

MSgt. Ralph Freeman, USMC (Retired)
2122 River Road, Stella, North Carolina
Interviewer: L.J. Kimball
11 August 1999
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L.J. Kimball: Interview of Mr. Ralph Freeman, 2122 River Road, Stella, North Carolina. 11 August 1999. Interviewer L.J. Kimball. Tape one, side one.

Ralph, we were talking about a previous interview which was done on the eleventh of May 1979 by Elizabeth Cranford. Do you remember that?

Ralph Freeman: Vaguely.

L.J. Kimball: Do you have any recollection of what the occasion was that she conducted this interview?

Ralph Freeman: Seemed to me it was something about the, ah, the history or something around Onslow County, I believe it was.

L.J. Kimball: I've heard several explanations . . . one that it was for the Bicentennial, more or less. They thought it'd be appropriate to capture some of the history from some of the people that recalled what it was like then before they all passed along. And believe me, there were people interviewed during the series that were born in the 19th century and unfortunately they're no longer with us. So there's a nice effort on their part to get it done. I knew it was done by the public library. But I didn't know if anything ever came of it. I was quite surprised recently to find out that they actually had, not only the tapes, but transcripts, of most of them. So I reproduced the tapes and the transcripts so I could go through them. It's a lot easier to go back and read a transcript than it is to figure out where something is on a tape if you want to go back and use it.

But principally I bring your attention to this interview you did before. If we find something of use on this interview, do you have any problems with us using it, in our history of Camp Lejeune?

Ralph Freeman: No.

L.J. Kimball: OK. Where were you born?

Ralph Freeman: Alexandria, Virginia.

L.J. Kimball: And when?

Ralph Freeman: It was May 12, 1925.

L.J. Kimball: And did you spend all your childhood there in Alexandria?

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Ralph Freeman: No. I moved all around Washington, D.C. and Virginia and Maryland.

L.J. Kimball: What did your father do?

Ralph Freeman: He was a, at that time, a mechanic. He, ah . . . When he married my mother he had just got out of the Marine Corps. He was down in the so-called Banana Wars in Nicaragua. And he came back up and Alexandria had a torpedo station where they made torpedoes.

L.J. Kimball: I remember it well.

Ralph Freeman: And, ah, he was a . . . on guard there. And that's when he met my mother and so forth. And then he got out of the Marines and went into being a mechanic, auto mechanic. And, ah, he worked in various places. And, of course, ah, this was during the depression. And jobs were hard to find. He had to get work where he could, you know, and so forth, so . . . That's why we did so much moving around. It took me, ah, eleven schools to graduate. From high school.

L.J. Kimball: The normal length of time or did it take you more time than usual?

Ralph Freeman: It took, well, actually, ah, when the war came along, I, ah, quit high school and went into the Marines. So then when the war was over with I went back to Washington, to Arlington, Virginia. And Washington, D.C. had started what they call a Veteran's High School. And it was at the old Central High School in Washington. And they called back retired teachers and they taught us, all these Veterans. We went there and we worked as fast as we could go through the class. In other words we didn't have a set semester and so forth that we had to work. If we could go through our English and learn a semester of English in four weeks, then that's what we did. But the . . . when we got through, the last, ah, last four months, we had to go out to a regular high school because they couldn't give a certificate of graduation. So we went through there and then we went back out to a regular high school and finished up and got our certificates there.

L.J. Kimball: OK. You mentioned your father was in Nicaragua in the Banana Wars. Was he in any other campaigns there besides Nicaragua that you recall?

Ralph Freeman: No. He was down there for quite a while.

L.J. Kimball: In Nicaragua?

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Ralph Freeman: In, ah. . . yeah.

L.J. Kimball: Do you. . . .

Ralph Freeman: And he was in . . . well, you see, he was in Nicaragua and I think he went to Haiti. Ah, he was in Haiti for a while. But other than that, that's about all I know about it. He never talked too much about it.

L.J. Kimball: . . . Subsequently you never had occasion to look up and find out what units he was with?

Ralph Freeman: No.

L.J. Kimball: Or any of his commanding officers?. . . Most of the combat leaders of middle rank at the beginning of World War II came out of the Banana Wars and got a lot of experience fighting the guerrillas down there. I just wondered if he ever mentioned or you recalled if he talked about, for example, Chesty Puller or people like that, if he'd served with. . .

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: So what year were you in, in high school, when you decided to join the Marine Corps?

Ralph Freeman: Ah, I was a junior.

L.J. Kimball: Junior. And this was 1941 or early '42?

Ralph Freeman: '42.

L.J. Kimball: Why the Marine Corps?

Ralph Freeman: Why? My father had been a Marine.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm. That was the principle reason?

Ralph Freeman: And, ah, so I decided, yeah. And I liked, well I liked the Marines. I mean I didn't . . . never did care too much for the Army. Ah, I grew up around Fort Belvoir, not Fort Belvoir, but Fort Myer, Virginia. And I didn't think too much of the Army. And of course I . . . I didn't like ships so I wasn't about to go in the Navy. (Laughs)

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L.J. Kimball: This might seem like an obvious question, but, we know in general why you joined the Marines, . . . and we were at war, but could you be more specific? Was it wrap yourself in your Nation's flag, or you liked the Blues, or . . . what . . . Could you be more specific as to why you joined?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah, I . . . I joined the . . . to go overseas and fight the . . . the Japs and all that attacked us.

L.J. Kimball: Where did you sign up?

Ralph Freeman: I had to go down to Richmond, Virginia to sign up. I was living in, ah, Arlington, Virginia, at the time.

L.J. Kimball: Were you underage?

Ralph Freeman: Yes.

L.J. Kimball: So you had to have your parents' permission?

Ralph Freeman: Right.

L.J. Kimball: You went down to Richmond and signed up. Did you go directly from there to Boot Camp?

Ralph Freeman: No. I went back to Washington for about two weeks. And then, ah, we formed a . . . a group. We had the meeting over at, ah, Union Station at a certain time. And, ah, we went down to, ah, Parris Island. And they put us all in a boxcar instead of a regular car.

L.J. Kimball: A real, honest to goodness boxcar?

Ralph Freeman: A real honest to goodness boxcar.

L.J. Kimball: Did it get you to Parris Island?

Ralph Freeman: With the doors open, and the soot coming in. All the way down to, ah . . . Well, we went to Yamisee. And then from Yamisee, we got off that train and got on another train. It must have been a Civil War version. Had the gaslights hanging up in the ceiling and so forth. It took us from Yamisee to Port Royal. At Port Royal we got off and we had to get on barges to go to Parris Island.

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They didn't have a bridge going out there at that time. Everything had to go by barge.

L.J. Kimball: When you changed trains at Yamisee, did you get a . . . a regular seating car then?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah, we got a regular. . .

L.J. Kimball: That had a Civil War vintage?

Ralph Freeman: . . . car. Yeah. I mean it had the old mohair seats and so forth. And, ah, the old stove at the end of it. You know the old potbelly stove.

L.J. Kimball: Do you recall when it was you got to Parris Island?

Ralph Freeman: I got there in August 1, 1943. I had tried to get in before and they kept saying they couldn't do it because they had to take these people, they had to take these people. And so when I finally got down there it was August '43.

L.J. Kimball: So, you went to sign up in '42 but you didn't get to Parris Island until '43?

Ralph Freeman: '43.

L.J. Kimball: What did you do in the mean time?

Ralph Freeman: I worked.

L.J. Kimball: As, ah, what?

Ralph Freeman: As a, ah, so-called, ah, grocery store clerk, I guess you'd call it. I worked at, ah, the Sanitary Grocery Company more or less while I was waiting for it.

L.J. Kimball: Where was your family when you went and signed up.

Ralph Freeman: Right there in Arlington, Virginia.

L.J. Kimball: OK. What'd your father think about you signing up?

Ralph Freeman: He wasn't too hot about it. But, ah, I talked my mother into signing it. (Laughs) So that's how I got in.

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L.J. Kimball: Do you recall how long Boot Camp was in '43?

Ralph Freeman: I really . . . I want to say ten weeks. And I think basically it was around ten weeks.

L.J. Kimball: That was, I guess, depending on your perspective, the good old days or the bad old days in Boot Camp with what your instructors could do to you which was about anything that they didn't. . . didn't get caught doing.

Ralph Freeman: That's right.

L.J. Kimball: How did they . . .

Ralph Freeman: At that time, when we went into . . . went in Boot Camp, we didn't have utility covers. We had these pith helmets.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm.

Ralph Freeman: And across the. . . the DIs carried swagger sticks and that's what they hit you with all the time. And I had a crease right down the center of mine where they kept hitting me over the head with a swagger stick.

L.J. Kimball: . . . Did they do they do anything else other than hit you on the pith helmet? I mean, did they punch you . . .

Ralph Freeman: Oh, kick. . . kick you in the butt and so forth, like that. And some of 'em, they would take you out back at night, if they were, you know, really fouled up.

L.J. Kimball: And actually. . .

Ralph Freeman: Like some of the guys from New York. That came in there. Wise acres and so forth. They'd take 'em out and square 'em away.

L.J. Kimball: Beat the crap out of 'em, huh?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: Well, it takes all forms of leadership sometimes.

Ralph Freeman: Well, they. . . it straightened 'em out. (Laughs)

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L.J. Kimball: What's your recollection of having gone through. . . after you were through with Boot Camp? Was this pretty much what you expected . . . in Boot Camp?

Ralph Freeman: It was, ah . . . It was a little rougher than I thought it would be. Ah, like I say, at that time we was going through there, they didn't have all the controls and so forth. It's ah . . . We'd stand there with our, ah, M-1s in the, ah, sand for an inspection. And they'd come along and inspect. If they didn't like it, they'd through it down on the sand and you had to spend all evening cleaning it then. Ah, the, ah, fleas down there. Those sand fleas were really terrific. And we'd have to stand there and they . . . They'd make us not quinch at all, you know, if they bit us. And they'd be biting us all over the face and everything else. And you couldn't do anything. You just had to let 'em bite you. Because if you did, they'd make, ah. . . make you lay down in the sand and, and, ah, walk over you or something like that. It was like on the Drill Field. We'd be out there marching on the, on the Drill Field. And at that time, if someone passed out on the field and fell down, you stepped on him. You didn't lengthen your . . . your stride. You had your 30-inch stride and it was. . . If he was in your way, you stepped on him. And if you extended to step over him, then you laid down and the platoon marched over you. And, ah, I tell you, it, ah. . . When you got through there you was a proud son of a gun that you'd made it through there. Because for every five barges that went over, there'd be one barge come back of rejects. They. . . they couldn't take it. But, ah, I finally made it through.

L.J. Kimball: Did I hear you say M-1? You were training with M-1's in '43?

Ralph Freeman: We had just got the M-1s. We had . . . they had the O-3's. In fact, we had some O-3's at . . . at one time. When I first got there, then we got the M-1's. But the O-3, and that's when they would really mess you up in the sand. But they'd come along and take that bolt you know and when you come up for inspection of arms, they'd hit that lever and throw it out on the ground. And then you had to pick it up and clean it. But, ah, then at near the end, we got the M-1's. And, ah, so forth. Man, we thought those . . . we were in hog heaven when we got those things.

L.J. Kimball: Did you have any trouble with Boot Camp?

Ralph Freeman: No.

L.J. Kimball: Physical training, anything?

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Ralph Freeman: No. I made it through, ah, all right. And, ah, came out a PFC.

L.J. Kimball: Was that typical or was . . . it was exceptional that you . . .

Ralph Freeman: Well, they had a certain percentage that they would promote to PFC. I don't know what the percentage was, but I wasn't alone. I mean, I guess there was about ten other guys or more that, ah, became. . . got PFC too.

L.J. Kimball: Is this in the entire class or just in your Battalion?

Ralph Freeman: In the whole Platoon.

L.J. Kimball: Platoon.

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: OK. What MOS did you want when you were in Boot Camp? Or when you graduated?

Ralph Freeman: Ah, paratrooper. (Laughs) I wanted to be a Paramarine.

L.J. Kimball: That was secondary MOS then wasn't it? Or was that a primary?

Ralph Freeman: I guess it was secondary.

L.J. Kimball: So you wanted to be Infantry probably?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: And what did you end up when you left?

Ralph Freeman: Ah, when I got up here to Lejeune and reported in, they, ah, checked into, ah, Building Two. And they put us in a jeep and took us down to one of the barracks that they had. Most of the barracks were finished by this time . . . the brick ones. And, ah, took me down, took my gear out. And we went up to the second floor and was going into the Squad Bay. And he says why don't you go in there and pick out a rack, any of 'em. Stow your gear away in the locker and so forth. And, ah, just hang around. So if you want to go out to the PX, go ahead. If you want to go out to the movie at night, go ahead. He said, ah, until we get enough people here for a class.

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L.J. Kimball: Did you know your MOS at that time?

Ralph Freeman: No. I had no idea. What I thought was just a plain old Infantry Unit. But when I went in I looked up over the door. And it says Fire Control. Well, I had been a volunteer fireman. And I said these sons of bitches are gonna put me in the Fire Department. (Laughs) I said I don't want to be in the Fire Department. Man, I ranted and raved around there and the guy says nah, it's not Fire Department. It's something else. Then they come there and they got us all, you know, that we formed enough guys there for a class. And they took us down to this classroom. They said you guys been chosen because you're a high IQ and so forth for Seacoast Artillery Fire Control. Well I was still fuming. Because I didn't want to be in there. I wanted to be in the Infantry. And, ah, of course I didn't get very far with that. But, ah, then we went through our school there with the, ah . . . learning fire controls and seacoast artillery which was the 155 gun, ah, that they used.

L.J. Kimball: You said that you saw the sign Fire Control. Was that in the barracks you were staying in?

Ralph Freeman: Right over the door as you went into the Squad Bays.

L.J. Kimball: And it was open Squad Bays?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. Oh yeah.

L.J. Kimball: And your classrooms, were they in the Barracks or were they someplace else?

Ralph Freeman: No, no. They were in another building. Low building.

L.J. Kimball: I'm sure you've been back and forth Camp Lejeune many many years. Do you recall where your barracks was?

Ralph Freeman: I would have no idea. The barracks that, ah. . . The brick barracks was probably in area . . . I think Area 5.

L.J. Kimball: All the way down to the end where the artillery is?

Ralph Freeman: All the way down to the end. And, ah. . . But where that low building was that we went to. I don't know. I know we would form outside and march to it. And . . . and all our classes would march back.

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L.J. Kimball: Was it a permanent building or wooden?

Ralph Freeman: No. It was wooden building.

L.J. Kimball: Single story?

Ralph Freeman: Mmm-hmm.

L.J. Kimball: And what did they teach you? Do you recall what the training devices . . . that they used in those days?

Ralph Freeman: Ah, yeah. They had, ah . . . One thing that I remember they taught, they taught. . . They was teaching us logarithms and I had. . . Man, I hadn't even had any of that in high school you know. So I set in the head most of the nights studying so I could pass my test and everything the next day. But we went through, ah. . . They had things on weather. And of course you had to know the trajectory and windage and . . . and all this with the. . . the, ah, ah, 155 millimeter. And, ah, and then of course we went through, ah, training and . . . and, ah, exercise and so forth with that. But, ah, they would have . . . one man over here'd be on a . . . on a machine that had the weather report coming in. And then you'd have somebody over here taking something else. And, ah, the weights and all that.

L.J. Kimball: The weights of the projectiles?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. The weights of the 'jectile and how much powder and so forth it should need. It'd go for a certain distance. And then we had the . . . They had what's called Base End Stations and these were four by four platforms, some . . . of them as high as 100 feet in the air, depending on how far you needed to see out to the ocean. And they had two of these. And they had azimuth instruments on 'em. And you'd have two people up there. One would be tracking the ship that they were firing at. And every, ah, I think about every 15 seconds, he'd call whatever the azimuth was . . . showed on it. He was reading it as you moved around. This would go by your telephones into the, ah, Fire Control Center. They had a huge half moon table there. I guess that thing was probably about eight feet wide or . . . or more.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm.

Ralph Freeman: And, ah, it had two arms on it going from the center of the flat edge out to each of the circles. And it had the azimuth readings all the way around. And

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one Base End Station would call into one of the arms, get his reading. And the guy would move his arm around and set it. Then the other Base Station would call into the other one and he'd move his arm around and set it. And wherever they set, then the guy down at the base had an instrument that slid out along these arms until it stopped. You pushed a button. You brought it back. And that was where the ship was. And you could follow that ship around making circles and everything else on that paper.

L.J. Kimball: So this was actually done down at Onslow Beach? Where you were watching the ships?

Ralph Freeman: Yes. We, ah, did. . . Well, it wasn't ships. It was a. . . They were pulling tow targets.

L.J. Kimball: OK.

Ralph Freeman: And, ah, they would call in and so forth. And then the, ah . . . They would fire. And, ah, then they would correct if necessary. And, ah, hit the tow targets.

L.J. Kimball: Was the Fire Control Center out there on Onslow Beach also?

Ralph Freeman: Ah, it was located on the beach, but not right on the beach. It was behind.

L.J. Kimball: But still on the other side of the Intercoastal Waterway, on the. . .

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: . . . on the island side.

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: Do you recall whereabouts that was?

Ralph Freeman: Right at Onslow Beach is where most of it took place.

L.J. Kimball: The key point of reference that we'd know today that was there was where the bridge is.

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. Where you going across the bridge they'd have a Base End Station down at one end and at the other end.

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L.J. Kimball: And the Fire Control Center?

Ralph Freeman: And the Fire Control would be back in the area somewhere. And the guns would be farther back than that.

L.J. Kimball: Would the guns be at . . . on the main side?

Ralph Freeman: They'd be on main side, yeah.

L.J. Kimball: Um, did you actually fire at the targets you were towing?

Ralph Freeman: Oh yeah.

L.J. Kimball: The FCC, back to that again. You went over the bridge with a ferry. Was it a ferry then or did you have a bridge?

Ralph Freeman: Ah, we had a pontoon bridge I believe.

L.J. Kimball: Was it to the left or to the right once you got over?

Ralph Freeman: Which?

L.J. Kimball: The FCC.

Ralph Freeman: Oh. I think it was probably to the right. I was on the Base End Station.

L.J. Kimball: . . . Did you say it was a tent or was it a building?

Ralph Freeman: Ah, it was a tent at that time.

L.J. Kimball: Do . . . you recall where the Signal Battalion, the Signal School was located? That's where the . . . Second Recon area was when it was out there on the beach. Was that there when you were there as you recall?

Ralph Freeman: If it was I don't remember.

L.J. Kimball: OK. Seacoast Artillery in the Marine Corps in 1943, that was in Defense Battalions wasn't it?

Ralph Freeman: Yes.

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L.J. Kimball: So you had anticipated from your training that you would end up in a Defense Battalion?

Ralph Freeman: Right.

L.J. Kimball: And your hopes for becoming a Paramarine became increasingly . . .

Ralph Freeman: (Laughs) Farther and farther away.

L.J. Kimball: Do you recall when it was you got to Camp Lejeune? After you graduated from Boot Camp?

Ralph Freeman: It was probably in October.

L.J. Kimball: Of '43?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: And how long was your school there?

Ralph Freeman: Ah, well I say I was in . . . in the school . . . I was only in school about, ah, I think about four weeks.

L.J. Kimball: How did you get out to Onslow Beach? Did you take a truck out there? Or did they barge you down or what?

Ralph Freeman: No. They had trucks that took us out.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm. And you were in school for a while. And . . .

Ralph Freeman: Then . . .

L.J. Kimball: At some point along the line they probably told you what your MOS was?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. Don't ask me what it was because I don't remember.

L.J. Kimball: Artillery of some sort.

Ralph Freeman: It was artillery.

L.J. Kimball: OK. You graduated from school. Then what happened to you?

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Ralph Freeman: Ah, we, ah, all moved out to Tent Camp.

L.J. Kimball: Camp Geiger?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. Wasn't called Camp Geiger then. It was called just . . . called Tent Camp.

L.J. Kimball: Was it still tents?

Ralph Freeman: Oh yes. Ah, some of 'em had, ah, ah, wooden frames around the . . . the base of it. But the . . . the roof and all, it was just regular tents over top of it.

L.J. Kimball: You didn't see the Homosote huts, the little green huts, or Quonset huts . . .

Ralph Freeman: No.

L.J. Kimball: . . . at that point. They were just tents.

Ralph Freeman: All tents when I was there. They may have had . . . Well they had Quonset huts I think for the storage of gear like mattresses and so forth. But when we got out there, that's when we started, ah, going to where . . . what I call Infantry training. Ah, we started out on, ah, hikes. And I can remember there was the . . . the railroad tracks that ran through Geiger at the time. That ran through Tent Camp. And we head out on those railroad tracks going south. And then we'd cut over . . . Where we cut over I don't know. But we'd get over onto the, ah, on Highway, old Highway 17 which was just a two lane road. And . . . and then come back to, ah, to Tent Camp. Starting out that was about a five-mile hike. We walked five miles and so forth. Well, then they was up to ten miles, then fifteen miles, then twenty miles, and finally we did fifty miles. Fifty miles we'd go down the tracks and way the heck down. Cut through all kinds of dirt roads twisting and turning and so forth and come out way on the other side of Richlands. And then coming back down to Tent Camp, down old 24. And, ah, that was walking and running with your pack and your weapon. And we'd start out in the morning around seven, and we'd be back in camp by five. And I'll tell you right now (laughs), by the time we got back there, it was miserable. We'd fall out on the rack and then they'd come around and say you could take liberty. There wasn't a damn soul that wanted to go on liberty. They was too damn tired. But, ah . . .

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L.J. Kimball: Do you recall this training organization? I'm not sure what they called it. If they called it Infantry Training Regiment, or. . . You know what is now School of Infantry Was it for all combat Marines or just for the Artillery Marines?

Ralph Freeman: It was for everybody in the Replacement Battalion.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm.

Ralph Freeman: And that's what they called that. We had a. . . a number. And what the number was I don't know. But that's what we was called. Replacement Battalion.

L.J. Kimball: So when they stuck you in a Replacement Battalion, it didn't matter what your MOS was. It was basically. . .

Ralph Freeman: No.

L.J. Kimball: It was a pool.

Ralph Freeman: That's right.

L.J. Kimball: Would that Battalion go overseas as a whole?

Ralph Freeman: That's right.

L.J. Kimball: OK.

Ralph Freeman: It was just everybody. And then of course they . . . they had instructors in landing for the barges. And they would transport us by truck out to the Inland Waterway. And then we'd get in the, ah, the Higgins Boats and go on down. I don't know where the outlet was, but we went down, ah, the Inland Waterway and I can remember going to my . . . my left and we went down to some inlet out into the ocean and, ah, then we would come in and land at Onslow Beach. And of course on the old Higgins Boats, you know those . . . those no drop fronts. It was all over the side. And you had the, ah. . . They had the, ah, what'd you call them? Rails or what. On either side. And you had to set in the boat with your back towards the bow. On the . . . on a port side with your right hand on the rail. And if you set on the starboard side you had your left hand on the rail. And then when the boat came to a stop you rolled over with your hand holding the rail until you dropped down into the water.

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L.J. Kimball: Did the port and starboard files face in opposite directions then?

Ralph Freeman: At that. . . No. We was all facing . . .

L.J. Kimball: The same way.

Ralph Freeman: The same way. With our back towards the beach.

L.J. Kimball: But with just. . . a different hand on the rail.

Ralph Freeman: It was different hand on the rail. Yeah. And, ah, we just. . . All you do is just take it and roll over.

L.J. Kimball: Would you roll over so your back was toward the beach or your front?

Ralph Freeman: Your front was toward the beach.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm.

Ralph Freeman: And, ah, the swabbies would never take us all the way in. They'd drop us off out there where we had to wade in there waist high most of the time. And, like I say, October, November, it was colder than blazes. And we'd take the sand dunes. And after you'd take the sand dunes, then they'd have you form back on the beach. Then we'd run down the beach. Get back into the barge and those boats go back out, come in again. And you'd do that three or four times. And then we would spend the night on the beach and of course it was black out. No lights or fires at all. We'd have to dig down into the sand, burrow down to keep the wind off of you. And then cover yourself up with your blanket out of your blanket roll.

L.J. Kimball: Where did they take you to board the Higgins Boats? Do you recall? Was that around the pontoon bridge?

Ralph Freeman: It was somewhere in that area, yes. Ah, I seem to remember going across the bridge and then getting into Higgins Boats on the Inland Waterway and going on that. Because I didn't know it was Inland Waterway at that time. All I knew was it looked like a stream. (pause in tape)

L.J. Kimball: Tape one, side two. Do you recall the Amphibious Mockup that was down there on the Intercoastal Waterway?

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Ralph Freeman: Yes.

L.J. Kimball: Did you ever train on it?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. We went . . . well, we went down . . . we had some of those at, ah, out there at, ah, Tent Camp.

L.J. Kimball: What you had at Tent Camp, of course, . . . as you recall, was called Dry Net Training.

Ralph Freeman: Right.

L.J. Kimball: But the Amphibious Mockup allows you to do Wet Net Training right into the Intercoastal Waterway.

Ralph Freeman: No. We didn't do any of that.

L.J. Kimball: You didn't go down. . .

Ralph Freeman: All we had was dry.

L.J. Kimball: Mmmm.

Ralph Freeman: And, ah, I don't remember any wet training at all.

L.J. Kimball: Did you say that you did use the Amphibious Mockup or you just remember seeing it?

Ralph Freeman: I remember seeing it.

L.J. Kimball: OK. What it was of course was a mockup . . . a full-sized mockup with a much narrower deck, of an amphibious ship. The road still goes there. It's called Mockup Road.

Ralph Freeman: Mmm-hmm.

L.J. Kimball: And they'd go up the nets on the dry side. Go across the deck and descend down into Higgins Boats on the Intercoastal Waterway which was a very close simulation to what they'd expect going down the side of a ship except you weren't presenting yourself as a torpedo target at that point.

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Ralph Freeman: I don't remember doing that at all, ah, Kim. I . . . I remember the boats would . . . would come in there to the, ah, to the beach. And I don't remember if they had any bulkhead there or not and we would climb into 'em. They'd number us off . . . that amount would get into the boat.

L.J. Kimball: So you were there in a Replacement Battalion. And while in the Replacement Battalion you were conducting basic Marine . . .

Ralph Freeman: Basic, yes.

L.J. Kimball: . . . combat training.

Ralph Freeman: Right.

L.J. Kimball: And how long are you there in the Replacement Battalion before you shipped out?

Ralph Freeman: We, ah, we were scheduled to leave about four times. And we'd pack up our mattresses and everything and cots and take 'em down and turn 'em into the Supply. And take our sea bag and everything and set and wait. Then they'd come around about three o'clock, four o'clock and say not going today. Go back and draw your cot and your mattress out again. We did this about four times. And now whether they was trying to throw any, you know, people off, about our movement or not, I don't know. But we eventually got on the train.

L.J. Kimball: Did you load the train there in Geiger where those. . .

Ralph Freeman: In Geiger.

L.J. Kimball: . . . where the long warehouses are? Where the siding runs through? You call it a warehouse?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. Th. . . There's. . . Well, I. . . I don't know if there was warehouses or long . . . They were somewhere.

L.J. Kimball: There was a big water tank on the other side of the tracks.

Ralph Freeman: There was some buildings and all there, I know. But we loaded right there in Geiger. And we pulled out at night. And, ah, went up to Norfolk. And they put us out on a dock out there and we went aboard this, ah, SS Extavia. And like I said, that's the only ship I ever remember in all the traveling I've done.

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L.J. Kimball: Is that because it's your first experience or because it's your worst experience?

Ralph Freeman: Because it was the worst experience.

L.J. Kimball: What was it, an old converted passenger ship or something?

Ralph Freeman: It was a . . . an old, ah, Merchant Marine. And it was Merchant Marine crew on it.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm.

Ralph Freeman: That took us over. And, ah, went aboard that. And of course they only fed us twice a day. And usually it was, ah, hard tack or these biscuits that they had. And an orange. And some kind of a soup. Once in a while we might get an apple too. But that was the same thing twice a day.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm. No meat.

Ralph Freeman: No meat.

L.J. Kimball: No fresh vegetables.

Ralph Freeman: But where we ate in the mess hall. . . And you had to stand in line to go eat. And you formed the lines in the morning. And by the time you got through and ate and come back, you might as well get back in line, go right in, get ready to go in there for the evening meal. Because that's how long it took the lines to go through. Very small mess hall that they had, or a galley. And, ah, where we were we had to stand up of course and eat at these tables. And the . . . you could look through a . . . a passage. . . down the passageway and see where the Merchant Marines were eating. And you could see signs up on a blackboard there with several choices. They had about five or six different choices and all they wanted to eat. Then it got to the point where they were selling sandwiches to the Marines and they charged four or five bucks for a sandwich.

Well, we went down through the Caribbean going to Panama. And we got almost to Panama when the boilers blew up. And they had, ah. . . The ship was blacked out of course and no smoking or anything like that. And there were sparks flying out the smoke stack and we were at what they called Torpedo Junction at that time. But we made it into, ah, able to limp into, ah,

Panama. And they towed us, ah, through, ah, the Canal to Balboa where they, ah, welded the boilers and so forth and repaired 'em. Then when we pulled out of there on our way to New Caledonia and the, ah . . . We ran into a typhoon that messed the ship up pretty bad. And by this time some of the guys were about ready to commit mutiny because they was starving to death. And finally one night a bunch of them did go down to the reefers and break into the reefers. They were bringing back this cheese and meats (we called it "horsecock") and things like that and passing it out all over the quarters . . . sleeping quarters. And of course they . . . the ship's Captain jumped up and down about that. But our officer didn't do anything.

In the . . . Then the, ah, then the next typhoon we hit they had 40-millimeter guns mounted on the bow. And they were welded to a plate and the plate was welded to the deck of the ship. And I'd always volunteer as soon as I got on the ship there. Til I found out what it was all about, I'd volunteer for Guard Duty so I could have some place to go and sit down. Because you couldn't sit on the ship. There was no place to sit. And, ah, the 40-millimeter gun on the bow that I was assigned to . . . Course they'd pull us off the deck when the typhoon hit. But we went out there the next morning and the whole plate had been rolled back and the gun was pointing up in the air instead of pointing forward.

L.J. Kimball: Mmmmm.

Ralph Freeman: They lost all the life rafts. Were wiped off the ship. And so that, ah, that made it bad.

L.J. Kimball: I imagine it did. Let's go back and look at some of the dates here. Do you recall when you left Camp Lejeune for Norfolk? What day that was?

Ralph Freeman: No. But turn your thing off there a minute. (pause in tape)

L.J. Kimball: You got some paperwork there. Does it give some dates? If you come across your MOS, you can tell me that too. That would be interesting.

Ralph Freeman: Eight ninety-five.

L.J. Kimball: Eight ninety-five?

Ralph Freeman: It says heavy artillery. Eight ninety-five.

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L.J. Kimball: OK. Oh Eight ninety-five.

Ralph Freeman: It hasn't got an Oh in front of it.

L.J. Kimball: Eight ninety-five. All right. I don't know, the MOS system we have now might not have been in existence then.

Ralph Freeman: I see it's got up here. Military Specialties. Eight ninety-five Heavy Artillery. Six oh three Field Artillery Crewman and seven twenty Four Heavy Artillery Fire Controlman. And it's got here . . . That course lasted four weeks. Fire Control Instrument Operator.

L.J. Kimball: After the four-week course, then you went to the Replacement Battalion . . .

Ralph Freeman: Yeah, four weeks and then to. . . Let's see. I don't have a date on that. (dog barking/pause in tape)

L.J. Kimball: . . . Does it say there what your Replacement Battalion was designated?

Ralph Freeman: That's what I'm trying to find. (pause in tape)

L.J. Kimball: . . . says there (dog barking) for the record what is (cannot understand/dog barking)

Ralph Freeman: Looks like it's C Battery, Artillery Battalion Training Center.

Female Voice: Howdy.

L.J. Kimball: Hi Hazel.

Ralph Freeman: Camp Lejeune. October 22. '43.

L.J. Kimball: That would be the beginning of your training?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. And then (pause in tape)

L.J. Kimball: After you completed your school, you went into the 27th Replacement Battalion. Is that what you read from your papers there? Does it tell you when you left Lejeune.

Ralph Freeman: Well I see I joined the Replacement Battalion on December 6th.

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L.J. Kimball: '43?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

(pause in tape)

L.J. Kimball: January 10th, 1944 you left Norfolk. So you figure you left Camp Lejeune probably within the preceding week?

Ralph Freeman: Oh, we left at, ah, probably two days before that.

L.J. Kimball: Two days. How do you spell Extavia?

Ralph Freeman: E-X-T-A-V-I-A.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm. And you went down through the Canal and. . .

Ralph Freeman: Right.

L.J. Kimball: . . . into New Caledonia.

Ralph Freeman: New Noumea.

L.J. Kimball: New Noumea.

Ralph Freeman: New Caledonia.

L.J. Kimball: What did they do to you when you were there?

Ralph Freeman: Ah, we were kind of corralled in a tent area waiting for . . .for further shipment.

L.J. Kimball: So you were still in kind of a Replacement Battalion status?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. Ah, we disembarked on February 11th. So we was on the doggone ship a month.

L.J. Kimball: At this time you still weren't assigned to a unit?

Ralph Freeman: Not yet.

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L.J. Kimball: You were . . . just a replacement.

Ralph Freeman: OK. We, ah, boarded the Pikney. . . Pinkey. P-I-N-K-N-E-Y. Left New Caledonia 20 February '44. Arrived the Guadalcanal 3 March 1944.

L.J. Kimball: OK. And what happened beyond Guadalcanal?

Ralph Freeman: Ah, they used us on, ah, mopping up, ah . . .

L.J. Kimball: You mean mopping up Japanese pockets of resistance?

Ralph Freeman: Yes. Pockets that were left.

L.J. Kimball: Sort of like a "Thin Red Line" scenario?

Ralph Freeman: Ah . . .

L.J. Kimball: Well, you had to have been an Infantryman then, or were you?

Ralph Freeman: 37th Replacement Battalion.

L.J. Kimball: And you're out mopping up still as a member of the Replacement Battalion with no unit assignment?

Ralph Freeman: No unit yet.

L.J. Kimball: OK. And where'd you go after that?

Ralph Freeman: (shuffling papers) Well they got these things all messed up here. They got me going to Pelelieu after that. And I didn't go to Pelelieu right away. (pause in tape)

L.J. Kimball: You left Guadalcanal and went to Pelelieu?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: Was that . . .

Ralph Freeman: And I was assigned to the 8th 155-millimeter Gun Battalion then.

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L.J. Kimball: All right. With . . .

Ralph Freeman: With the 3rd Corps.

L.J. Kimball: What Corps?

Ralph Freeman: Third Corps.

L.J. Kimball: Third Corps.

Ralph Freeman: Third Amphibious Corps.

L.J. Kimball: Did you land there as part of the assault or did you go in after the . . .

Ralph Freeman: Pelelieu?

L.J. Kimball: Yes.

Ralph Freeman: We landed on the . . . about the 6th or 7th wave I think it was.

L.J. Kimball: At D-Day?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: With your guns?

Ralph Freeman: They go . . . We landed first and then brought the guns in right behind us.

L.J. Kimball: Mmmm. One five five's?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. Because they was using one five five's there straight.

L.J. Kimball: Direct fire.

Ralph Freeman: Trying to close up those cave entrances.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm.

Ralph Freeman: And that's when they put me on machine gun.

L.J. Kimball: So you were a machine gunner instead of an artillery crewman.

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Ralph Freeman: Yeah. Because of, ah, the protection. Had to set up a perimeter defense.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm.

Ralph Freeman: And of course we had machine guns and that. . . They put me on that.

L.J. Kimball: What kind of machine gun was it? Do you recall?

Ralph Freeman: 30 caliber air cooled.

L.J. Kimball: Browning . . . ?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. I had that. I had a Thompson.

L.J. Kimball: Did you have occasion to function as a machine gunner?

Ralph Freeman: Oh, yeah.

L.J. Kimball: The lines were probed or attacked?

Ralph Freeman: Oh yeah. We had, ah, right there on the northern end of the, ah, island. They'd moved up. They were firing direct fire into these caves, ah, and of course they closed the caves up. And the next day they'd be open again. But we didn't know it at the time. But in the mountain there they had five stories. Five levels in there. They'd tell you to go move up and down and so forth. God, they had a hospital and everything else in that, ah. . . But anyway I had, ah. . . We had Japs that were trying to get from Pelelieu at that time over, ah, to the next island over and our machine gun was the one firing out across the coral and so forth and, ah, stopping 'em.

L.J. Kimball: Were they swimming over or going over in boats?

Ralph Freeman: Swimming.

L.J. Kimball: Did you ever have occasion where your position was actually attacked by the Japanese?

Ralph Freeman: Oh, on Guadalcanal we did. At one time there. Ah, I guess you'd call it Banzai charge. They kept running at us. And of course they had me on

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machine gun there too. That's why I got on a machine gun when I went to the Battalion.

L.J. Kimball: What was your impression, your actual being in a war like that and people trying to kill you and you killing them.

Ralph Freeman: Scared. Scared to death. Fact is they moved us in and set us up in tent and then they moved us out, you know, like I say, for these mopping up operations. And sitting there on my machine gun at night and a doggone coconut would fall and hit the ground. And that ground over there was nothing more than like a big coconut tree anyway. And sounded hollow. The other thing go whoooooop. And we'd jump. And then they had, ah . . . We had another night there that we . . . we knew they was out there in front of us and expecting 'em to attack us at any time. And all of a sudden we heard the (makes a shuffling noise) and then it would stop. And it sounds just like someone walking through the jungle. Then it would start up again. Then of course the closer it got to us and the scarer we got and so forth. We was ready. Then all of a sudden here comes this doggone big land crab walking. (Laughs) Right in front of us.

L.J. Kimball: This was on Guadalcanal?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: Any of your buddies get killed there in Pelelieu or Guadalcanal?

Ralph Freeman: Oh, in Pelelieu I had, ah, had a couple of 'em that got killed by snipers. Japanese snipers.

L.J. Kimball: I recall my first experiences in Vietnam along those lines and I'm kind of curious. What impact did it have on you when saw dead Marines, especially when they were your buddies?

Ralph Freeman: Well you know really, ah, all my buddies of course affected me some. But when seeing the others, as soon as you established that they were dead and you didn't have to call for a Corpsman or something like that, then you accepted it. In fact we would set around and eating our rations there, there'd be some dead Marines that hadn't been picked up yet, and then Japanese. Some of the Japanese were starting to bloat and so forth. And we just go ahead and eat. You know, it didn't bother us a bit at that time.

L.J. Kimball: Do you recall if there was kind of a pervasive smell of . . .

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Ralph Freeman: Oh yes. Definitely.

L.J. Kimball: . . . rotten flesh?

Ralph Freeman: Definitely.

L.J. Kimball: Flies?

Ralph Freeman: All kinds of flies. God, they was all over the place. That's why a lot of us got dysentery and, ah . . . I don't know. . . I don't remember how, but I latched on to a, ah, a tent hammock. A hammock with the tent on it and the mosquito netting on it.

L.J. Kimball: Right.

Ralph Freeman: I latched on to one of those somewhere. I don't know where. But I had that set up. And I had dysentery so bad there on. . . on Pelelieu. . . What I'd do, I'd dig a little trench underneath it at night and then just unzip it, stick it out, let it go and zip it back up. But, ah, dysentery was bad.

L.J. Kimball: Were you still a PFC then?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: How long were on Pelelieu before they moved you along somewhere else?

Ralph Freeman: We was on Pelelieu for the whole operation.

L.J. Kimball: Which was several months wasn't it.

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. And then they moved us out there and back to Guadalcanal.

L.J. Kimball: Do you recall when that was? When you got out of Pelelieu?

(pause in tape)

Ralph Freeman: On, ah, 25 November.

L.J. Kimball: And when you went back to Guadalcanal, it was as the 8th Gun Battalion?

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Ralph Freeman: It was still the 8th Gun Battalion. And, ah, we arrived at Guadalcanal on, ah, 10 December.

L.J. Kimball: 10 December 1944.

Ralph Freeman: Right.

L.J. Kimball: All right. Then what happened to you?

(pause in tape)

Ralph Freeman: . . . to . . . We're landing on, ah . . . They were going to send us to Saipan.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm.

Ralph Freeman: And then it come down and changed it and we started tr. . . training and so forth for, ah, Okinawa. Because they were doing so well on Saipan. And, ah, Guam. So then we, ah, we start preparing and getting new equipment and so forth and all and preparing to go to Guadalcanal.

L.J. Kimball: Okinawa.

Ralph Freeman: I mean Okinawa.

L.J. Kimball: Did you actually make the Okinawa landing?

Ralph Freeman: Yes.

L.J. Kimball: D-Day?

Ralph Freeman: D-Day we landed.

L.J. Kimball: First of April 1945.

Ralph Freeman: First of April and we walked all the way across the island without seeing a Jap. We saw one dead civilian. And we couldn't understand what was going on.

L.J. Kimball: Do you remember who you landed with? Which division you were landing with? Or what Corps it was?

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Ralph Freeman: We were the 3rd Phib Corps. We stayed with 3rd Phib [Amphibious] Corps all the time.

L.J. Kimball: OK.

Ralph Freeman: Trying to think of the . . . was it Blue Beach?

L.J. Kimball: Well, that's all right. It was in the Marines' main landing.

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. It was in there. The Marine sector. And we went all the way across. And then when we didn't find anything going all the way across, then of course the Marines were supposed to go north. And the Army was going south. And we had started to go north. And, gosh, we hadn't been probably more than six or seven days going north and they called us back down and . . . and had us reform and go south.

L.J. Kimball: Were you operating. . . the 8th Gun Battalion, was it operating as a separate unit or were you part of an artillery regiment or group?

Ralph Freeman: We operated as a separate unit most of the time. The, ah. . . under the 3rd Phib Corps.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm.

Ralph Freeman: Third Phib Corps moved us anywhere they want. . . wanted to move.

L.J. Kimball: You said the third Amphibious Corps?

Ralph Freeman: Mmm-hmm.

L.J. Kimball: Third Phib Corps.

Ralph Freeman: Third Amphibious Corps. Ah. . .

L.J. Kimball: So they sent you south to support the Army.

Ralph Freeman: Well, they. . . they moved us south and then they, ah, they moved the Army over on the. . . the Pacific Side and we took the China Sea side.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm.

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Ralph Freeman: And, ah, we were the ones moving into, ah . . . well, through Shuri Castle and then we went on down to, ah, ah, Naha. And we had some real bad weather. Rain, I mean it rained something terrible. We got so muddy. At the biggest bulldozers they had the mud was coming up around the floor of the operator. That's how deep the mud was. And it got to the point where they had to throw our rations from one point to another for us to get. Because we couldn't move at all. We had, ah. . . I had my machine gun set up. And, ah, right in front of me a . . . I later dug it out the next day. . . was a 75 millimeter shell, roughly equivalent to a 75 millimeter. I don't know what the Japanese was. Landed right in front of the gun and went underneath it. And the mud saved us. It didn't go off.

And I had the same thing happen on Pelelieu. Backing up some. We went ashore at Pelelieu and of course I'm crawling along with my tripod, going through some underbrush, and I see a Jap in front of me. Rifle aimed at me, staring right at me. I thought uh-oh this is it. I swung my 45 around and fired but he was already dead. So I was fortunate there that he wasn't alive. Then we started going across the airstrip. And the, ah, 150 millimeter shell that the Japs had. One of those landed about ten feet from us and bounced a couple times.

L.J. Kimball: Off the cement.

Ralph Freeman: Off the concrete. And, ah, didn't go off. So we was lucky on that one. Then about halfway across someone yelled "gas." Of course when we hit the beach everybody had dropped their gas mask. It was just extra stuff to carry, you know. And we just dropped 'em. So everybody was scrambling around trying to find a gas mask, you know. But, ah, then we finally made it.

But then going back to Okinawa, that one shell landed in front of me. I dug it up the next day. I was the guy that took all the grenades apart and took the silk bags out of them and so forth for the guys so they could send 'em home.

L.J. Kimball: Help their curiosity there.

Ralph Freeman: Souvenirs you know.

L.J. Kimball: My father did the same thing when he was on Saipan. It's at the point of your life when you figure you're immortal and it's not going to blow up.

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Ralph Freeman: (Laughing) Yeah. But, ah, we used to take the potato mashers we called them. Take 'em apart. But they used to have some of the prettiest silk bags in 'em. And the guys would take 'em and send 'em home you know for their sweethearts or their wives and they'd make handkerchiefs out of 'em. And then, ah, after Okinawa secured, we was going down into Naha and of course we had seen these big books that they had on the ship.

L.J. Kimball: Books?

Ralph Freeman: Books. Photos. Showing what Naha looked like and so forth and so on. This was the first city that we'd ever seen over there, you know. We was all excited about going in. We was going into a big city man. It was a big city. And, ah, we come up over that hill and the only thing you could see was the Agricultural College over here and they had some buildings left standing and out in the middle was a doggone bank building. And everything else was just leveled. And so that's how we worked our way through that and down through the southern tip. Then after they secured and so forth we moved back up to the . . . I guess we moved about six or seven miles up from Naha right on the China coast. China Sea coast. And, ah, set up our tents there and then we was supposed to start training for landing in China.

L.J. Kimball: China?

Ralph Freeman: We was gonna land in China. And then we had this other typhoon. It was knocking our tents down and everything. They had these, ah, you know, these burial vaults. . .

L.J. Kimball: Yeah.

Ralph Freeman: . . . that they had. In Okinawa. So we scrambled up the hillside and all and went into those and stayed in those. And we come down. . . come out there the next morning after the storm had subsided and there was this great big freighter setting right there almost in our camp site that had been washed ashore.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm.

Ralph Freeman: And, ah, well anyway we got out there and straightened and cleaned our camp up and everything. It was. . . it was supposed to start when they had the . . . then we had heard about the bomb being dropped. And then we heard about

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the second bomb being dropped. And then we heard that they had surrendered. And, ah . . .

L.J. Kimball: What was your feelings when you heard about the surrender?

Ralph Freeman: Oh, tickled pink, man.

L.J. Kimball: And was there a lot of people running around, yelling and screaming?

Ralph Freeman: Oh, everybody was jumping up and down and so forth. And of course we didn't have any beer and so we couldn't drink beer (laughing). I didn't drink beer at all. I drank a coke and I would swap my beer for cokes, you know, and things of that sort. Like cigarettes. I didn't smoke so, ah, I would swap my cigarettes.

(pause in tape)

L.J. Kimball: . . . Tape two, Side one. Go ahead.

Ralph Freeman: But I was one of the first ones to go home.

L.J. Kimball: And how did they determine that?

Ralph Freeman: They had point systems. Ah, if you had 120 or 125 points and that was based on your length of time over there and so forth.

L.J. Kimball: Still a PFC?

Ralph Freeman: Still a PFC. They, ah . . . was . . . the . . . If you had a 125 then you could go home. I had a 190 or so. So I was the first one. And boy I tell you I made sure I was on that doggone truck that was leaving the next morning to take us to the ship.

L.J. Kimball: How long did you have to wait after the war was over before you went . . . caught the ship back.

Ralph Freeman: Well, let's see. The (pause in tape) . . . was up to Vella Lavella.

L.J. Kimball: So you went on an excursion that . . . was this again a cleaning up operation?

Ralph Freeman: It was a kind of a, ah, landing, yeah.

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L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm.

Ralph Freeman: We went in, ah . . . They asked for volunteers and I volunteered. And we went in landing from a submarine and we went into Vella Lavella.

L.J. Kimball: From a submarine?

Ralph Freeman: Uh-huh.

L.J. Kimball: That must have been an experience for you.

Ralph Freeman: Got sick as a dog almost on that doggone thing. Smelling that diesel oil.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm.

Ralph Freeman: Gosh, almighty.

L.J. Kimball: Did you actually submerge?

Ralph Freeman: Oh yeah. We, ah, we were never so damn glad to (laughing) get 'em out of that thing to save our life. But, ah, we went . . . went ashore and. . . on a scouting thing. And then of course the . . . After we made sure that the . . . the natives were friendly and the Japs you know had pretty much been pushed over to one side by the . . . the bombing.

L.J. Kimball: When was this? Do you have a date on when you went to Vella Lavella?

Ralph Freeman: Vella Lavella was in 14 of March '44.

L.J. Kimball: And were you still doing this as a member of the 8th Gun Battalion or was it some kind of special composite raider group that was put together for it. I mean were all participants on this members of the 8th Gun Battalion or were there other units involved?

Ralph Freeman: No. There was other units and it was all volunteers.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm.

(pause in tape)

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Ralph Freeman: . . . '44.

L.J. Kimball: Do you have a date that tells you when you left the island of Okinawa?

Ralph Freeman: That's what I'm trying to find.

(pause in tape)

L.J. Kimball: Left Pelelieu on 25 November '44.

Ralph Freeman: Arrived back in Guadalcanal on the tenth of December '44.

L.J. Kimball: In December '44.

Ralph Freeman: (shuffling papers) I know it's in here. When. . . when the heck did I leave Okinawa?

L.J. Kimball: Well, you can keep looking for it there and if you find a date we'll mention it. But do you have a feeling for how . . . Were you there just a few days, a few weeks, a few months before you shipped back to States?

Ralph Freeman: Okinawa?

L.J. Kimball: From Okinawa back to United States?

Ralph Freeman: Well, we landed there of course on April 1st and, ah, I was there until after the surrender.

L.J. Kimball: All right. That would have been August.

Ralph Freeman: So that was in August.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm. But, ah, then you have the surrender. Do you have any recollections . . . only you'll probably find a date . . . how long you waited after that until you went back to States?

Ralph Freeman: That's what I'm trying to find here.

(pause in tape)

L.J. Kimball: So you left Okinawa and you then you went back to Camp Pendleton?

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Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: And do you remember what ship. . .

Ralph Freeman: That was 3 November '45 when we. . .

L.J. Kimball: Got back to Pendleton?

Ralph Freeman: When I got there.

L.J. Kimball: Where did they drop you off from the ship?

Ralph Freeman: San Diego.

L.J. Kimball: San Diego.

Ralph Freeman: Mmm-hmm.

L.J. Kimball: OK. It's November 1945 and you're back in Camp Pendleton. When you went back to the States, you didn't go back as the 8th Gun Battalion?

Ralph Freeman: No.

L.J. Kimball: You went back again. . .

Ralph Freeman: Went back as a Replacement Battalion.

L.J. Kimball: And what'd they do with you when you went back to Camp Pendleton?

Ralph Freeman: Quarantined us.

L.J. Kimball: Quarantined?

Ralph Freeman: Quarantined.

L.J. Kimball: Medical quarantine?

Ralph Freeman: We had to go into these Quonset huts and stay there and couldn't go nowhere. And I can't remember how long we stayed there. But anyway (pause in tape)

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. . . Casualty Battalion.

L.J. Kimball: Company B, Casual Battalion.

Ralph Freeman: Red Regiment? Receiving Regiment.

L.J. Kimball: Receiving Regiment.

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. And that was on 3 November. (shuffling papers) But where heck's the ship that I left. . . (pause in tape)

L.J. Kimball: OK. Got a date?

Ralph Freeman: We embarked on the Howell . . . Howell Lykes. SS Howell Lykes. H-O-W-E-L-L. L-Y-K-E-S. On 20 October '45.

L.J. Kimball: 20 October '45.

Ralph Freeman: Sailed on the 21st of October '45. Arrived in San Diego, California, on November 6, '45. And then they . . . We went by train from San Diego to Pendleton.

L.J. Kimball: After you were done there in quarantine, did you stay at Pendleton or did they ship you off somewhere else?

Ralph Freeman: No we stayed there and then, ah, all the East Coast Marines that were going back for discharge and, ah, they loaded us on trains. And we went across country on trains. And we had a whole seat to ourselves, a whole bunk to ourselves, and, ah, and so forth. We stopped three times a day at the Harvey Houses to eat and then we pulled into Bainbridge, Maryland. A Navy Base there. And off loaded there. And we remained there overnight. And I mean they were really processing us through there fast. To get us out. And I was discharged on December 1st.

L.J. Kimball: December 1st, 1945.

Ralph Freeman: '45. I was back in school on December 3rd.

L.J. Kimball: Was that your only tour of active duty in the Marine Corps.

Ralph Freeman: At that time.

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L.J. Kimball: And you came back to the Marine Corps later?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. I went into the, ah, Reserves. And then I was in the Reserves and then I came back on active duty in . . . during Korea. And that's when they offered me that if I came back on active duty to send me to Special Agent's Course in counterintelligence.

L.J. Kimball: When did you come back on active duty?

Ralph Freeman: That was in 19 . . . 1952.

L.J. Kimball: OK. Were you still a PFC when you came back on active duty?

Ralph Freeman: No. I had finally worked up and I was a Corporal (laughing).

L.J. Kimball: You were a Corporal before you got out?

Ralph Freeman: No, I was a PFC when I got out.

L.J. Kimball: OK, but you came back in as a Corporal?

Ralph Freeman: I came back into Reserves and then I worked up to Corporal.

L.J. Kimball: Where was the Special Agent school?

Ralph Freeman: In Fort Holabird, Maryland.

L.J. Kimball: OK. Then after you graduated from that school, what did you do?

Ralph Freeman: A lot of things. First of all I went back to Japan. And, ah, worked with the National Police there. I was also. . . had a dual job there as not only Agent working with them in counterintelligence, but I was also the S-2 Chief for the regiment. Fourth Marine Regiment.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm.

Ralph Freeman: And, ah. . .

L.J. Kimball: You were still a Corporal then?

Ralph Freeman: No, Sergeant then.

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L.J. Kimball: Sergeant. OK.

Ralph Freeman: Then I had, ah, . . . We worked together on . . . on a North Korean spy net that they had working in, ah, Japan.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm.

Ralph Freeman: And then they come out with a price on my head. And lucky enough the Fourth Marine Regiment was leaving at that time, so I left with them. And, ah, the Japanese Police wanted me out of there. For my own benefit. And we went back of course with the Fourth Marine Regiment to Hawaii. Got back to Hawaii. I set up a counterintelligence office there in Kaneohe and then we started working with the various intelligence agents around there. We set up a, ah, perimeter of defense for Kaneohe because they didn't have much of a defense when we was there. And security. And then they had, ah, well they had one special deal there that I had to build a room within a room that could not be penetrated by radio or any type of listening device. They had a special deal going on there . . . that Kaneohe that had it. So I got in on that.

L.J. Kimball: That's where they could have very sensitive discussions without fear of . . .

Ralph Freeman: That's right.

L.J. Kimball: . . . being recorded or overheard.

Ralph Freeman: They had a room inside of a room and they could see completely underneath it, on the sides, on the back. And it was lined with copper sheeting.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm.

Ralph Freeman: And then the, ah . . . I started working on the, ah, International Longshoreman's Union which was a Communist organization in Hawaii.

L.J. Kimball: This was still while you were a Marine?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. But I was a civilian.

L.J. Kimball: Right. Wearing civilian clothes.

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

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L.J. Kimball: OK.

Ralph Freeman: I was known, ah, as a tech rep. And I had civilian ID and everything. The, ah . . . so I worked on that and worked with, ah, Lyndon Johnson on the, ah, Senate Unamerican Activities Committee. He came to Hawaii on the same thing and we worked with him.

L.J. Kimball: This was Lyndon Johnson?

Ralph Freeman: Lyndon Baines Johnson. Dirty old man. (laughing) But we, ah, worked on that. And that was in Hawaii four years working on . . . on various things and kinds of organizations there. And, ah. . . I finally told the General I . . . I want to go back to States. And, ah, he didn't want me to go but he said OK.

L.J. Kimball: Do you remember when the Fourth Marines and you went back to Hawaii?

(pause)

We can look it up.

Ralph Freeman: It must have been, let's see. (pause in tape)

L.J. Kimball: Well, fortunately your arrival coincides with the Fourth Marines so that's a matter of record.

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: And didn't you stay there for four years at . . .

Ralph Freeman: Stayed there for four years.

L.J. Kimball: Somewhere during this period you . . . meet Hazel?

Ralph Freeman: Well, we was married, ah, we was married in '47.

L.J. Kimball: OK.

Ralph Freeman: So. . .

L.J. Kimball: When was that picture taken of you up there in Corporal stripes?

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Ralph Freeman: When I was in the Reserve. Right after the war.

L.J. Kimball: Where were you when you were in the Reserves?

Ralph Freeman: Washington, D.C.

L.J. Kimball: Washington, D.C. When you left after four years in Hawaii, were you a Staff Sergeant by then?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: And Hazel was with you when you were in Hawaii?

Ralph Freeman: Ah, I had to bring her over at my expense.

L.J. Kimball: So you're on a unaccompanied tour in Hawaii?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: Where did you go back to States after you left Hawaii?

Ralph Freeman: Ah, they sent me back to San Diego. Marine Corps Recruit Depot.

L.J. Kimball: You worked on the . . . Recruit Depot?

Ralph Freeman: I worked on the Recruit Depot, yeah.

L.J. Kimball: You were still operating as an intelligence type at that point, as opposed to . . .

Ralph Freeman: Intelligence and, ah. . . When I got there they didn't have an Intelligence Billet and they didn't know what to do with me. So they, ah, they asked me if I would do a perimeter security evaluation and so forth and all. And I did that. Then they wanted me to write up guard orders for a . . . for the Military Police and things of that sort. So I worked on that. But when I first got there, you know, I started asking people how long you been here? Six years, seven years, eight years. I says great. So I went down and started going back to college. And, ah I was doing great until the IG came here and found out I was there. (laughs) He said what in the hell are you doing here?

L.J. Kimball: In the college?

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Ralph Freeman: No, in the . . . at San Diego.

L.J. Kimball: At San Diego.

Ralph Freeman: I was going great guns in college. Man I had worked up to be president of the student body. When they found out I was there and boom. Back to Japan I went.

L.J. Kimball: What year was this?

Ralph Freeman: Ah, this had to be sixty. . . 1960 I guess it was.

L.J. Kimball: During that time. . .

Ralph Freeman: At one time. . .

L.J. Kimball: Go ahead.

Ralph Freeman: It was '58 when I went to San Diego. And then, ah, I was there for like two years. When the IG found me and sent me to Japan.

L.J. Kimball: During the time that you were there in San Diego were there any investigations you participated in? For example, uncovering cells of homosexuals? Did you have any of that while you were there?

Ralph Freeman: No, but I did work on a lot of that in Hawaii. They, ah. . . In fact, they closed down the whole WM Barracks there at Kaneohe. Because, well, back at Headquarters Marine Corps after I started sending all this information back to them and everything, the officer [Major Hank Marshall] back there says My God we got somebody back here that is sending all of the lesbians to Hawaii. And they started investigating back in Washington too. But we had . . . We worked with the Army. I worked real close with the Army Counterintelligence there. And, ah, one thing we were the only. . . one Army guy and myself were the only sound men there, what's called DASE - Defense Against Sound equipment. So we did a lot of high-level work doing that. We also got involved, because these girls had, ah, had, ah, clearances. And at that time one of the, ah, things that the communists was doing, well they would find out someone like that. And then they would blackmail them. Threatening, you know, to expose 'em and so forth and so on if they didn't furnish 'em information. And, ah, so we worked on cases like that. And, ah, we went to the CO of a WM Barracks and we'd try to keep her abreast of what

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was going on. Then it got to the point where we knew these girls were gonna meet and we'd try to set up a surveillance and they wouldn't meet. So I went back into her office one day and I just walked right on in. I didn't even stop you know. And there she is setting there with her feet up on her desk smoking a cigar and I says son of a . . . So from there on it was downhill for 'em.

L.J. Kimball: For them?

Ralph Freeman: Huh?

L.J. Kimball: You say downhill for them?

Ralph Freeman: Downhill for them.

L.J. Kimball: Yeah.

Ralph Freeman: Because then after we got all the . . .

L.J. Kimball: But you're saying that your CO was the one that was tipping them off?

Ralph Freeman: Right. She was one herself.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm.

Ralph Freeman: And we had some nice young girls in there but they were scared to death. They were in. . . one of these situations over there in Hawaii where the butch who is the masculine one. And, ah, we had . . . They played softball. And one of these butches out there playing and her girlfr . . . was setting over in the stands and another girl was coming up and trying to make out with her and she come over with a baseball bat and hit her upside the head. Almost killed her. I mean that's how bad they were. Male homosexuals weren't like that. But the women, man, they just as soon kill you as anything if you mess with their girlfriend.

L.J. Kimball: Is this something that was just within the WMs or did you find civilians and officers' wives, for example, involved.

Ralph Freeman: Ah, no. The . . . We were asked over there. The General asked us to investigate a lot of things over there that CID [Criminal Investigation Division] should have done. Or Naval Investigative Service. And the General didn't believe neither one of them.

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L.J. Kimball: What . . . was . . .

Ralph Freeman: We had . . .

L.J. Kimball: The CID was Army wasn't it?

Ralph Freeman: No. We had Marines CID on . . . on the Base over there.

L.J. Kimball: The Marines were called CID?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: OK. Yeah, are they still called CID?

Ralph Freeman: They call them . . . they call themselves CID.

L.J. Kimball: Do they still do that?

Ralph Freeman: I think so.

L.J. Kimball: OK. Go ahead.

Ralph Freeman: If you don't correct them. (laughs) But anyway we found a wife swapping. The General had heard rumors of it, wife swapping, so we investigated that. Sure enough they did. So he cleaned that up. And that we had, ah. . . A Master Sergeant came to us or come to the General and told him that the Commissary Officer was taking food out of the warehouse. So we set up cameras at the warehouse and we set up cameras at the officer's home. And then we went in and marked a lot of the meat and then we set up our surveillance and so forth. And sure enough he comes to the warehouse with his bags, empty bags, that had been used . . . Commissary bag. Who does he have with him? CID Chief. So they go in. And they're loading up their bags. Bringing it out. Taking it over to their homes. Of course we got movies of it. Got movies of 'em taking it into the house and so forth. And once we had this, we went to the General and told him and he says let's go. So we proceeded to go down to the Officer's Quarters. And, ah, General says he wanted to see his freezer and he wanted to know why. He told him he just wanted to see his freezer and he opened it up. We put a black light in there and, man, the thing lit up like a neon sign. So needless to say, he was out. The Chief was out.

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But, ah, we had to investigate the Criminal Investigation Section there several times. Ah, one time the General got a report that they were taking stuff out of the Evidence Locker. And what they would do if they needed money, if they had money that was involved in a crime in the Evidence Locker and between pay days if they needed money they'd go in there and take some of that money out and use it and then put it back on pay day. And cigarettes, the same thing. They'd take cigarettes out. Put cigarettes back. So we caught 'em in that. But, ah, they had . . . had us doing all kinds of things over there. I got several, ah, letters of commendation for the, ah, work that we did on a lot of the hush-hush stuff.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm.

Ralph Freeman: We had one, ah, an Admiral. Was it Admiral Stumpf? Every time he had a cocktail party or anything like that, it was John Watkins who was the Army man and myself, we had to go and check the whole house out for any hidden devices. And then go there during the cocktail hour and monitor and so forth and so on. But, ah, he never had one party that he didn't have us come there and monitor.

L.J. Kimball: When did you get back over to Japan?

Ralph Freeman: That would have been sixty. . . sixty-one.

L.J. Kimball: And you were Staff Sergeant then?

Ralph Freeman: Staff Sergeant. And at that time I went to, ah. . . They sent me to Iwakuni.

L.J. Kimball: You're still in Counterintelligence.

Ralph Freeman: Right. We had an office . . . Counterintelligence office there. Ah, at Iwakuni. And we, again, worked with the National Police and so forth on various things. At that time we was having a lot of Communist demonstrations against the Base and so forth. And, ah, Communist attacks on Military out in town sometimes. So of course we had to. . . we worked on that with them.

L.J. Kimball: How long were you in Japan?

Ralph Freeman: I spent a year there. And, ah . . .

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L.J. Kimball: Was that an accompanied tour?

Ralph Freeman: No. Unaccompanied. Then I came back. '62 I reported into Camp Lejeune. January of '62.

L.J. Kimball: And who did you report to in Camp Lejeune?

Ralph Freeman: To the, ah, Second Counterintelligence Team.

L.J. Kimball: And how long were you at Camp Lejeune then?

Ralph Freeman: Well, let's see. '62. '63. When was Kennedy assassinated? '64?

L.J. Kimball: '63.

Ralph Freeman: '63. Just before he was assassinated I was sent down to, ah, Puerto Rico.

L.J. Kimball: Still as a Marine?

Ralph Freeman: As a Marine Counterintelligence.

L.J. Kimball: And how long were you down there?

Ralph Freeman: And I was down there about three, four months. Working, ah, undercover down there.

L.J. Kimball: But still as a member of Second, ah, Counterintelligence Team?

Ralph Freeman: Mmm-hmm. Right.

L.J. Kimball: So your base was still Camp Lejeune? You were just down there TAD?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. I was down there and I lived and worked out of the Police Department there. At, ah. . .

L.J. Kimball: San Juan?

Ralph Freeman: No. What the heck is that island down there?

L.J. Kimball: Viegas?

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Ralph Freeman: Los Veg. . . I mean Vegas, Vieques. Yeah. Ah, we was having a lot of problems with the, ah, independent political party down there. And they was causing all kinds of trouble and so forth, trying to stir up, ah, things against the Military. And the base out there. And they're doing it again.

L.J. Kimball: Yeah.

Ralph Freeman: But, ah, worked on getting the information on that. And, ah, on the people and who were part of it and so forth. And this was the same group that was involved in shooting up Congress.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm.

Ralph Freeman: And then I came back from that.

L.J. Kimball: Back to Lejeune?

Ralph Freeman: Back to Lejeune. And then back to, ah, I think it was shortly after that I went to, ah, Spain.

L.J. Kimball: That was permanent change of station?

Ralph Freeman: No. They had. . . they had a problem. Exercise going on.

L.J. Kimball: That's still TAD then.

Ralph Freeman: And I went to, ah, work the CI going over there on a ship and then when we got there, ah, I was attached to the Guardia Civil, ah, working in Spain. And then we came back. Then I went to Japan.

L.J. Kimball: OK. That was PCS [Permanent Change of Station] from Camp Lejeune back to Japan then? What year was that? Just off the top of your head?

Ralph Freeman: Must have been '64. Decemb. . . Probably around December of '64.

L.J. Kimball: You had been promoted by then?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. I was a Gunnery Sergeant.

L.J. Kimball: OK.

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Ralph Freeman: And then I went to. . . went back to Iwakuni. Then I was called down to Okinawa for undercover work there on the, ah, Lt. Col. who was suspected of furnishing information to the Russians.

L.J. Kimball: Great. A Marine?

Ralph Freeman: A Marine. So I worked on that case and then I went back to Japan.

L.J. Kimball: Was he?

Ralph Freeman: Yes he was. I followed him to India. And took pictures of him and so forth passing material over to another person.

L.J. Kimball: What was his motivation, do you recall? Why was he doing this?

Ralph Freeman: Money I guess. I don't know. I just did the investigation and turned it over to a. . . the higher command, you know.

L.J. Kimball: It begs the question. You got a Lt. Col. in the Marine Corps. Why is he betraying his country? I'm kind of curious, ah, what the rationale was?

Ralph Freeman: But, ah, most of the time it is money. You know, they want that. . . that money. And then I went down to, ah, Vietnam.

L.J. Kimball: What year was this?

Ralph Freeman: This was '65.

L.J. Kimball: And you were still a Marine?

Ralph Freeman: Yes. Still CI.

L.J. Kimball: OK. And this is permanent change of station down to Vietnam?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah, I'm sure it was. Yeah, the whole. . . Yeah, we went down there and made the landing on. . . and, ah. . . When'd they make a landing at Chu Lai? July. . . or June or July.

L.J. Kimball: Is this Starlite? Or before then?

Ralph Freeman: That's when we went in there and established the Base.

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L.J. Kimball: At Chu Lai?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: OK. So you went with the group that established the base at Chu Lai.

Ralph Freeman: Yeah, established the Base there.

L.J. Kimball: OK.

Ralph Freeman: Ah, and of course my job was, ah, the black, white and gray list which we had nothing. We had nothing to go on.

L.J. Kimball: So you had to work with the Vietnamese?

Ralph Freeman: So I had to work with some of the Vietnam. . . Vietnamese people, the National Police and . . . and others. CIA was there. And, ah, they were supposed to be furnishing their information and most of the information they had was zilch. So we had to go out and get our own stuff.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm.

Ralph Freeman: So my interpreter and I, we'd go out and do our job and come back in as the other sub teams were going out and . . . and doing their job and getting the information and so forth.

L.J. Kimball: This was the thirteen-month tour for you?

Ralph Freeman: Uh-huh. The, ah. . . They were building the air station there. The civilian contractors. Every time I'd walk in the office, he'd say oh no, not again, because we'd be there to arrest somebody. (laughs)

L.J. Kimball: Did you do this in uniform? Or you're in . . .

Ralph Freeman: No.

L.J. Kimball: . . . civilian clothes?

Ralph Freeman: Well, sometimes we did . . . (pause in tape)

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L.J. Kimball: Tape two, side one. Mr. Freeman was saying that sometimes he was in uniform, sometimes in civilian clothes in the performance of his duties.

(pause in tape)

A picture here. It's a big Montage. It shows you as a . . . this is a Recruit.

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: And it looks like it's an O3.

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. It is.

L.J. Kimball: OK. And you have another picture on your board here.

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. Not on the board here.

L.J. Kimball: OK.

(pause in tape)

You left Vietnam in '66?

Ralph Freeman: December of '65.

L.J. Kimball: December '65. And you're still a Gunnery Sergeant?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. Made Master [Sergeant] when I got back here.

L.J. Kimball: And from Vietnam where'd you go?

Ralph Freeman: Back to Camp Lejeune.

L.J. Kimball: Back in '65 you go to Lejeune. And were you back with Second CIT when you got back to Lejeune?

Ralph Freeman: No. I came back as the Counterintelligence Chief for the Division.

L.J. Kimball: Second Division CI Chief. OK. I'm looking at a picture of you with a sawed off carbine with a banana clip in it, it looks like. And this is how you operated in, . . .

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Ralph Freeman: In Vietnam.

L.J. Kimball: At what? Dark green or black T-shirt?

Ralph Freeman: Black.

L.J. Kimball: Black. Jungle utilities. Jungle boots. Ah. Jungle hat. Bandana around the neck. Yeah.

Ralph Freeman: Didn't look too much like a Marine did it? (laughing)

L.J. Kimball: No. Look like a real bandito there. So you came back in '65 of the . . .

Ralph Freeman: December of '65 I think it was when I got back.

L.J. Kimball: As the CI Chief for the Second Division.

Ralph Freeman: Ah, Second Division. Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: All right. You lived in Base housing or did you get in town?

Ralph Freeman: No. I have never lived in Base housing.

L.J. Kimball: OK. Where did you find a place to live?

Ralph Freeman: We lived in, ah, McArthur Estates. You know where that is?

L.J. Kimball: Not off the top of my head.

Ralph Freeman: Out on Gum Branch Road.

L.J. Kimball: Yeah. I know where it is.

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: And how long were you with the Second Division?

Ralph Freeman: Until I retired.

L.J. Kimball: Which was?

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Ralph Freeman: 1970.

L.J. Kimball: OK.

Ralph Freeman: April 1970.

L.J. Kimball: Let's go back to your first visit to Camp Lejeune. And you're going to school there . . . artillery, basically an artillery person.

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: Did you get a chance to go out on liberty into Jacksonville?

Ralph Freeman: Not in Jacksonville. Wasn't anything go on liberty for.

L.J. Kimball: Really? Where you'd go for liberty?

Ralph Freeman: Kinston.

L.J. Kimball: So instead of visiting the local hot spots in . . . in Jacksonville when you were here in, what was it, '43, '44?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. There was no hot spots in Jacksonville.

L.J. Kimball: There weren't?

Ralph Freeman: No.

L.J. Kimball: Nothing to do?

Ralph Freeman: When you come across the bridge, the old bridge, onto, ah, what they call Old Ports. . . Old, ah. . .

L.J. Kimball: Old Bridge Street.

Ralph Freeman: Old Bridge Street.

L.J. Kimball: This is coming from the Wilmington side?

Ralph Freeman: Like Wilmington there yeah.

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L.J. Kimball: OK.

Ralph Freeman: And, ah, and, ah, Kinston area. You come across that bridge. There was a theater there. A small theater. On the right hand side. As you come in town. And then on the corner where the County Manager's office is now . . .

L.J. Kimball: Right.

Ralph Freeman: . . . was an old filling station.

L.J. Kimball: OK. Do you remember the name of the filling station or the type of gas they had?

Ralph Freeman: No.

L.J. Kimball: OK.

Ralph Freeman: And then on the other corner, ah, was a bank. Ah. . .

L.J. Kimball: You talking about the . . . where Old Bridge Street runs into Court Street?

Ralph Freeman: Mill Avenue.

L.J. Kimball: OK.

Ralph Freeman: Would be, ah, would be the street. Which is not there now.

L.J. Kimball: All right.

Ralph Freeman: But, ah . . .

L.J. Kimball: The other side of the street. You talking about over where the Courthouse is now?

Ralph Freeman: Like where the Sheriff Department is now.

L.J. Kimball: Yeah.

Ralph Freeman: OK. Coming in town you had the filling station on this corner where the Manager's office is and across the . . . On this corner was the . . . the bank, a

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hardware store, and a couple of other stores. And then you had the Courthouse right where it is now. The old Courthouse, not the new.

L.J. Kimball: Right.

Ralph Freeman: And, ah, then if you was going toward Court Street across from the Manager's Office, there was another hardware shop. And then a barbershop and a Masonic Lodge. I'm trying to think if there was another bank. I think there was another bank.

L.J. Kimball: There was.

Ralph Freeman: I think there was another bank on the corner.

L.J. Kimball: There was a bank on the corner right next to the Masonic Lodge.

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. And, ah, then Court Street, ah. . . you had, ah, several clothing stores to the, ah, to the right.

L.J. Kimball: Do you remember any of the names of them?

Ralph Freeman: Ah, one was Jacksonville Department Store.

L.J. Kimball: OK.

Ralph Freeman: And then you had the, ah. . . across from that was the Five and Dime Store. And I don't know if was Roses at that time or not. But it was Five. . . Five and Dime.

L.J. Kimball: So when you're looking south on Court Street, the Jacksonville Department Store was on the right.

Ralph Freeman: On the right hand side.

L.J. Kimball: And the Five and Dime was on the left.

Ralph Freeman: On the left.

L.J. Kimball: OK.

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Ralph Freeman: And . . . in, ah . . . there were several other stores or something along there and then you come on down towards the Courthouse on the, ah, east side. You had a drug store and I think another clothing store. I can't say it was Margolis. I don't know who was there then.

L.J. Kimball: Now were the roads paved then?

Ralph Freeman: The street was paved. That street was paved, yeah.

L.J. Kimball: Court Street was.

Ralph Freeman: Right.

L.J. Kimball: And Old Bridge, was that paved?

Ralph Freeman: The Old Bridge was paved.

L.J. Kimball: OK.

Ralph Freeman: And then we went on past the Courthouse going on down you had, ah. . . where the parking lot is now. . .

L.J. Kimball: Right.

Ralph Freeman: . . . was a warehouse, pool parlor and things like that. And on the other side was, ah, some other little stores and all along there. And where the Tax Office is was the Plymouth Dealer.

L.J. Kimball: OK.

Ralph Freeman: Foscue.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm.

Ralph Freeman: And, ah, then there was . . . then the US . . . I think the USO was down there. And then there was a . . . I don't remember what was on the corner there. But down. . . you walked down where the bus station was and the bus station was in the same place where it is now. I mean, same size building (laughs) as it is now.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm.

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Ralph Freeman: But the street did end there. The busses went in and made a turn and come back out. And all that area down behind where the bus station is now, ah, including where the cleaners and laundry . . .

L.J. Kimball: Right.

Ralph Freeman: . . . and all that stuff is, was all open field pastures where cattle were.

L.J. Kimball: OK. So Court Street came to an end there where the bus station was.

Ralph Freeman: Right.

L.J. Kimball: Do you remember Murrill Circle being there up where the Bojangles is now at the end of Court Street?

Ralph Freeman: No. There was nothing. That was all pasture.

L.J. Kimball: OK.

Ralph Freeman: All pastures back in there.

L.J. Kimball: And there. . . At that point, ah, did 17 go through there or was there a road?

Ralph Freeman: 17 came up across the old bridge and then came out to Chaney Avenue and around and then shot up towards New Bern.

L.J. Kimball: So the . . . the bypass wasn't there then? You know, the one . . .

Ralph Freeman: Oh, no. No.

L.J. Kimball: . . . by the USO?

Ralph Freeman: The new bridge wasn't there.

L.J. Kimball: OK.

Ralph Freeman: None of that was there.

L.J. Kimball: All right.

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Ralph Freeman: And, ah, being where Chaney Avenue comes out to where it made a turn there by the . . . where the school is now. That used to be the old Jacksonville High School.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm.

Ralph Freeman: And it would. . . 24 would turn out that way going out to the Base. And then from . . . from the high school which was on the edge of town, on out, it was just noting but tobacco fields, tobacco barns and that was it on a two-lane road.

L.J. Kimball: OK. We're talking 17 . . .

Ralph Freeman: 24.

L.J. Kimball: 24 goes down to the Base.

Ralph Freeman: 24 going to the Base.

L.J. Kimball: What about 17?

Ralph Freeman: 17 went on up past, ah, where Chaney Avenue and 24 went this way and 17 went on that way. Still two lanes.

L.J. Kimball: Yeah. And probably there wasn't much on 17 at that point.

Ralph Freeman: No. Wasn't anything on 17 at all.

L.J. Kimball: Between there and Maysville was probably pretty empty wasn't it?

Ralph Freeman: It was all fields just like it was on 24 basically.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm.

Ralph Freeman: Couple of houses I think out there. But. . . farm houses.

L.J. Kimball: What was there in Jacksonville in the way of recreation for troops?

Ralph Freeman: There was nothing there.

L.J. Kimball: Bars?

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Ralph Freeman: U . . . USO came. . . No bars because this is a . . . this was a dry county. [!?!]

L.J. Kimball: Was it?

Ralph Freeman: It was like that at the Second Front out there. They could go over there but the only thing you could do is sneak in there and try to get some moonshine.

L.J. Kimball: The Second Front was dry at this point?

Ralph Freeman: Mmm-hmm.

L.J. Kimball: Um, when did they start selling beer in Onslow County?

Ralph Freeman: I don't know. They were selling beer when I came back in '62.

L.J. Kimball: Sometime between when you left in . . . around '44 . . .

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: Well, Kinston's up in what, Lenoir County?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: Did they sell beer up there?

Ralph Freeman: You know, I don't know. I think. . . I think maybe they did.

L.J. Kimball: OK. Jacksonville probably had some restaurants.

Ralph Freeman: They had one.

L.J. Kimball: One restaurant?

Ralph Freeman: A diner. An old car, railroad car like and it was right across from the bus station.

L.J. Kimball: And that was on. . . .

Ralph Freeman: Served the best doggone fried chicken you ever tasted.

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L.J. Kimball: Was that New Bridge Street or was that . . . ?

Ralph Freeman: No. That was on Chaney Avenue.

L.J. Kimball: Chaney. So we have Coleman's . . . a diner . . .

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: . . . Coleman's Diner I believe. And, ah, you had the . . . Didn't you have a movie theater on Court Street also and Old Bridge Street?

Ralph Freeman: No. The only one that I knew of, ah, was over on, ah, on Old Bridge Street.

L.J. Kimball: Old Bridge Street. So then you go up to . . . Kinston on liberty and I suppose there were girls up in Kinston which was the principle. . .

Ralph Freeman: Well, they had, ah. . . They had the cattle cars. That they would run up there.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm. . . from Lejeune?

Ralph Freeman: From the . . . from the bus station.

L.J. Kimball: The bus station in Jacksonville?

Ralph Freeman: Mmm-hmm.

L.J. Kimball: These were military cattle cars?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: OK.

Ralph Freeman: But they'd pull in there and you could get on there and you could ride up to, ah, Kinston. Whether they had any going to Wilmington or not, I don't know. I never went to Wilmington. I went to Kinston one time. And when I got up there because I. . . heck, I was, you know, a high school kid.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm.

Ralph Freeman: So I went up to the high school. And met some guys out there. And girls out there. And . . .

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L.J. Kimball: You walked out to the high school in uniform?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. You had to be in uniform.

L.J. Kimball: Just to meet. . . just to socialize. Meet people your own age and talk to 'em?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: . . . You wouldn't be trying to pick up any of the young female students?

Ralph Freeman: No. No. Just went out there and, ah, and, ah, got with them. And, ah, I started going with this young girl. Her father owned a bowling alley. So whenever I got to Kinston I could go and bowl free. Had a snack bar there. I'd get a free sandwich. And, ah, we knew the boys on the . . . on a . . . taking the tickets and all at the theater. And we could get in the theater free.

L.J. Kimball: Up in Kinston?

Ralph Freeman: Up in Kinston.

L.J. Kimball: Right. And you don't remember having a beer or anything up there.

Ralph Freeman: No. I never. . . I didn't drink.

L.J. Kimball: What was the drinking age in those days anyway? Do you know?

Ralph Freeman: I imagine it's probably 18.

L.J. Kimball: So if you were a 17 year old there you couldn't . . . supposedly couldn't get anything to drink.

Ralph Freeman: No. I drank Cokes and Pepsi's and things of that sort.

L.J. Kimball: Did you ever get down to Wilmington or up to New Bern?

Ralph Freeman: Never go to Wilmington. Never got to New Bern.

L.J. Kimball: Did you see any black Marines?

Ralph Freeman: No. The first black Marines I saw was on Pelelieu.

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L.J. Kimball: What were they doing?

Ralph Freeman: Longshoremen. (They did work like shore party.)

L.J. Kimball: Now you were here in '44. There were black Marines out in Montford Point. Since you didn't see any black Marines, you didn't get out to Montford Point?

Ralph Freeman: I didn't see. . . no.

L.J. Kimball: Did you hear any stories about there being black Marines?

Ralph Freeman: Didn't even know there was any out there. Never heard of 'em.

L.J. Kimball: Did you know there were women Marines at that time?

Ralph Freeman: We had heard that there were some women Marines down at the other end. When you come in there at Building One and, at the circle, and you go that way. And they kept them back down there somewhere.

L.J. Kimball: You didn't have a chance to go get 'em?

Ralph Freeman: No. Never had a chance to fraternize.

L.J. Kimball: If you had had a chance to fraternize would you have gone down there?

Ralph Freeman: I'm sure every . . . all of us were.

L.J. Kimball: So you knew they existed but you never saw them either?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: Were there any stories going around at that time about how women Marines fit into the Marine Corps? Did you have any perception of what they did?

Ralph Freeman: Mmm-mmm. We all . . . we understood that they did office work.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm.

Ralph Freeman: And of course they call 'em BAMs. [Broad-Assed Marines]

L.J. Kimball: Yeah. Yeah. Beautiful American Marines, right?

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Ralph Freeman: Yeah. (laughing)

L.J. Kimball: What do you remember of Camp Lejeune itself? Was all the construction done at that point?

Ralph Freeman: No. Oh gosh no. They . . . they were still working and building and so forth. They, ah . . . Building 15 which is where the Medical was.

L.J. Kimball: That's Dental Quarters now isn't it?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. It's Dental now I think.

L.J. Kimball: But that was the Dispensary.

Ralph Freeman: But that was the . . . the big Dispensary. That's where you went for your shots and, ah . . .

L.J. Kimball: As opposed to the hospital?

Ralph Freeman: There was no hospital that I knew of.

L.J. Kimball: There was no hospital that you're aware of.

Ralph Freeman: All that was the building there. That was the only . . .

L.J. Kimball: That was it. Building 15 was the Dispensary.

Ralph Freeman: Was it.

L.J. Kimball: Yeah.

Ralph Freeman: And, ah, had that. They had both barracks built on either side of Holcomb Boulevard going down to Building Two. Building Two was down there.

L.J. Kimball: And at that time, it was what? Do you recall?

Ralph Freeman: I don't know if it had been a Division Headquarters or what. What, as a Receiving . . . ah, that's where all the . . . everybody was received into Lejeune was there.

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L.J. Kimball: So that was kind of the Receiving Area. The Reception Center for the Marines coming and reporting aboard the Base was in Building Two.

Ralph Freeman: Right.

L.J. Kimball: Well, that could be. Because it was the Headquarters of the Training Center.

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: At that point.

Ralph Freeman: That probably would have been it.

L.J. Kimball: Yeah.

Ralph Freeman: Because I know that's where we was taken, ah, there to report in. And all of our paperwork was done and then we was put on trucks and taken out to different places.

L.J. Kimball: So to the best of your recollection you thought your barracks was out in Area 5.

Ralph Freeman: I think so.

L.J. Kimball: I'm asking you to go back a long time. But . . . did that area look newer than the barracks down near Area 1 at the other end of the Base?

Ralph Freeman: Oh yeah. Looked brand new.

L.J. Kimball: Was there any grass?

Ralph Freeman: Not much.

L.J. Kimball: Trees?

Ralph Freeman: There were some trees, yeah.

L.J. Kimball: Little trees? Or big ones?

Ralph Freeman: No, we had big . . . big pine trees there.

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L.J. Kimball: Did they look like trees that were there before the Base was?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: Were all the streets aboard Camp Lejeune paved to your recollection?

Ralph Freeman: The main drag from the circle down was paved and I think Holcolmb Boulevard coming in from the main gate was paved. And down by Building Two was paved.

L.J. Kimball: Going up toward Paradise Point . . . was that paved? The main drag that went up by the Bicentennial Oak and those places?

Ralph Freeman: Well, see, I never went . . . When I was there I never went past the circle going that way.

L.J. Kimball: Do you remember any service club there at Lejeune? Recreation centers by whatever name?

Ralph Freeman: They must have had a recreation center. But the little buildings that they're using for gyms and all now are theaters.

L.J. Kimball: Just entirely theaters?

Ralph Freeman: Just entirely theaters.

L.J. Kimball: Seats in 'em?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: OK.

Ralph Freeman: Not . . . not fixed seats. I mean, ah . . .

L.J. Kimball: Folding seats.

Ralph Freeman: Folding seats. You would use it for other things probably.

L.J. Kimball: Do you recall if it was used for a basketball court, that sort of thing?

Ralph Freeman: No. No. Don't remember ever . . .

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L.J. Kimball: Just principally a theater.

Ralph Freeman: Just principally a theater. It was only open at night as far as I know.

L.J. Kimball: Did you ever use those? Ever go to those theaters?

Ralph Freeman: Oh, yeah.

L.J. Kimball: What'd it cost you to see a movie?

Ralph Freeman: Nothing.

L.J. Kimball: Nothing.

Ralph Freeman: They were free.

L.J. Kimball: Did officers and staff NCO's go to the same theaters with you?

Ralph Freeman: Yup.

L.J. Kimball: Did they have a special section or some set up for them.

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. I think they had a special section. They had the center section towards the front I think was for officers and then the sides and the back and all was for enlisted.

L.J. Kimball: You're getting pretty salty by now. You've been through Boot Camp, been through your specialist training and one thing or another. What was your feelings about the Marine Corps at this point?

Ralph Freeman: I still liked it. There was nothing like it. Proud that I was able to make it as far as I had made it.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm.

Ralph Freeman: We had, ah, one thing too at that time on the mess halls . . . I remember we marched to the mess hall and then we'd march in and march down along the tables and set down. And the tables would already be set. Had china on it. Not metal trays. And then they had they the . . . the, ah, messmen pushing

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these big carts filled up with all kinds of potatoes and food and all like that.
And it was home style.

L.J. Kimball: Family style?

Ralph Freeman: You ate and so forth. And if you got empty you held it up. They'd come around, take the empty one and give you a full one. Put it right there.

L.J. Kimball: Did everybody march to chow then or was it just because it was a school or a Replacement Battalion situation?

Ralph Freeman: Everybody that I knew of marched to chow. But I guess we were all probably in that category.

L.J. Kimball: I know at some point in the Marine Corps, and you probably remember too, when you went to chow, you marched there.

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: You get in formation and march to chow.

Ralph Freeman: That's right.

L.J. Kimball: That was pretty much the case then? And obviously in the forties. . .

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: . . . because that continued up probably to the sixties also when you were still in the Marine Corps. Do you have any recollection of a, a rec center or a service club?

Ralph Freeman: I don't remember any of 'em.

L.J. Kimball: A slop chute or anything like that?

Ralph Freeman: Like I say, when I was there in that school, I was in the head most of the night studying.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm. That's when you were a PFC?

Ralph Freeman: Yup.

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L.J. Kimball: What was your impression of . . . I don't know if you have a recollection, but, ah, any impression of what Marines were like? Granted, there wasn't a whole lot to compare them to at that point in your experience, but did you have any overall ideas or impressions about Marines, the Marines Corps at that point, other than it was great to be in and you were very proud to be a Marine?

Ralph Freeman: Well, we knew. . . of course we was. . . it was drummed in our heads, you know, about O'Bannon and all of that stuff. The. . .the Marines and all, ah, up through the ranks. And, ah, ah, I guess I could say I was privileged to meet, ah. . . What the heck was his name? He made a hero of himself in the South Pacific and he had just came back and was sent back.

L.J. Kimball: Wasn't Chesty Puller was it?

Ralph Freeman: No. He was a Master Sergeant. He was always finding where the action was. And wouldn't stay where he was supposed to stay. He come back with all kinds of medals. Ah, doggone it.

L.J. Kimball: Is his name pretty familiar in the war?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah, his name's in some of the history books I imagine. But, ah. . . [Lou Diamond]

L.J. Kimball: Could think of a lot of names probably.

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. But it, ah. . . I guess that's probably . . . Unless you got some more questions there buddy about all I can think of.

L.J. Kimball: Well, yeah . . . I have a few more . . .

Ralph Freeman: At the main gate. The main gate was basically where it is now. But it was just little old . . . well you know the old sentry shack.

L.J. Kimball: Yeah.

Ralph Freeman: And that's all that was there.

L.J. Kimball: OK. The sentry shack that used to be there was further inside the Base wasn't it?

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Ralph Freeman: Yes. It was a little bit farther. . . in farther off the highway.

L.J. Kimball: The next time you came back to Camp Lejeune, you're back during some of the turbulent racial period, weren't you?

Ralph Freeman: Yes.

L.J. Kimball: Especially in Second CI, you probably knew pretty much about all the stuff that was going on. What was going on?

Ralph Freeman: Well, they're. . . We had to investigate quite a few complaints like that because they, ah. . . You get a letter from Congress coming down and saying some Congressman was coming down to check on this and to check on that and so forth. Ah, and most of this I guess was in sixty . . . '62, '63. And of course the General would have us checking it out and so forth. But most of the time we found out there was nothing to it.

L.J. Kimball: You're talking about racial. . .

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: . . . problems.

Ralph Freeman: It was just. . . it was just one or two of the. . . The blacks would, ah, maybe some Sergeant would tell them to do something and they didn't want to do it. And they'd go saying that he was trying to force 'em and all this kind of stuff. And, ah, it got. . . it got pretty bad there, but they just didn't want to obey orders, that's all. That was it basically.

L.J. Kimball: Now it got to the point later on in the sixties and the early seventies where there were actual large gangs and fights and major racial confrontation. It wasn't that bad in the early sixties?

Ralph Freeman: Ah, no. We did have some occasions there, ah, later on. I can't tell you when. Ah, white Marines walking from barracks to barracks would be attacked by blacks and beaten up.

L.J. Kimball: This was in the early sixties?

Ralph Freeman: Mmmm-hmmm.

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L.J. Kimball: Now by this time in your career, you've seen black Marines and you've seen women Marines. Did you have some kind of impression where black Marines fit in the Marine Corps? Did you have a feeling that, they weren't as good as white Marines, or that they were being discriminated against one way or the other?

Ralph Freeman: No. I . . . the, ah . . . I had some very good friends that were black Marines that did their job and they were as down on, as hard on some of these other blacks that didn't want to abide by the rules as the whites were. And as far as I can see they were doing their job and did a good job.

L.J. Kimball: So apart from your co-workers which were very professional and good Marines, which is redundant I suppose, was there a general impression in the Corps that, ah, blacks were treated differently? That they were discriminated against?

Ralph Freeman: They were treated differently by having . . . handling with kid gloves. The NCO's were afraid to give 'em an order and that's the point it got to. And they . . . That's wh . . . where the problems started arising.

L.J. Kimball: Was there a feeling that black Marines somehow took away something from the Corps, or they were a positive contribution?

Ralph Freeman: I'd say the majority of 'em made a contribution. But there was a . . . a small segment of them that . . . that, all they was looking for a freeloader it looked like to me. And I tell you what really turned me off on . . . on some. The barracks, the open squad bays. *No one* is supposed to be in those barracks during the daytime. *Nobody*. Unless you got a sick leave, or a sick chit. And if I had business down there and I could down there and I'd walk through some of those squad bays, there'd be black Marines laying in the rack playing their music, trash on the floor. That wasn't my Marine Corps.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm.

Ralph Freeman: And that's one thing that turned me off on some of these . . . these jokers like that. It was just nothing but a pigpen. And here they are in there but the NCO's are afraid to tell them to get out because if they do, it's discrimination.

L.J. Kimball: Did you have a feeling that there was a lack of command support in enforcing discipline with the blacks?

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Ralph Freeman: The handling with kid gloves went all the way up. Except to the General.

L.J. Kimball: Except? It didn't include the General?

L.J. Kimball: The General didn't know what was going on. Because he wasn't being told the whole story.

L.J. Kimball: Would you say, looking at the black Marines, that there was about the same number of criminals of various variety . . . among them as there were with the white Marines or would you see more troublemakers on the black side?

Ralph Freeman: Well from our standpoint we had some troublemakers on the white side too because they was involved in, ah, in some of these other off the wall organizations like the Students for Democratic Government.

L.J. Kimball: You saw that in the Marine Corps at that time?

Ralph Freeman: And organizations like that. And trying to print ah, ah, clandestine papers that they distributed on Base. So I can't say that, you know, it was all black. There was a heck of a lot of whites that was involved in. . .

L.J. Kimball: The other end of the . . .

Ralph Freeman: . . . things.

L.J. Kimball: . . . sort of the spectrum on the white side, how about Ku Klux Klan?

Ralph Freeman: Yes. We had, in fact, quite a few of those.

L.J. Kimball: Now those of us that lived through that period knew that it existed because it did and we had to experience it. How'd they get in the Marine Corps? Was the Marine Corps that desperate that they lowered the standards to let these type of people in? What's your feeling on that?

Ralph Freeman: Have you worked with recruiters?

L.J. Kimball: I've heard all sorts of stories about having to meet quotas . . .

Ralph Freeman: You can go . . . you can go to a courtroom sometimes and the judge will say OK it's either thirty days of join the Marines.

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L.J. Kimball: I know that's the way it used to be but you have a buyer's or seller's market and the Marine Corps wouldn't feel that they had to take that unless they couldn't get the quality people they wanted.

Ralph Freeman: Well, here's the thing. Your recruiters are just like a salesman. They have a quota.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm.

Ralph Freeman: If they don't meet that quota it reflects on their fitness report which reflects on promotions and assignments and things of that sort. So these guys have to do just about anything that they can do including turning their heads in order to get these people in there so they can meet their quota. And I think it's one of the worst things the Marine Corps does is to slap quotas on these recruiters. Because they're gonna drop their quality if they continue to do it.

L.J. Kimball: Sort of one of those classical management studies where you establish the criteria for success as numbers, not quality.

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: And so they. . .

Ralph Freeman: That's right.

L.J. Kimball: . . . get the numbers anyway they can.

Ralph Freeman: They . . . the quota come down saying we need, ah, forty from your district and then the officer in charge of the district goes out and says I want you to get ten, you get ten, you get ten. And if they don't get ten, it's marked on their fitness report.

L.J. Kimball: Well by this time Jacksonville's changed considerably . . .

Ralph Freeman: Oh Lord.

L.J. Kimball: . . . since your experience in '44. What was Jacksonville like in the early sixties when you were here?

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Ralph Freeman: Well, I came back into Jacksonville. I couldn't believe the size of the town. It was really large. I was really surprised to see Court Street which was nothing but bars and . . . (pause in tape)

L.J. Kimball: Tape three, side one. You were saying Jacksonville had grown and you were really surprised to see Court Street.

Ralph Freeman: Yeah with all the bars because of course when I've been here it'd been dry. And here it is all these bars both sides with prostitutes and all walking up and down the streets. And you couldn't drive a car down the street hardly because of people all over. It's just like a . . . a . . . one of these malls like that they have, you know, that there's no automobiles allowed on it and just people walk anywhere.

L.J. Kimball: Right. Pedestrian mall.

Ralph Freeman: And that's just the way it was. I mean from one end of Court Street, well from Railroad Street on Court all the way down to the bus station, that's the way it was. I mean you . . . you couldn't drive a car down. If you did you had to watch out you didn't run over somebody or hit somebody. And, ah, of course the police out there are walking. The MP's walking. The Shore Parties . . . ah, Shore Patrol walking. But that was a big disappointment to me because I hadn't expected to see that here.

L.J. Kimball: Were the Marines then, were they still required to wear uniforms on liberty or could they wear civilian clothes?

Ralph Freeman: At that time, no. They could wear civilian clothes.

L.J. Kimball: I suspect, just kind of leading to your recollections, that this was pretty much a free fire zone, a total lack of recognition that they were part of the Marine Corps at this point. No discipline. No pride, esprit d'corps, every man for himself sort of situation in the streets.

Ralph Freeman: Down there you were there to get a drink and get a woman. That looked just to be the way it was. Everybody head for Court Street. Liberty. Head for Court Street.

L.J. Kimball: I guess being in Second CI at this point also you're kind of aware of some of the underground goings on down there on Court Street.

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Ralph Freeman: Oh yeah. We worked with the, ah . . . I worked with the Police Department, Sheriff Department pretty closely. But, ah, the rest of the town, you know, it had really grown up like, ah, like New Bridge Street. When I had been back here before it only went to about where the high school is. And, ah, it was a dirt street out there. And, ah, of course now they had all these buildings and stores and all this kind of stuff along there.

L.J. Kimball: Was New Bridge Street still the economic center of Jacksonville then or had it gone beyond that? The New River Shopping Center was there by then, was it not?

Ralph Freeman: Ah, New River Shopping Center came in after I left.

L.J. Kimball: It was there . . . in the fifties.

Ralph Freeman: Ah, well I'm talking about forties. When I, you know, when I . . .

L.J. Kimball: Right.

Ralph Freeman: When I came back in '62, yeah, it was there. Yeah, it was all there then.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm. Remember Sears and Penney's and Belks?

Ralph Freeman: Ah, Sears was in New River Shopping Center. And, ah, Belks, Belks, Belks . . .

L.J. Kimball: The City Hall took over Belks.

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: I was wondering if Belks was there then or not.

Ralph Freeman: It may have been.

L.J. Kimball: Do you remember any of the other major stores at the New River Shopping Center?

Ralph Freeman: Ah, you had something like United Appliances. You had the drugstore. Ah. Sears. Sears was located where the, ah, Pottery Place is now. You had various, you know, dress shops and things like that back in there.

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L.J. Kimball: New Bridge Street itself had . . . a lot of commercial activity, a lot of stores along there?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. Yeah, you had Boomtown Furniture on it. Ah.

L.J. Kimball: Iwo Jima Theater. Was that there?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. That was there then. And, ah, then they had all. . . all these other stores along there. And some restaurants. And, ah, I think the Post Office was there too.

L.J. Kimball: Is this when you lived out on McArthur Estates?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: Given this particular period, were there a lot of undesirable organizations trying to recruit Marines, like the Students for Democratic Society the Black Panthers or whatever?

Ralph Freeman: It was when I was here in that. . . that time, yes.

L.J. Kimball: You had to deal with that?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. We had to investigate and, ah, get 'em out.

L.J. Kimball: Wasn't, ah, somewhere around this time, wasn't Chesty Puller the Division Commander and closed down the town? Do you recall that incident?

Ralph Freeman: No I don't.

L.J. Kimball: OK. It's been a while. I'd have to go back and check myself the chronology but I know at one point because he thought the town was taking advantage of the Marines, he made the town off limits and they changed their ways in a hurry as you might suspect.

Ralph Freeman: Oh yeah. Especially Court Street. (laughs)

L.J. Kimball: Looking at the overall quality of Marines now in the early sixties compared to what you knew in '44 here at Camp Lejeune, how had it changed?

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Ralph Freeman: Drastically. The honesty and the esprit d'corps of the Marines has changed drastically. Back in the forties I could walk out and leave my wallet laying on my rack.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm.

Ralph Freeman: And come back and it'd still be there. You can't do that today.

L.J. Kimball: Well in the sixties, was that the case then?

Ralph Freeman: No. You couldn't do it in the sixties. But it, ah . . . it was just everyone was . . . was so proud to be a Marine that most of 'em tried to stay out of trouble. I know all those groups going up there to Kinston, we only had a handful of 'em that would go across the bridge over to the prostitutes.

L.J. Kimball: When you're talking about going over the bridge. . .

Ralph Freeman: To Kinston.

L.J. Kimball: The bridge of the Neuse River?

Ralph Freeman: Going up to Kinston, when you're going on the main drag to Kinston . . .

L.J. Kimball: On the other side of the Neuse River.

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. There's a . . . there's a bridge. Not . . . not the one going on, ah, on 24 or 258. But it's the . . . You know where the . . . I think it's where the Post Office is now.

L.J. Kimball: I'm not that familiar with Kinston. I know that . . . there was an area up there. I believe it was called Cherry Hill.

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. Well that's . . . that's where they was going. But when you go in town and you go where the Post Office is now and you turn this way to go on Route 11.

L.J. Kimball: Turn right?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: OK.

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Ralph Freeman: Going . . . and go around. If you go the other way there was a . . . kind of small bridge going across the other way and that's where the . . . where it was.

L.J. Kimball: OK. You take a left at the Post Office on 11. And it was down there.

Ralph Freeman: Now the . . . I stayed at a, ah, at the hotel they had which is that big tall building. And I think it's a senior citizen place now or something like that.

L.J. Kimball: I heard at one point it was the tallest building in eastern North Carolina.

Ralph Freeman: It probably was.

L.J. Kimball: I read about that.

Ralph Freeman: But that was a hotel. I spent, ah, one or two nights there. And then, ah, these kids introduced me to this old couple. And they had a house and they would rent out their bed, you know, to Marines. A room . . . rent out a room. And, ah, I started going there every time I come to town. And, ah, stayed with them. And it got to the point where she'd get up and fix me breakfast in the morning and so forth. That was . . . I just became a regular Kinstonian.
(laughs)

L.J. Kimball: I don't want to put words in your mouth, but you can see what we're trying to do here, as it specifically relates to Camp Lejeune is get somebody who was there at that time, their impression. You know, you saw the Marines, there in '44, now it's '62. You obviously don't think as much about the Marines then. Once again . . . We know that the Marines in '44 were prideful and proud to be Marines. How would you characterize the Marines of the early sixties?

Ralph Freeman: It would seem to me that they just felt like they had to be there and that they was just gonna do what they had to do to get by. Now, not all of them that way. There was an awful lot of them you know that was gung-ho Marines and so forth and so on. But there was also a large majority too that just felt like they, ah, they had to serve. They were there to put their time in and then get the heck out.

L.J. Kimball: Was there less respect for NCOs, Staff NCOs, and officers?

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Ralph Freeman: Oh yes. A lot less respect. Back in 1940 if a Corporal spoke to you, boy you jumped. You had no association with Corporals. Corporals had no association with Sergeants.

L.J. Kimball: There was a less respect. Was there more, say, fraternization among the ranks then, in the sixties?

Ralph Freeman: I think it was beginning to be, yes. I think it was beginning to be a . . . A Lt. going out with a PFC somewhere. And, ah. Which I always frowned on because, you know, you can't command somebody if you're going out and buddy buddy with them at night.

L.J. Kimball: That . . . still wasn't illegal then?

Ralph Freeman: Well, evidently. . .

L.J. Kimball: It was obviously discouraged but . . .

Ralph Freeman: It was discouraged, yeah.

L.J. Kimball: Was it on the books that you couldn't do it?

Ralph Freeman: I don't think it was. I think the only thing they had was, ah, was officer and enlisted women couldn't fraternize. Or couldn't . . . weren't supposed to go out together. It happened.

L.J. Kimball: Obviously, ah, male officers and enlisted weren't supposed to go out either?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: It's all right if the sexes were different if they were different rank.

Ralph Freeman: But it, ah. . . Yeah, I didn't get involved too much in that.

L.J. Kimball: What was the . . . what was the perception of women Marines at this point in the sixties at Camp Lejeune?

Ralph Freeman: I don't know. I think most of us had . . . still had a respect for 'em cuz they was still working in offices at that time. And, ah, doing good jobs, you know.

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L.J. Kimball: Something along the lines I'm wondering . . . yes, no, which way it was that a NCO women Marine or an officer women Marine wasn't viewed by the male in the . . . same way they would a male NCO or officer. They didn't feel they had to obey them or take them seriously because they weren't real Marines. How did you feel about that?

Ralph Freeman: Ah, that's . . . that's true. There's a, ah, a lot that, ah, that wouldn't obey a . . . didn't want to obey a female officer. But, ah, heck, there was a lot of male officers like that, that, ah, that were the same way that they didn't want to obey either. But, shoot, you know, they, ah . . . I think the women realized, you know, that there was a problem. And they would kind of, you know, work around it, so. I mean they wouldn't come out and say I'm giving you a direct order. That will be it and you do this and that and so forth. Most of them kind of knew how to handle it and got pretty good results I think.

L.J. Kimball: Was there a feeling that women Marines weren't really Marines?

Ralph Freeman: Yes.

L.J. Kimball: Was there a feeling that maybe they were discriminated against either in positive or negative manner or they were given, you know, treated differently to their benefit or not to their benefit?

Ralph Freeman: I think it was the same way as it was with the blacks there in '62. They figured that the women were getting preferential treatment.

L.J. Kimball: The next time you're back in Lejeune it's in the seventies. Is that correct?

Ralph Freeman: No. I got out in '70.

L.J. Kimball: OK. You retired?

Ralph Freeman: Mmm-hmm.

L.J. Kimball: You were at Camp Lejeune then though?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: From your experience in the early sixties then to the seventies when you retired, was the Marine Corps still on the downswing or had it come back up?

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Ralph Freeman: As far as I was concerned it was on the downswing.

L.J. Kimball: Still going down. The qualities you saw . . .

Ralph Freeman: That was one of the . . .the reasons that I retired.

L.J. Kimball: Really? Could you explain that a little bit more? What your feelings were and what you saw.

Ralph Freeman: I . . . I . . . I just got so . . . so disappointed in . . . in walking around and the things that I was seeing. The way the Marine Corps was going. And no one seemed to want to correct it. Ah, I'd be down maybe walking to Building, ah, Building Two. And there's some big . . . there'd be some Marine out there starting to go into Building Two with his utilities all torn to shreds and everything else. And I'd tell him get out of there. I'd get his name and his organization. And I'd call down to his . . . the First Sergeant and tell him, you know. He's not supposed to be in the area dressed like that. Make sure he gets some decent clothes. Well I had a couple of officers call me and you can't tell me, you know, tell my man what to do and so forth and so on.

L.J. Kimball: And what rank were you when you retired?

Ralph Freeman: I was Master Sergeant. And this . . . and I says what do you mean I can't tell 'em? I says I have authority over him just like you do. Oh no you don't. They're mine and you don't tell 'em what to do. I said you want to make a complaint to somebody. You better believe it. I'm gonna to put you on report. I says fine. Meet me at Building Two at three o'clock this afternoon and we'll go up and see General Ryan. Then they'd back off. But I mean it's just outrageous what he was doing. And like I say going down through the barracks and see 'em . . . a Squad Bay that looked like a pigsty. That wasn't the . . . my Marine Corps. And even though I was a Counterintelligence Agent and worked in these civilian clothes a lot and everything, I was still a Marine. And it just tore me to pieces and to hear how some of 'em talked back to each other. I mean you hear some . . . some PFC telling some Corporal or Sergeant, you know, that he wasn't going to do this and he didn't have to do that and all that kind of stuff. And then the Sergeant backing down. That wasn't my Marine Corps.

L.J. Kimball: What else did you see that kind of disillusioned you at that point. You talked about dress and discipline. Do you see that out on the Base in general just

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walking around. Once again, I don't want to put words in your mouth, but no pride in their uniforms or no pride in . . .

Ralph Freeman: No . . . That's right. I mean when you see them walking around with torn clothes like that and you know they get a clothing allowance. You know, they can buy a pair of trousers now and then. But, ah, it was just . . . the re . . . disrespect they had, ah, for senior personnel. The little pride they took in their clothes and their dress and so forth. It just. . . I said the heck with it. I don't have to put up with this.

L.J. Kimball: How about their actual performance at their jobs?

Ralph Freeman: That I don't know because see I had no contact with them in things like that.

L.J. Kimball: You also had the advantage in your position of being in contact with a lot of officers and senior staff NCOs. What'd you think about them? Were they pretty much good or were they going downhill too?

Ralph Freeman: No. Most of them were . . . were decent. But the thing was they were afraid to say anything. Because they say if I say something and they write to their Congressman and their Congressman comes by, I've lost my career. And that was officers as well as enlisted men, senior enlisted men.

L.J. Kimball: At what point did you move from McArthur Estates to out here at on the White Oak River?

Ralph Freeman: I came about 1973.

L.J. Kimball: '73. And you were retired then?

Ralph Freeman: I was retired then.

L.J. Kimball: And you stayed in Jacksonville thereafter working in various legal capacities. Would you briefly tell us about what you did after you retired.

Ralph Freeman: Well, I say I, ah. . . When I retired they wanted me to go to this retirement formation. And of course I didn't want to go to it. And I asked General Ryan if I had to go. And he says no. He says you don't have to go but just make sure you come over here and say goodbye. So I said OK. So after going through about the Sergeant Major, and the Colonel, and so forth at Headquarters, but I didn't tell them that I . . . didn't have to go and so forth

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and all that. I had permission. So at twelve o'clock I went up and said my good-byes to him and his Chief of Staff and all of 'em up there. And at 12:30 I was at work as an insurance investigator.

L.J. Kimball: For whom?

Ralph Freeman: Ah, I was doing most of the work for State Farm.

L.J. Kimball: OK. And where was that in town?

Ralph Freeman: Jack. . . in Jacksonville.

L.J. Kimball: How long did you work for them?

Ralph Freeman: Ah, until 19. . . 1974.

L.J. Kimball: OK.

Ralph Freeman: And then the Volkswagen dealer, ah, Mr. Papurea. My wife was working there at the time. And he came to me and asked me if I would want to manage a Volkswagen dealership that he was building in Havelock.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmm.

Ralph Freeman: I says I've never done anything like that. I'll try it. So after a few months training and so forth with him in Jacksonville I went to Havelock and oversee . . . oversaw the building or the building and the stocking and the hiring and everything. And I was with him for about two years. And it got to be monotonous because I had everything running right and everything was going smooth and I didn't have a thing to do. Just to set there you know. And so I'd been asked to be an investigator with a law firm in Jacksonville. So I said well, it's working the other side of the street but I'll try it. So then that's when I went with Bailey and Raynor.

L.J. Kimball: What year was that?

Ralph Freeman: That was 1975.

L.J. Kimball: And you went to work for Bailey and Raynor.

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Ralph Freeman: And, ah, I did, ah, malpractice insurance as, ah. . . I mean malpractice cases there as well as criminal cases. And I worked with him quite a while and then the District Attorney called me and said he wanted to talk to me. And went up there. And he wanted me to come work with him as Chief Investigator. So I went to work with him.

L.J. Kimball: What was your official title then?

Ralph Freeman: With him?

L.J. Kimball: I mean was in Onslow County Chief Investigator or what?

Ralph Freeman: No. It was the Chief Investigator for the Fourth Judicial District of North Carolina.

L.J. Kimball: OK. And what did you . . .

Ralph Freeman: Which covered four counties.

L.J. Kimball: When did you go do this?

Ralph Freeman: That was '87.

L.J. Kimball: Just . . . just for the record. When you worked for Bailey and Raynor, where did you work? What was your office?

Ralph Freeman: Right there at their, ah, their building on New Bridge Street.

L.J. Kimball: And then when you worked for the Fourth District. . .

Ralph Freeman: That was in the Courthouse.

L.J. Kimball: You had an office in the Courthouse?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: OK.

Ralph Freeman: But I covered four counties. I had to work in Sampson County, Jones County and, ah, Duplin County.

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L.J. Kimball: And Onslow.

Ralph Freeman: And Onslow.

L.J. Kimball: So you had four counties. How long have those four counties composed the Fourth Judicial District?

Ralph Freeman: Still is.

L.J. Kimball: I mean how far back does that go? Is that relatively recent or . . .

Ralph Freeman: No. That's been for quite a while.

L.J. Kimball: A hundred years?

Ralph Freeman: Oh no. I don't think it's been that long.

L.J. Kimball: I'm just looking at it from the historical perspective.

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: Now is the Fourth Judicial District, that's not the same thing as the Fourth Congressional District?

Ralph Freeman: No.

L.J. Kimball: Clearly different.

Ralph Freeman: Entirely different.

L.J. Kimball: How long were you Chief Investigator?

Ralph Freeman: From '87 until seventy. . . Let's see, '87 to ninety. . . '93 I believe it was.

L.J. Kimball: All right. Now of course you've been in Jacksonville and undoubtedly have had professional dealings with Marines for that period. Is there any hope for us from your exposure in the seventies? Has the Marine Corps got better or does it continue going down hill?

Ralph Freeman: Well, I haven't been out there but what I read it looks like they're doing a pretty good job now. I don't know. But. . .

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L.J. Kimball: Right.

Ralph Freeman: We're still having 'em getting in trouble.

L.J. Kimball: Yeah.

Ralph Freeman: And now it's getting worse where they even committing suicide which. . . I . . . I just don't understand that.

L.J. Kimball: Hmmm.

Ralph Freeman: I know they deploy an awful lot which . . . Maybe that's the reason for it. I don't know.

L.J. Kimball: You hear people talk and you kind of wonder. Like in years past, they didn't call it political correctness, but you had to treat the blacks a certain way. You had to treat the women . . . whatever political hot potato or what was proper at the time, you had to steer clear of that particular problem. You hear people talk about general officers standing up and saying the Marines are the best we've ever had. And you say well, with the wisdom that comes with years, that maybe the Marines today are the best we ever had or maybe it's just blowing smoke because he's obligated to because that's the party line these days.

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: But you know, you go into the Commissary, you go in the PX, you go around the Base. You have an opportunity to gain an opinion on how the Marines conduct themselves, the way they wear their uniform, their haircuts and . . . You've seen that. Do you see an improvement over the sixties and seventies from what you see?

Ralph Freeman: Oh, I think there's a drastic improvement over the sixties. The, ah, the ones that I see when I . . . whenever I have to go out to the PX out there, they . . . they all seem to be neatly dressed and have a military bearing and, ah, they have military courtesy. And that's a far cry from some of the things I saw in the sixties.

L.J. Kimball: I know you're at the PX because I chased one of your checks across the parking lot one afternoon.

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Ralph Freeman: Yeah. (laughing)

L.J. Kimball: You know what we missed here. When did Hazel come into the picture?
How'd you meet her?

Ralph Freeman: That's . . . that's kind of an odd . . . odd thing. The . . . we lived a block apart.
And I never knew her.

L.J. Kimball: A block apart in what, Virginia?

Ralph Freeman: In . . . yeah . . . in Arlington. We went to school in the same car. But it was
an old Model A. And I set in the rumble seat and she set up front with the
guy that drove the car. And nothing, you know. And then I came back home
and the guy across the street threw a homecoming party for me. And she came
and . . .

L.J. Kimball: What was the occasion of your coming home?

Ralph Freeman: Being discharged from the Marine Corps.

L.J. Kimball: From World War II. Discharged.

Ralph Freeman: World War II.

L.J. Kimball: OK.

Ralph Freeman: And, ah, so I met her then. And one thing led to another and, ah, two years
later we got married.

L.J. Kimball: Two years later. Long courtship? Or typical for those days?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: And how many children did you have?

Ralph Freeman: We got two.

L.J. Kimball: Two. One of them, I know . . . one of them lives near you don't they?

Ralph Freeman: Both of them do.

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L.J. Kimball: They do. OK. I remember one of them came to a Christmas party.

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: And what not.

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. One of 'em was, ah, was with the Sheriff's Department for 15, 20 years. He was the Chief Investigator. And then he went with Marine Fisheries and was the Director down there, and squared that away until it started getting political. Then he bailed out. Now he's at the, ah, the University of North Carolina, Wilmington. In Law Enforcement.

L.J. Kimball: Not too far. Not too close. Just about the right distance to be.

Ralph Freeman: No, he still lives in Jacksonville.

L.J. Kimball: Oh, he does. I was gonna say because my daughter's in Fayetteville and that's just far enough away we don't pester her everyday, but it's close enough we can go see 'em on the weekends.

Ralph Freeman: And then my grandson. His son was with the Jacksonville Police Department. And now he's gone with the Sheriff's Department in the Evidence, ah, Collection Department.

L.J. Kimball: Is he a Freeman?

Ralph Freeman: Mmm-hmm

L.J. Kimball: OK. You showed me a couple of pictures. One of you in a "kill" pose at Parris Island and another in your, ah, field outfit in Vietnam. Do you have any other memorabilia from your time in the Marines?

Ralph Freeman: I've got some that are up in Doug's attic. And I'd have a heck a time trying to get to 'em.

L.J. Kimball: What, photographs?

Ralph Freeman: Well, a lot of 'em are postcards. Like, ah, I think I got postcards of the theater. Postcards of the, ah, I almost think . . . Building One or not. And I got pictures of the 155.

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L.J. Kimball: When you were in 8th Guns?

Ralph Freeman: Postcard from Camp Lejeune at that time.

L.J. Kimball: Where does Doug live?

Ralph Freeman: Huh?

L.J. Kimball: Where does Doug live?

Ralph Freeman: On Bosco Drive.

L.J. Kimball: Over near Tim Oliver?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: Well, the next time you're over there. . .

Ralph Freeman: But he's got his attic is loaded with his. . . his son's stuff and his daughter's stuff and it's all piled in front of where my stuff is.

L.J. Kimball: Do you ever have an opportunity to go up and look through your boxes and see?

Ralph Freeman: I don't even know if I could get to them or not.

L.J. Kimball: OK.

Ralph Freeman: And I've asked him a couple of times and he says yeah, he's gonna tell the kids to get their stuff out of there now they both got homes and they can put it in their homes.

L.J. Kimball: Well maybe . . . they can get their stuff out of there.

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: So if you can . . . if you have a chance to dig some of that stuff out, I'd like to see it not only in a personal capacity but to the people that are putting this book together to see if they want to use any of it.

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Ralph Freeman: I also got a photograph of Betty Grable in the famous pose of hers that was sent to me overseas too.

L.J. Kimball: You told me about that. Is that up in Doug's attic also?

Ralph Freeman: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: OK.

Ralph Freeman: Yeah, I got . . . got about three lockers up there in that. . . in his attic.

L.J. Kimball: I'd sure like to see that stuff.

Ralph Freeman: Stuff. Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: I know the problem with those. It's your son and your grandson have stuff in there. You don't want to go climbing around in the attic. You want to get one of your grandsons to go climbing around in the attic. And start moving that stuff around.

Ralph Freeman: Yeah. And especially in this hot weather.

L.J. Kimball: Oh yeah.

Ralph Freeman: Have to wait til it cools off a little bit before you go up there.

L.J. Kimball: Well it's never too late until it is too late to see what you've got in those boxes and record it for posterity.

Ralph Freeman: Because I can't remember, you know, everything I got in there. I know I got a lot of Japanese money and. . .

L.J. Kimball: And you might. . . might have picked up. . .

Ralph Freeman: . . . stuff like that.

L.J. Kimball: . . . a couple of silk bags that you pulled out of the grenades and a few artifacts like that that you brought back from World War II. That'd be neat to see and take pictures of.

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Ralph Freeman: Well, I had a nice set of silver teeth knocked out of Jap's mouth with. . . They were stolen from me by some swabbie on ship.

L.J. Kimball: Yeah. We don't like to talk about that anyway.

Ralph Freeman: (laughs)

L.J. Kimball: You can keep your . . . the dried ears and teeth and everything like that in the bottom of the foot locker.

Ralph Freeman: That was one of the guys that was trying to cross on that a . . . on Pelelieu.

L.J. Kimball: Hmmm.

Ralph Freeman: And I saw him out there. He was by himself so I didn't cut down with my machine gun. I grabbed my Thompson and went out.

L.J. Kimball: Got him?

Ralph Freeman: And, ah. . . yes. (end of tape)