinion that you hold now.

Sgt. Rameriz: Yes, it has not changed.

L. J. Kimball: As a sponsor of a dependent, how have you found the quality of life and the care and keeping of dependents in the Marine Corps to be? Is it satisfactory in your estimation?

Sgt. Rameriz: For the most part, yes.

L. J. Kimball: Have you had any problems, once again, having dependents where you felt that the Marine Corps was not providing the support that you thought they should for your dependents and for yourself as a family person?

Sgt. Rameriz: No, I have been lucky I guess. I have not had any occasions like that. I always felt that the Marine Corps took care of my family just about as well as it took care of me.

L. J. Kimball: Do you have any memorabilia from your early years as a Marine, young Private Rameriz, that sort of thing, standing on the drill field, your first tour as a DI, etc.?

Sgt. Rameriz: I am sure that I do up in my attic. I have it boxed because I do not spend much time going through it.

L. J. Kimball: I know you have a 3 o'clock appointment, so just briefly. When I knew T&O it was training and operations with TRMD and TSD. Now you are TE&O and you have acquired education. What else does that entail, is that dependent schools?

Sgt. Rameriz: No. The education side of training and operations is that we now have responsibilities for distance learning.

L. J. Kimball: Distance learning, which is?

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Sgt. Rameriz: Right. Distance learning is a bank of learning resource centers which is a facility where we have 20 computers linked to the Internet and Marines go in there now and knock out MCI [Marine Corps Institute] courses, Staff NCO Extension courses, spend time on the computer terminal with a direct link to MCI. As well as other courses that are tied into the local college campuses.

L. J. Kimball: That is through computers that you are talking about?

Sgt. Rameriz: Right.

L. J. Kimball: Okay. How about John Waters, is he still around?

Sgt. Rameriz: John Waters is still here. He has formal education. He is now under the MWR [Department of Morale, Welfare, and Recreation] Organization and they still have off duty education.

L. J. Kimball: So is there any other component other than distant training underneath the "E" here?

Sgt. Rameriz: Right. The other part of the "E" is that we handle all of the civilian training for the base and we are the liaison to the formal schools when the Commanding General dons his Formal Schools hat. So, those are the three tiers of education—distance learning, civilian education and liaison support of formal schools.

L. J. Kimball: Do we still have TQL [Total Quality Leadership]?

Sgt. Rameriz: No. Well, we still have TQL but in other forms but I could not tell you off the top of my head what they are called now.

L. J. Kimball: Is the Director of Education, is he/she on the same level as you in TRMD and TSD.

Sgt. Rameriz: What do you mean on the same level?

L. J. Kimball: You are the Director of TRMD. Is the Director of Education in TE&O also. . .

Sgt. Rameriz: I am the same person.

L. J. Kimball: You are the "E" also?

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Sgt. Rameriz: Right.

L. J. Kimball: So education is kind of a subset of TRMD.

Sgt. Rameriz: Right.

L. J. Kimball: Is there still a TSD?

Sgt. Rameriz: Yes.

L. J. Kimball: And is that civilianized also?

Sgt. Rameriz: No, that is still headed up by a Lieutenant Colonel and has a Deputy GS-13.

L. J. Kimball: And the assistant Chief of Staff for TE&O, what is his name?

Sgt. Rameriz: The Assistant?

L. J. Kimball: Yes.

Sgt. Rameriz: That is Col. Essick, Bob Essick.

L. J. Kimball: The Deputy then, who took John Charles's place.

Sgt. Rameriz: Right. That is a GS-14 Renee Hawthorne.

L. J. Kimball: Well, I think that you pretty much covered everything that I wanted to ask you Joe. Any final observations about the Marine Corps and your perception over the years?

Sgt. Rameriz: No not really.

L. J. Kimball: Do you think that we are going to be around for a while?

Sgt. Rameriz: We have got to be. This is the only organization that you can really rely on.

L. J. Kimball: Any closing impressions on Camp Lejeune as a Marine Corps facility? Is it a good place to be?

Sgt. Rameriz: Having never been to Camp Lejeune until my first tour in 1988 or 1989, I can tell you that I came out here reluctantly. But having been here now and having

been to Camp Pendleton as well as many other places, this is probably in my opinion, the premiere training base for the Marine Corps. It has all of the training capabilities that a Marine could want.

L. J. Kimball: What's Bruce Reed doing these days.

Sgt. Rameriz: You need to talk to him. He is a contractor. He is over in two buildings down from me in Building 11 and he is with the Advanced Concept Technology Division where they are testing different technologies for mine warfare.

L. J. Kimball: Does TE&O still have a historical function?

Sgt. Rameriz: Yes. Renee Hawthorne carries all of that.

L. J. Kimball: As the Base Historian?

Sgt. Rameriz: Right.

L. J. Kimball: Is there anything active ongoing in that particular capacity.

Sgt. Rameriz: Well, right now they have opened up all the historical files and are converting them into disc through scanners. That has been going on every day and it has been going on since the first day in June.

L. J. Kimball: What do they do with the original documents?

Sgt. Rameriz: Good question, I don't know. Renee would know.

L. J. Kimball: That is interesting. It is about time that somebody put those to use because it is a treasury of information that is just gathering dust and disappearing over the years.

Sgt. Rameriz: That is all that it did was gather dust because there were boxes and files and nobody had the time or could take the time to sort through it, but once we get it in electronic mode, the ability to sort through, filter and search, there are probably a lot of things that we could do with it then.

L. J. Kimball: Where would somebody have access to these discs?

Sgt. Rameriz: You would have to check with Renee. She is handling it and all I know is that we are converting it all to disc and we have electronic access to all the data.

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L. J. Kimball:      Okay Joe, well thank you very much for your time.