

Sgt. Maj. Ihor Sywanyk
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Tape 1 Side 1

L. J. Kimball: Interview with retired Sgt. Maj. Ihor Sywanyk, at the Scarlet & Gold, 222 Henderson Drive, Jacksonville, 29 July, 1999, Interviewer: L. J. Kimball, Tape One, Side One. Go ahead please . . .

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Ah. . .

L. J. Kimball: You're talking about photographs and how. . .

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Yes, I believe that you know, to me photographs are invaluable. I collect anything I can get my hands on. I've got some displayed here in the club and I've got quite a few at home. Just not a lot of reference material over the years have been written on putting uniforms together, how to wear the uniforms, both officer and enlisted. You get a photograph, and you say, oh, that's how they work. So, I think, to me photographs are more important than the spoken word, or the written word. Without a doubt.

L. J. Kimball: When you're doing historical research, a picture is worth a thousand words.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I just bend over backwards, and of course they're much more scarce in different periods like the post Civil War which the Marine Corps was very small as you know, and did they partake some, but looking at emblems. I've acquired a buckle that they started to appear in the London antique stores and kind of flea markets in the early 50's. I've got one. It cannot be substantiated. The company that made them is no longer in existence and really there are no pictures that show you what the Civil War, we're not talking about the Civil War Marines, I'm talking about Confederate. Special this, there's nothing that show you O.K. This is what the kind of emblem that they wore. Everything is assumed right now that they did wear the globe and anchor when then had split, but there isn't much on the Civil War anyway. Everything from that period is so rare, uniforms, pictures, anything. But, and the rarity of things really don't have to add a lot of years or age, or things from Wake Island, which I think is one of the most glorious parts in our history and probably two of the most glorious, Wake Island and of course the Marines Division in Korea, the Frozen Chosin are really the highlight of what those unbelievable, what they did. But, anything from Wake, is exceptionally rare. I mean I had a chance to buy a flag that was from Wake Island. I don't know how this thing came around to exist even, because I know when the Japanese took over, they

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destroyed everything, burned everything. They put everybody the civilian workers and the Marines all in black pajamas and sent them back to Japan. Everybody was of course in prison, so there's a few things. General Putnam, who's, he retired as a BG, was Devereau's XO on the island and his stuff came on the market about 3 or 4 years ago. I just didn't have the money to buy it, but it was like \$2,500. And it was maps of Wake and rosters, the Marines, rosters of the civilian workers, construction guys, his uniforms, his sword. So, in today's money, \$2,500 is peanuts. Especially from the Wake period. I just kick myself over and over again not trying to buy it, but whatever. So there are things, the Raider Marines, WWII of course they didn't have as many of those folks and anything from the Raider period.

L. J. Kimball: Do you know John Carson.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Pardon?

L. J. Kimball: John Carson.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Right. Anything from, just a cammy, camouflage utility. I mean the average Marine didn't even, doesn't even know that Marines did wear cammies in WWII. They just don't know that, but they did. A lot of those, they had 3 different patterns, and stupid camouflage covers, pretty difficult to come by. I've been looking for one. I've got a set of just one pattern. But, the hat, still looking, you never know.

L. J. Kimball: What I'd like to do Sergeant Major is to go back to some of your personal history, maybe outline your career then go back and look at some of your tours in a little bit more detail. Then you can tell me about your establishment here. Where were you born?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I was born in the Ukraine. Which was then of course part of the Soviet Union and independence came what 7 years ago. The family immigrated to Germany. Really, nobody thought, really the entire family did immigrate, Aunts, Uncles, Grandmother, my Grandfather died in Germany. They just kept going. Loaded their wagons up, my parents were farmers. Because of the war, the Ukraine was a battleground. Between the Germans and the Soviets. Of course, in those days, there was no electricity, no phones. So everybody packed their wagons and went to the next village to see what they're going to do, what are they doing?

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What I'm telling you is what my Mom told me. I was, when we moved, when we left the Ukraine I was 2.

L. J. Kimball: When were you born?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: 1942.

L. J. Kimball: What day and what month?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: 2 July 1942.

L. J. Kimball: So, the Ukraine was pretty much in flames when you. . . it's amazing that your family was able to get out.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Well, not only my family, but quite a few other families. As a matter of fact almost the, I would say a third of the village did get out. Not because they had intention to come to the U.S., I mean, there's a place in Cleveland called Parma, it's a suburb. Well, Cleveland and Parma which quite a few of Ukrainians settled and no way did they have in their mind to come to Parma, Ohio, when they were loading their wagons and you know. They figured things would cool down and all that and they would be able to come back. Of course, that never happened. They came to the border and the Germans took everything. Took the cattle, took everything except what they could carry and put everyone on trains and took them to Germany. We became DP's at that time. Displaced person. I mean DP when I first came to the States, I was called a DP and that kind of really sounded negative. I mean it's not really a negative term. It seemed like it was. They looked at you like you were the scum of the earth. Well, I guess foreigners of all races were treated that way, many years over and over, from the blacks to the Irish, whatever. So, we came through Ellis Island.

L. J. Kimball: Excuse me a minute. Sometimes I need to interrupt you get to hear the rest of the story. You left the Ukraine and you went to Germany.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: We spent time in Yugoslavia, a little bit of time in Yugoslavia and then the majority of the time in Germany. Then of course there was all types of nationalities in these DP camps. We were in Aschaffenburg and right at a little camp right outside, I forget the city. It was called **Shleizheim** and everybody was just kind of brewing and wondering and some, my Uncle worked for the American Army, one day after the war, so he had always

that chance, a lot of connections, he was a mechanic. He worked in the motor pool and he was pretty good with his hands and he always got the connections to get extra butter and salt and chocolate. He always fed the family pretty good. We always had the extra little things, because he had the connections. And we, at that particular time, if you had an illness that was recorded or, not so much old age, and generally illnesses do attack people that are older. You'd have a hard time. You'd have to wait forever to get, to immigrate. At that particular time, the big push was for New Zealand, Australia, and Canada. Now, my Dad didn't want to go to either of those places. He wanted to come to the States because there were some Ukrainians from the village that were there a little earlier, maybe 6 or 7, 8 months earlier and as a matter of fact my Father's grade school teacher, that taught my Mom and Dad, I think they only went to 4th or 5th grade before they had to work the farm. He immigrated like way before the war, 1939, 1940, I believe. He was in Minneapolis, Minnesota, worked for railroads. He was instrumental of course to get us here. Of course, at that time if you had a sponsor, it was much easier than it was without one. So, and we had a problem with my Grandfather which, we were kind of late coming in. Our paperwork was submitted, I think it was almost 2 years to come back, but after my Grandfather died, he died in Germany. He's buried there and I think the approvals came a little bit earlier, he had tuberculosis and that's probably why one of the reasons the family didn't want to go and leave anybody. They wanted to go in tact. And, once my Dad, my Grandfather passed away, we got the approval to immigrate. I don't know if it was because of my Grandfather dying, but actually it could have been. And so, it was myself, my dad, my mom, my grandmother, my uncle, my aunt and her husband.

L. J. Kimball: You had no brothers and sisters?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Yes, I do have a younger brother, but he was born here. Ten years difference. So we went through Ellis Island and when they had the Centennial of Ellis Island, the Statue of Liberty, brought a lot of tears to me, I was a kid going through there.

L. J. Kimball: What year was it that you came to the U.S.?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: 1950. Immigrated in 1950 and we went, we met some people in NY that my parents knew that also immigrated a little bit earlier and they wanted us to stay in NY, but my Dad said no. For some reason he wanted to go up to Minnesota. Actually the sponsor, that's where he lived, railroads and . . . we moved to Minnesota. Took a long train from NY to Minneapolis and

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there was not a lot of work there. My Dad worked in a I think they made gravel. He didn't work there long. And, but the majority of Ukrainians that we knew did immigrate to Cleveland. We didn't know that until later. There were very few Ukrainians in Minnesota, Minneapolis, except for our sponsor who was my parent's teacher, as I mentioned before. We were there like 7 months. Then, I'll never forget this. It reminds me of the Beverly Hill Billies. My Uncle bought a car. He was always first to get anything. He bought a Studebaker. So, in the Studebaker was my mom, my dad, me, my grandmother, my aunt, her husband, my uncle and my niece. I don't know. I remember as a kid we had everything loaded. I mean everything was on top. There was no room for anything. Somehow we made it from Indianapolis to Cleveland.

L. J. Kimball: What year was that?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Same year, 1950. We only spent 6 or 7 months in Minneapolis.

L. J. Kimball: Go back. You apparently were 8 years old when you left Europe for the U.S. Were you in a DP Camp that entire time before you left?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Yes, we were in 3 camps. One for a very short time, about a month and at Charpenbourg we spent a lot of time and Schleizheim we spent about equal time. From there of course we took a train to Bremerhaven, the Port, the city in Germany, took a boat. The first time I ever saw an orange.

L. J. Kimball: When you got on the boat?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: They grow no oranges in the Ukraine. The first time I seen an orange and the first time I'd seen a banana too as a matter of fact. I was kind of curious what that was.

L. J. Kimball: Any recollections of what it was like as a child to be in a DP Camp?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I think there was a lot of negative. In the DP Camps, everybody stayed there and of course a lot got jobs in the economy. My Dad worked at a lumber mill for awhile and then my Mom worked in the hospital for awhile. So, besides work, everybody came back to the camp. We did live in Munich for a short time. We were still DP's but we were waiting to get our papers to come to immigrate. So, we were out of camps so we lived in a private housing area. It was like apartments. They were called that. But, the interplay between the what the Germans call **Ouchlanders**,

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outsiders. The **ouchlanders** were not looked at as equal. I remember that. So, I did go to a German school as a kid. From there, from, I can't even remember the little town. I don't know if it had a name. But, I believe it was Munich the little outskirts of the main part of town. From there we immigrated again. Trains to Bremerhaven to NY and then from NY a train to Minneapolis, MN, and then again about 7 months there and got on the Studebaker and traveled to Cleveland, OH.

L. J. Kimball: Back briefly to the Ukraine during the War. Was the principle reason for the immigration, was it the War? Were there political and economic considerations also?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I think it's a combination of a lot of things. I believe initially when, well, I think the German's really screwed up. Initially because the Ukrainians hated the Russians. They still do to this day and, but a lot of the Germans did not treat the Ukrainians, they treated them like they treated the Russians and they lost a lot of support which they did have. The Ukrainians and then the German Army, special separate Ukrainian Units, and also of course the Soviet Union too, in the Soviet Union. But, you know during that particular time villages and last names and homes, churches were totally obliterated and not to ever be rebuilt again. I mean they were totally gone. I mean millions and millions of people immigrated. The biggest concentration of Ukrainians is of course in Canada and we have a very large population of Ukrainians in England. My uncle being one, which we looked for about 25 years, and finally located him. But, he fought for the Poles. You know they put the Ukrainian Unit together in England and the Polish Unit and they sent them back to Europe, so we never knew that, we thought he was dead. He's the only one that didn't come with us.

L. J. Kimball: So, you got to Cleveland and started a new world, new life?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: We lived, matter of fact, the funny thing about it. . . across the street where we moved to, if you can recall the movie *The Deer Hunter* and the wedding scene in that church? We lived right across the street. It's a little old place. It's right on the edge of the steel mills in Cleveland. We lived there for a little bit. As a matter of fact the whole family was in one room and we had blankets to partition off the area.

L. J. Kimball: So, the deer hunter was shot in Cleveland?

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Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Well, the mountain scenes, the hunting scenes if you recall. They were shot in Pennsylvania, but the church scene, the alley scenes, the wedding scene were shot all in Cleveland. As a matter of fact, the wedding scene was shot in a place called Lemco Hall and I had a dance band way before I came into the Marine Corps. I used to play in that hall, it's ironic.

L. J. Kimball: Well, did you stay in Cleveland then until you enlisted in the Marine Corps?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Right.

L. J. Kimball: What was family like and was it, were you in the survival mode or you lived pretty comfortably and never wanted for anything during that period?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Well, no, I don't think we had, I would not consider the family as middle income. Of course not poverty either, but the low, middle income, whatever that grouping is. My dad worked 4, 5 different companies. He was a tool maker for a while. My mom, as a matter of fact, my mom used to take a bus to go downtown Cleveland and clean office buildings. She worked nights so she would work from 11:00 at night until 7:00 in the morning for like 30 years. My dad was the type of person where he always used to tell me, he'd say, hey if you're going to buy something do what you possibly can not to get it on credit. He says because the interest rates will kill you. Talking about this revolving door. He was the kind of guy who paid cash for everything. I'll give you a quick story about him. He got a car when he got older. He couldn't speak English and he finally got his license. I was in DI school at Parris Island and my mom called me and said, Dad is ready to buy a car. I said, O.K., I may be going home on leave here shortly, I guess we'll go out and look. So, we got there and looked around and seen this Buick in this showroom. I think it was like \$5,200. Of course he fell in love with that, then we went to, I said, Dad there's so many other cars, let's go look around. Well, he was not happy going into any of the other dealerships. I said, I knew we were going to buy that, because I knew that's what he wanted. So, we came back there and he says he wants the Buick. So, he sat in a little cubicle with the salesman. I don't think we got a good deal, because the salesman knew how enthusiastic my dad was about the car. But, I believe it was about \$5,200 out the door and so we started to sign the contract and all that. My dad pulls out \$20,000 in cash. I says, the salesman's eyes got big and I said, Dad, what, I didn't even know he had that money. I said, what are you doing? I told the salesman just to leave us alone for a little bit. I said,

what are you doing Dad? This is all in Ukrainian now, not in English. And, he says, well, I'm going to buy it. I said, you know it's pretty hard to save that money. Put it in the bank. Just put down \$500 and then you can pay it off in a couple of years. I finally talked him into putting some of the money, he actually paid half and financed the lower \$2,000. A month later or so I called home. I said, well, how's it going, Mom? How's the car? She said, well, Dad polishes it everyday. I think he's going to rub the paint off of it. He loves it. Oh, by the way, he only made one payment and he went to the bank and he paid it off. But, he was, and you find that a lot in all foreigners who come here. I'm sure you've probably noticed that. They come here and all of a sudden they've got a business, you know? They work their asses off. They understand the value of a dollar because they never had anything back where they came from and they realize how important it is. Hard work was never an issue. They know that you've got to work hard to get ahead and they do. My dad was pushing, wasn't in a business or anything, but he bought a home out in the suburbs, as a matter of fact the freeway took our old home. We had no choice but to move and these two other families on either side were there way before my dad bought it and he paid it off and they were still paying for it. He made double and triple payments to pay it off. He paid a 30- year mortgage off in 10. That's the kind of guy he was. Hard working, but he drank too much and that's what killed him.

L. J. Kimball: Was it a strict upbringing?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Yes, very much so. He was a disciplinarian from the word go. There was no gray areas, none, that's it, black and white.

L. J. Kimball: Did the family go to church together?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: All the time.

L. J. Kimball: Which church did you go to?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: We went to St. Peter and Paul when we lived in the inner city in Cleveland and then we moved out to a place called Parma, we went to St. Joseph's. It's actually two churches. Actually I went to Parochial School, when we came into Cleveland.

L. J. Kimball: What denomination were these churches?

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Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Roman Catholic. Of course it was all Nuns and they were strict. I don't know if they're like that now, but boy they were hard and that's O.K., that's alright.

L. J. Kimball: A little discipline never hurt anyone.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Yes, no, I think we had, that's what I think is the problem in today's society. Very little. . . you get a kid that breaks school rules. You see it on T.V. all the time and he gets 3 days off and whatever and the parents are fighting for him. Oh, my Johnny he's never do this or that. Boloney. The parents actually don't help the system. Teachers cannot teach an undisciplined person. They cannot do it, you know? It's not the teacher's fault. It's starts in the home. Everything starts in the home and ends in the home.

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

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: 1964.

L. J. Kimball: Why did you join the Marine Corps?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I think I'd seen a couple of films on the Marine Corps and I was impressed with the Corps period. The uniforms. You always hear about the Corps discipline and the history and I knew very little about the Corps from what I'd read, which wasn't much. I'd seen some movies. Then a good friend of mine joined the Corps a couple of years before I did. As a matter of fact he quit school and joined the Marine Corps. And he came home on leave, graduated from Boot Camp and he came right to the school and walking around in his greens, looked good and had that, it was probably one of the reasons why, not entirely, but. . . And recruiters didn't have to recruit me, you know what I mean? I went in and I didn't care what they gave me. I just wanted to be a Marine, that's it, so I was easy.

L. J. Kimball: You were a little bit older than the average recruit weren't you?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Yes. I was the oldest recruit. Well, there was one more recruit that was older than me, but both of us were the oldest. I was 22 and he was 23.

L. J. Kimball: So, you finished high school?

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Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I finished high school and I studied music for one year at the Cleveland Institute in music. I had a band at that time too. So, I thought that the band thing would be my career. But, I guess it wasn't. I studied music for a year and quit that and I just, I didn't think I could do anything as a musician. I played the clarinet. I played the sax. Of course when you study music you have to take piano, you don't have a choice. I wasn't keen on taking that. I studied the piano for a little while and music theory and music history. There's quite a bit to it than most people think. But, whatever. I did that for a year and then my. . . I did a lot of traveling playing. Weekends I was always gone. I worked for a metal company. **Barger** Sheet metal and they made all types of cabinets for electrical outlets and generator cabinets, and etc., etc. I worked there, for them for a while. Then I decided to go in and I did.

L. J. Kimball: Besides all of the usual good reasons people join the Marine Corps and want to be in the World's Best, was there any thought of getting a steady pay check?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: No. I never really thought that, I never looked at, going in there to get benefits and a job. I was so naive about the Corps like I guess most young people. I didn't know what they would give me, really and the pay was a hell of lot less than I was making at the company that I worked for. But, of course it was a union company so they held my job for me. Because I did go in for 4 years and I got out and went back to the company again.

L. J. Kimball: Let's kind of go through your Marine career now. If you would. Tell me the years that these things were happening, too. You went, you were recruited and then you went to Parris Island?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Went to Parris Island, graduated. Of course I seen ITR [Infantry Training Regiment], which is now a School of Infantry here at Camp Lejeune. It's the first time I'd seen Camp Lejeune, or Jacksonville which was nothing like it is now, of course.

L. J. Kimball: What year was this?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: 1964. I went in, in February of 1964.

L. J. Kimball: When you got to ITR were there brick buildings there or did it still have Quonset huts?

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Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: No, it was all Quonset huts, except for one lone brick building. None, I don't think there's, well, there might be one or two Quonset huts left. Supply building or something around the edges of Geiger, but there's not much.

L. J. Kimball: After ITR, where did you go?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I went to 29 Palms. I was a machinist on the outside. Also working for the cabinet company and didn't like it. **(2nd side of tape 1)** I was on 03 out of Boot Camp. Landed at Palm Springs and were bussed up to the pass, you know, Morongo Valley and Yucca Valley and up to 29 Palms, late at night, 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning. Put us to sleep and the next morning I got up and I said, where is this place? It's all desert. I was kind of disappointed because I didn't want to be in the desert. I guess, knowing very little about the Corps and you know. . .

L. J. Kimball: What was your impression, having gone to Boot Camp and you're up to ITR and hadn't had a chance to look around and decide that this was pretty much what you expected?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: No, it was a solid month of pretty intensive training. Late hours. There was some liberty that I recall. I just, like every other Marine in my platoon wanted to get this thing over with and go to their duty station wherever that was going to be. Of course after you completed that, you went home on leave. After leave you come back and then you had your orders. You didn't know when you, where you were going until you come back from leave. It's a little, considerably different now.

L. J. Kimball: You didn't have any choice about where you were to go or no preknowledge of where it might be?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: No, nothing. Once we got back here then a bunch of us got together here. We were, actually you're still a recruit. We were treated like shit in ITR. I mean really. Well, you weren't like a recruit at Parris Island, but you weren't like a real Marine, you know?

L. J. Kimball: What kind of training were you doing at ITR?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Oh, everything, I mean. You could fire a flame thrower at a 3.45 rocket launcher. Learn how to set demolitions. Squad tactics, infiltration course. I mean you name it, we did it. A lot of night training. Because I know

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we'd get back at 1:00, 2:00 in the morning, back at Geiger. Compass march, etc.

L. J. Kimball: Did you have the M-14 by then?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: No, we had the M-1.

L. J. Kimball: So, you went to 29 Palms? What year did you go?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: August, 1964. No, September 1964.

L. J. Kimball: What did they do? What did they do with you?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: As soon as I got there they put me on mess duty. So, and I was on mess duty for a week. I thought maybe they'd . . . the Gunny said, you got another week and you're gone. So, after two weeks they gave me another week. It wound up being 5 weeks of mess duty. I thought that this was going to be my regular job. Plus they made me a store keeper and I really had it easy. Dry goods, etc., etc. Plus the Gunny said, we need to get some new kickplates. All these Marines are kicking the bottom of these doors in the mess hall and I'll take you to the machine shop and you can oh, blah, blah, blah. I said, I can do that, no problem. So, I got a bunch of brass, drilled, counter sunk the holes and of course I put them on all the doors. The Gunny was impressed, but also the Gunny in the machine shop was impressed. He said, hey this guy knows what he's doing. Of course, he knows how to use the machinery and all that so. So, they, without my knowledge and without me knowing anything, they gave me a 2161 MOS which is a machinist. They never had to send me to school. I mean I knew how to use a lathe, milling machine, read a micrometer, etc., etc. So, after, I didn't even join my outfit. After mess duty I went to work as a machinist, 2161, building 2000. I'll never forget it. Brand new building. One of the last buildings on the end of the base, if you're familiar with 29 Palms.

L. J. Kimball: I never had the misfortune of being there.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I'll tell you initially I kind of hated it, but my wife got pregnant. Of course I don't know how that happened, and she finally joined me in 29 Palms. We've got great memories. I spent 2 years there and I loved it.

L. J. Kimball: When did you get married?

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Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I got married right out of Boot Camp.

L. J. Kimball: Was this a childhood sweetheart?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Well, I don't know, childhood. We went to kindergarten together in Germany as DP's and didn't know each other. I don't think I can take it back any further than that. She comes from a real aristocratic family. Of course my background is farmers. Her parents were actors. They traveled as an acting traveling theater. They traveled all the big cities and put on plays. Shakespeare, whatever. They were famous in Ukrainian circles and they were kind of well to do. They had servants, etc., etc., etc. I never knew that lifestyle. Of course her parents and she later came here. Of course when they came here they lost everything. All the gold and everything they had was stolen from them. They came here with what they carried like thousands of immigrants at that time.

L. J. Kimball: So, you met her in Cleveland?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I met her in Cleveland. We went to Parochial School together, St. Peter and Paul and graduated together, went to high school together. Then I started dating her I think when I was a senior. Dated her for like 4 years. She actually proposed to me. She thought we'd never get married, we'd always go out. She said, do you think we're ever going to get married? I never even thought about getting married. So, I said, I'm really thinking of joining the Marine Corps. She was all for it. She knew nothing about the Corps. She said, well, maybe we can do that when you get back. I said, well, O.K. I think it's a good idea. So, I came home on leave, I got married and came back to Geiger awaiting orders to go to 29 Palms which I didn't know at the time that that was where it was going to be. Got married in blues, which was something I always wanted to do. At 29 Palms, of course getting off mess duty, they made me a machinist 2161. Of course they saved money on me because they never had to send me to school, which was in Quantico, I believe at that time. That doesn't exist. I think it's in Aberdeen now, I think it's an Army school. I worked as a machinist for two years and then of course the screening came for DI school came up from San Diego to all the bases and I got interviewed and soon after I got orders to San Diego.

L. J. Kimball: So, you were at 29 Palms for three years?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Two years.

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L. J. Kimball: Rank? Lance Corporal?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Corporal. I made corporal. I just made corporal when I got orders to go to San Diego.

L. J. Kimball: So, then I came to interview you as a DI, you were relatively young for that particular posting weren't you? You were junior?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Well, not really because don't forget, I was 4 to 5 years older than the average Marine that came in with me as far as recruit training goes, but there were younger Marines than myself in my class. So. Plus I think that when I went through recruit training as a recruit I took stuff seriously. I didn't screw around. I understood discipline. I understood yes, and I understood no, from my Dad. So, I was, I think I was relatively easy a recruit to motivate. So, I don't think there was any problems, you know what I mean. I just come from a really strict family. I understood the values of money and I understood to say Sir to elders and on and on and on. So, and I was about the oldest for sure in my DI school class.

L. J. Kimball: What did you say? Did you say you got married in Cleveland?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Yes.

L. J. Kimball: When you were in ITR where was your wife?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: She was in Cleveland.

L. J. Kimball: O.K. Maria?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: How did you know that?

L. J. Kimball: I read the newspapers once in a while. O.K. You got to San Diego and went to DI school and this was, what year was this?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: 1966.

L. J. Kimball: O.K. You go to DI school and you go out on the grinder?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: 2nd Battalion, no, 3rd Battalion India, I believe. F Company, 3rd Battalion. I loved it. It was great. Of course recruit training is not quite the same and I've been back to Parris Island many times. I've been to San

Diego a couple of times, years later. My, of course I went to see my son graduate. He trained in Parris Island. Things have changed. I believe that the majority of the changes in recruit training and I can experience recruit training because I was in both San Diego and Parris Island later on. For the positive and I think for the better.

L. J. Kimball: How long were you at San Diego?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Two years and I really had no towards, really undecided. I should have listened to my wife, you know. I guess I could have listened to her in more ways than one. I really had no intentions to stay in the Corps. It's getting closer for me to get out and I got orders to Vietnam and of course I was too short. I got orders. The first time I got orders to Vietnam I just did not send. But very, unless the guy had a lot of time on the drill field and the overseas control date was really long or whatever and then they would send. But, very few people, initially at least anyway, went to Vietnam, later on. There were people from all assignments. But I got orders to Vietnam and I was canceled and the 2nd time I got orders, and of course I was short. I only had like 7 months or 6 months left. At least 6 months and those were canceled too. So, I finished my tour. My wife said, look, let's go home, take leave and go home and take a look and see how things are going back home. We haven't been there in 4 years and then we'll see. Maybe if you want to come back, decide to extend, re-enlist. I said no. I didn't want to do that. Of course I did get out and later on came back and I should have listened to her. Could have retired much earlier and younger.

L. J. Kimball: You retired after this tour at San Diego? Or did you go on?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: No, no. I got out and I went back to my old job.

L. J. Kimball: I guess, I mean, at the end of that enlistment in San Diego then you went back to Cleveland?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: That's correct. I went back to Cleveland. My parents of course had moved. Like I mentioned earlier the old home was gone because the freeway took that and they bought this place out in Parma that they paid off earlier than everybody else like I mentioned before. My wife worked. She had a pretty good job. She worked for General Electric, Quality Control, and I worked for Barden Metal, same place and I didn't lose any seniority and I didn't lose any pay. The union helped. But, you know after

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about a couple of years of that I was really dissatisfied because I looked back. I was a Sergeant in the Marines. I was somebody. Here, I never really realized that before the Corps. But, after the Corps it really hit me. I told my wife, I said. . . you know we had bought a home, bought a boat. We really were entrenched and established in the community and bills, up to here. I said, you know what? I think we need to go back. She said, what? Then she said, I told you so. I said, I don't want to hear it. I'm going to talk to the recruiter and see what they say, I don't know anything about if you can or whatever. It was relatively easy, but I went to the reserve recruiting route. They said we can use you downtown to recruit if you join the reserve program, which I did. For about a year. Exactly a year and then my papers came in to come back into the Marine Corps and uphold of course some orders, automatically to Okinawa. Where all the good Marines go.

L. J. Kimball: The chronology down here, was it 1968 when you got out of the Marine Corps?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: 1968.

L. J. Kimball: Alright then, you got back in, what year?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: 1972.

L. J. Kimball: And did you come back in as a Sergeant?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Oh, no, 1973.

L. J. Kimball: 1973.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Because in 1972 I went in already on active duty as a reservist and recruit. I did that for a year to 1973.

L. J. Kimball: Did you come back in as a Sergeant?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Sergeant.

L. J. Kimball: Machinist?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Yes.

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L. J. Kimball: O.K. In what capacity did you go to Okinawa?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I don't understand what you mean.

L. J. Kimball: I mean, did you go as an individual or as part of a unit deployment unit?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: No, no. Single. It was not a unit deployment. I just went one for one replacement. I don't know who I replaced, because when I got there he was no longer there. I became a Platoon Sergeant on my, what they called then an engineer platoon. They weren't engineers, but you had welders, you had electricians, you had machinists, so there were about 16 MOS's and this one. We all worked together and we all lived in this one big building at Camp Hansen.

L. J. Kimball: What unit was that?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: 3rd FSR [Force Service Regiment].

L. J. Kimball: So, were you in the 3rd Engineer Battalion or anything like that? Service company or?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Let me think. I think it was engineer battalion maintenance company. I did that of course and I had the chance to shoot the Far Eastern matches, which was the first time they had rifle competition because of Vietnam. I did quite well. I love to shoot and I did that for that tour of duty. That tour of duty in Okinawa was 13 months, instead of 12. So, I did that, but I got orders to go to Barstow as a machinist. I said, I really hate this job. I didn't come into the Marine Corps to become a machinist. I mean I like what I did and all that, but I just didn't, I didn't want to do that. So, I got orders to go to Barstow to some big, you know Barstow they got the re-work facility. They repair everything just like Albany, and I said, shit, I'm going to be working probably for some civilians, which they are now. And so, I talked to the 1st Sergeant. I said, look, I don't care what you get me, but see if you can change these orders. And he said, where do you want to go? I said, well, I was a drill instructor. If I can get that, I don't care really, anything, but I don't want to be a machinist. Whatever you can do. MOS changes were much, much easier then than they are now. And duty assignments were much easier than what they are now. So, the 1st Sergeant said, let me make some calls and see what I can do. A month went by and he said, hey, you want to go to drill field right? I said yes. You're going to Parris Island. I was so elated.

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L. J. Kimball: This was in 1974?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Yes, 1974. So, back home on leave. My wife was course, was up in Cleveland, we spent time there and then reported to Parris Island, to DI School.

L. J. Kimball: Did Maria come with you?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: No, not during school time. She came after I graduated.

L. J. Kimball: What school were you going to at Parris Island?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: DI School.

L. J. Kimball: Even after having gone to DI School in San Diego?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Well, the reason is, I was 6 years difference and this is the instructor, the chief instructor telling me this. Also I was interviewed by the chief instructor and another instructor. I don't remember who the hell he was. I think the PT instructor at that time. He says, you know you've got some maltreatment tendencies in you from the old days. I says, what do you mean the old days? This had been 6 years ago. And, well, I was really kind of close to being dropped. I didn't do anything to show him that I was going to kick some recruit's butt in DI school. So, I did everything because I wanted to graduate and get out on the street. I guess they made me go through the whole class to observe me I would think. That's the only answer I can give you. I had no problems in there. I mean training recruits was nothing new to me. I did it before. It was different, then that 6 years had made a difference. You know the amazing thing and we took statistics. Well, I graduated from DI school then went back home on leave and then brought the family down. We lived in Laurel Bay. I joined my company, which is F Company 2nd Battalion. I was on the street only one year and then I was a Series Gunny and then I got interviewed to go to DI school to be an instructor. So, I spent three years in DI school.

L. J. Kimball: When you got to Parris Island, were you Staff Sergeant?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Staff Sergeant.

L. J. Kimball: And when you left you were Gunnery Sergeant?

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Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I picked up meritorious Gunny in DI School. But, I noticed not, with the little bit of records that I kept in DI School and classes, the honor graduates and the ones that don't do so well, how long they do and how well they do in the drill field, so we kept statistics. There are some old statistics from previous classes. When recruits are trained to go into combat, even by drill instructors that have never been to combat, the maltreatment levels go up. So, anything preparing Marines going to Vietnam, even not drill instructors that had seen Vietnam yet, abuses had a tendency to rise. And they'd go just like that from day one and weekly training. That's just the way it is unfortunately. You know you've got to be hard because you're going to be killed and all, it goes on and on and on and then a lot of unprofessional things which I consider unprofessional things, that I've seen as a drill instructor. Had really nothing to do with training the basic Marines. Playing games and unnecessary crap. It's unfortunate, but it happens, you see it.

L. J. Kimball: So, we're about 1977 now and you leave Parris Island?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I spent 4 years in Parris Island, so 1974 to 1978. And I got orders to MSG [Marine Security Guard] Duty. And of course the family moved, up to Cleveland again and I spent time, as a matter of fact I spent time, I was on a weeks leave. Reported to MSG school and which at that time was at the Henderson Hall. I don't know if you remember. I went to the last class at Henderson Hall. As a matter of fact I forgot about recruiting school. I went to the last class of recruiting school at Parris Island before they moved it to San Diego. So, I went to the last class in the MSG school before they moved it to there, kind of a makeshift, temporary building in Quantico. On the left-hand side of the PX there. You go underneath the bridge, until they built a new school eventually up on the hill on the right hand side. They made it look like an embassy. Graduated from MSG School and went home on leave, awaiting orders. I got Frankfurt, Germany, as my assignment and but, hell, I must have stayed home two months. I would call and this was very unusual for a Marine to be in, I'd call and say, hey what's the story here? He said, don't worry about it. You just stay home until we get hold of you. Your passports and your, all your legal stuff to immigrate to go to Germany is just not finalized. We'll just let you know. It was kind of funny because I called the school again and said, hey this has been two months now. Nobody is even calling me saying anything to me. They should at least call and say, hey, relax, don't worry about it, it'll be another week or two. He says, oh, by the way, you're flying out today. I said, I have nothing. I had no papers, I have

nothing. This is Thursday. He said, you're flying out tomorrow. I said, I have nothing. You're telling me now on Thursday? I called you, you didn't call me and I'm flying out tomorrow? So, me and my family and a buddy who took me to the airport. I was standing in front of the house waiting for the mailman for the package of my tickets, my orders. I couldn't believe it. Of course we were late. We just barely got there, so as soon as that mailman was there, I got that brown envelope from Quantico, we were gone. Hopkins Airport. We get in there, I give them the orders and tickets and all that and the lady said, That will be \$900 and some odd dollars. Of course they had TR's [Travel Requests] cut for me and the wife, not the kids. I said, I told Lindy, I says, I don't care, fix it. I said, I don't care who you call and I don't really care. Me and the family are getting on a plane. I didn't want to miss that plane. I should have said, just screw it, until they ironed things out. They called somebody up there and they started looking at the orders and all that. Calls are made. I was a Gunny. They said, you're a Gunny, you're good to go, just get on the plane. Unbelievable.

L. J. Kimball: Was that a three-year tour?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Three. It's actually a four-year tour. Well, it's an 18 month double assignment, 18 months and a hardship or non-hardship or vice versa. Generally. I spent all my time in Frankfurt next to the, right there at the company headquarters. I did a lot of traveling helping out other NCOIC that had problems. I think I was an asset to the CO. That's why he didn't want to send me anywhere else. I didn't care anyway. I had a great assignment. I was involved in the hostages coming back from Iran, getting uniforms for them and it was pretty memorable. Good assignment. Of course I didn't see much of Europe. My family did. A lot of demonstrations. It was almost on a weekly basis there were demonstrations in Germany. I was always tied to the embassy there and I had my Marines ready to go.

L. J. Kimball: Were you the NCOIC in the detachment?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: NCOIC [Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge].

L. J. Kimball: Was there any feeling of you'd been there before, even when you were in Germany as a child?

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Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Yes. I really wanted to take a trip to the Ukraine at that time. Of course that time there and now is a whole different ball game. The ambassador says, you know I supported you Gunny and I'll do everything you need to get authorization to go, but he said, let me tell you something. I called and talked to my CO also. He's says, Headquarters Marine Corps is not going to approve it. You were born there, you're a Marine, you're in the security business. It's going to take a year before we get anything back, but I'll tell you what. The ambassador also told me the same thing. He told me the chances of you getting it Gunny is slim to none. So, I didn't even approach it. But, I really wanted to go back just to see, but that never happened, so.

L. J. Kimball: After Frankfurt, where?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Well, after Frankfurt, I got orders back here. As a matter of fact, to Camp Lejeune.

L. J. Kimball: This was 1980?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: 1981. And I reported and they gave me a choice. Do you want to go to tank battalion or do you want to go to AAV's [Amphibious Assault Vehicle], which is courthouse bay. The only reason I didn't take courthouse bay is because it's further to drive there than tank battalion. Of course that 2161 MOS kept haunting me. So, I'd got assigned to one of those two. Of course I didn't do any of that machinist work anymore. They had made me a Company Gunny. I mean.

L. J. Kimball: Was your still primary MOS 2161? Did you have an 0369 in there somewhere?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: It was there, but that was my kind of a secondary. Primary was 2161, so. And I really wanted to go to grunt outfit but they couldn't assign me to a grunt outfit because of the 2161 MOS. But, I was pretty happy in tanks. I didn't know anything about tanks, but my job was the company gunny, so my hands were full anyway doing other stuff. Formation, promotions, working with the 1st Sergeant all the time. It was busy work and I enjoyed it and I also learned how hard tankers work. I never knew that. When the weekend comes around and everybody's kind of heading to swoop circle, you don't see any tankers there. **2nd tape side 1** Those green monsters have got to be cleaned, squared away before anybody goes anywhere so.

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You could say that about, in any MOS that's got gear. You know, truckers, tankers, aviators, aviation. . .

L. J. Kimball: How long were you at 2nd Tanks?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Two years almost. I got selected for First Sergeant and went to 3/8 [3rd Battalion, 8th Marines].

L. J. Kimball: O.K. When you were with 2nd Tanks, what company down there were you under?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: H & S. H & S had the weird MOSS machinists, electricians, etc.

L. J. Kimball: How many M 60's per company in those days?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Five?

L. J. Kimball: That would be a platoon wouldn't it?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Oh, per company? Yes. Platoon was five, company fifteen I guess, I would say. I remember.

L. J. Kimball: Did H & S have any tanks?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Well, the company commander had a tank. His own.

L. J. Kimball: The H & S commander had a tank?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: That's correct, but H & S was a, you know, a support outfit and repair.

L. J. Kimball: Where did you live when you were in 2nd Tanks?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: As a matter of fact where the library is. I bought a home.

L. J. Kimball: Up on Doris, around Doris?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Yes, right on Doris. Estate Drive, you take Doris and make a right on that, it's called Brook Valley, right on Estate Drive. As a matter of fact I came back here from Cleveland when we went to, from Germany and I left the family to. . .

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L. J. Kimball: **Interview with Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk, tape 2 side 1.** Alright. Two years in 2nd Tanks and you said you went to 3/8?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: 3/8. Then of course we deployed out to the Med. Northern Wedding, Bold Guard, those operations, great times, good operations. When we came back from the deployment, we were back here, of course Beirut, we spent 3 months in Beirut. Half of the deployment was operations in Scandinavian countries and the other half at the time was in Beirut. I was 1st Sergeant at Kilo, 3/8 and our assignment was the perimeter right along the airport runway. That's where my whole company was.

L. J. Kimball: Were you involved in the incident there in Beirut?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: No. When we got there. . .

L. J. Kimball: You're saying you're at Beirut and Kilo 3/8 was on perimeter defense?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Right. It was a whole different environment when we got there. We were the 2nd unit in. 6th Marines. They were the first to go in. We replaced them one for one. The companies that were there before, we took their positions. It was kind of a different ball game. The civilians there were friendly. Gee, we used to take a jeep and go in town and pick up sodas for the Marines, or the local food. They were involved in training. The company built an obstacle course. Hand to hand fighting was taught. Bayonet. There were forces there. I mean it was just kind of nonchalant. Also it seemed like we were doing things. But, as soon as we left and I think at, toward the end of us leaving, it started to turn negative, I think. Also I believe that once they assumed that the Marines were taking sides, then I think it started to get bad. As soon as we got back, about a month later, then the building went up. And, I think it was too political there initially. I mean Marines should never go in any area like that and just sit on their butts. I think the best thing that could have happened with the MEU [Marine Expeditionary Unit]. They were in there 30 days, whatever, 35 days, Kosovo and out. Let the Army take it and that's what the hell they're designed to do. We're not designed to go in and sit around. We're designed to take an area, take a beach head and then leave. That's it. I think being there for almost 2 years, all these deployments that constantly replacing one another and it got worse and worse and worse. Initially we didn't even have any loaded weapons. You know, the police keepers? I don't think we're police keepers, so. I don't think the way we train and the way, we're not police keepers, that's it. We don't do that well,

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anyway. It's not our job. But the building went up and of course we back again for the 2nd deployment. This time that was after the bombing and after the embassy bombing.

L. J. Kimball: O.K. You're still 1st Sgt. Of Kilo 3/8?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: That's correct, no I got changed. I went to H & S.

L. J. Kimball: H & S 3/8?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Yes.

L. J. Kimball: Were you the?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I came back with H & S over there the 2nd time. The 2nd time I went ashore regularly because I had some engineers from my platoon, part of the company was attached to me. I had a tank unit that were on that veranda area, new embassy that was all blocked off after the embassy bombing. So, we delivered mail and just seen how my Marines were doing. My engineer was building stuff, building bunkers, and stuff. They were pretty busy, but the majority of the company spent their time aboard ship.

L. J. Kimball: What were you doing in H & S company? Were you the 1st Sergeant?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: 1st Sergeant of H & S.

L. J. Kimball: And what were you doing in Lebanon this time compared to what you were doing before?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Well, I spent a lot of time in the air. I was, I flew in, back and forth to the embassy, in the Beirut area. Almost on a daily basis. Probably 2, 3 times a week and sometimes more. Delivering mail, checking on the Marines, bringing in, rotating Marines back to the ship. Medical problems. There was always something going on, so I had, out of the company, I believe that I had well over 100 Marines ashore.

L. J. Kimball: Where was 3/8 deployed ashore?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Around the embassy, the new embassy which they moved it of course after the embassy was bombed. Each company had a small contingent of

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Marines as security and the majority of the Marines out of my company, H & S, were either wire men, communicators, engineers, stuff like that.

L. J. Kimball: How long were you over there in that deployment?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Six months.

L. J. Kimball: Then you came back to Lejeune.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Right.

L. J. Kimball: This must have been about 1984?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: 1984, that's correct.

L. J. Kimball: What did you do when you got back?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I got orders to the Rifle Range. Stone Bay. And we did a lot of work out there at Stone Bay. I believe in making buildings professional looking and interiors look like Marines lived there. We did, and me, or course my new boss, Colonel Williams, Mike Williams, who's a super guy. We were, we were like two peas in a pod. We thought about the same thing. Unfortunately, or however you want to look at it, the majority of the people that worked on a range are FAPers [FMF Assistance Program], so they don't belong. They're there for 6 months and then they're back again and generally speaking most units do not FAP out their best Marines, but we would get the cream of the crop at the range. Of course we had some hard-working kids and of course they didn't like the PT program. They didn't like much of anything until we got them to thinking our way and it was good. So, we had a great time at the rifle range. We did a lot of things. We built the finest club I think in the Marine Corps, for a small little club, which is called Maggie's Drawers and it's still there now. I hadn't been there in a couple of years, but I heard that nothing's changed, very little, they're keeping it up. Everything that you see in that club, probably 80% of it is donated by me. I didn't want to take it all down, because I knew if I did, it would be nothing. But, the colonel stayed there awhile, he told me just to see what I could do. A lot of it was duplicates and stuff. When I went to Headquarters Marine Corps to scrounge some stuff and to the Band to scrounge some stuff when the club was being built, so. If you ever go up there now, I think you'll still see it pretty much so intact. It's a pretty nice little place. It looks like this, but it's tiny.

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L. J. Kimball: How long were you at Stone's Bay?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Three years.

L. J. Kimball: 1984 to 1987? Was Lt. Col. Norm Chandler there after Lt. Col. Mike Williams?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: No. Yes, Norm Chandler took over after Mike, but I was already gone. Because Williams was there when I left. My first CO was Carley. I don't know if you know him?

L. J. Kimball: I'm sure I did.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: He was a major then and now I know he's a colonel. I don't know if he might even be retired and then Williams replaced Carley and then Chandler replaced Williams.

L. J. Kimball: And your function, I'm trying to think, it was called a Rifle Range Detachment in those days? And you were the 1st Sergeant for the detachment?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: That's correct. I also got selected as Sgt. Major there too. Mike Williams actually didn't promote me, he frocked me at the rifle range at a ceremony out there. A great tour at the range. I think too many people go out there and kind of look at that place as a retirement spot and because it's away from everybody. Me and Williams, we did a lot there. I could show you everything that we did there. It was unbelievable. From painting rocks to putting a lot of money and time and effort building the BEQ [Bachelor Enlisted Quarters] there for the Marines. Duty desk, we had it constructed. Everything. Building a very, very nice club. A lot of work went into painting, trying to make the rifle range look like it's something, not just a place where you shoot.

L. J. Kimball: Was Maria still with you then?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Yes.

L. J. Kimball: Where did you live? Still on Doris Avenue?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Right. No, no. As you were. When I joined 8th Marines, my home burned down. I only had it six months, no five months. We didn't even,

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the garage was full of boxes. We didn't get a chance to unpack it yet. It burned down. So, we rebuilt on the same spot. Lost a lot of personal things. Lost a lot of my collection. A lot of old photographs from the old country, stuff like that I kept, it was gone. After the rifle range, I got orders to the 10th Marines. I was Sgt. Maj. of 3/10. Great tour with artillery. Pulled a couple of CAXs [Combined Arms Exercise] for artillery support for the grunts and that was one of the worst winters I ever had. The most miserable time I ever had in the Marine Corps as far as cold and I've been to California, been to Norway, never been so cold as it was in 29 Palms as it was that time. Unbelievable. Plus we had a storm and blew half the area down. It was unbelievable, terrible. That's when Colonel Sheehan was the camp commander.

L. J. Kimball: At 29 Palms?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: 29 Palms. He was at that time CO of the 8th Marines. Good tour with the artillery. I was only with them a year and a half and I got orders to Tustin, California, for a new unit.

L. J. Kimball: Let's get the years here for the record. You left the rifle range and then you went over to 3/10 and when did you leave 3/10 for Tustin?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: 1988.

L. J. Kimball: 1988. So, you went to Tustin. You're saying there was a new unit up there?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Well, they formed 302. 302 was disbanded right after Vietnam. 302 was a 53 [CH-53] squadron and so they made 301. At that time 301 was 46's [CH-46], 302 was 53's. After Vietnam, during the draw downs as it happens all the time, they combined the two squadrons. They got rid of, de-activated actually, 302 and put the 53's and the 46's together with 301. When I got a call, I was on leave when they called me. No, I was not on leave. They called me at the company, I mean at the battalion about orders to 29 Palms. I says, I mean Tustin. I says, look, I've only been here a year and a half, going on a year and a half. I mean, isn't there any other Sergeant Major around, isn't there any Sergeant Major in California that could take that assignment, instead of shipping me from here to there? Plus, I hadn't been in artillery that long. Well, the colonel tried to pull some strings, well, no, initially he told me to monitor, he said look, you're name is in the hat. There's a handful of others too. Why, this was a

Friday, why don't you talk to the wife and see what she thinks, you know? So, Monday I called and I said no, I don't want to go. It's too soon for me. You know, if I had a little more time here, I wouldn't care. He says, and about four days later I got orders. Wonderful. So, I took leave. I'm home on leave about a week and they called me right to the house, from Headquarters and they said, we need you at Tustin as soon as you can get there. Because they're going to re-activate this unit. There's going to be a formal, there's going to be a ceremony and blah, blah, blah. They had a sergeant major in 301. It's there. I said, wait a minute, can't this guy do this? I mean why does it take Sywanyk to drive 3,000 in the middle of my leave to do this? They said, well, we know you, we know your experience and we need you over there, so as soon as you can get there. So, I cut my leave short, packed my truck, gone. Report in late at night about 2100 and as a matter of fact, the Sergeant Major, the station Sergeant Major was there, doing some paperwork. I reported who I was and blah, blah, blah, and he said, you're not coming into the station here, you're coming into the base here. I don't know where you're going, and he didn't at that time. He didn't know I was going to 302. I told him I was going to 302. Our unit that was going to be formed. So, I sat there 9 days with nothing. It was not going to be scheduled for another almost 10 days for the ceremony and all that. Unbelievable. So, they took all the guys. They split the unit, all of 53 guys and formed a new unit. Which is of course, at New River now. They moved the whole unit to New River and the patch, me and the colonel designed the patch, which I have hanging on the ceiling here, for a brand new unit. Called the Phoenix, 302 Phoenix. I spent, that was my first assignment with the aviation community. I learned more than I ever knew about aviation as a whole.

L. J. Kimball: Did you find from that experience that aviation Marines were a different breed than ground Marines?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Yes. Considerably different. I was there for about two months. Me and the CO would talk a little bit and all that. But, generally I just kind of observed and saw what was going on. I was amazed that the system is so different.

L. J. Kimball: What in particular comes to mind when you think of differences between the two communities?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Well, I lived on the base, so I stopped in, we have a night shift, of course. I used to go in there at night time. I looked at these fat bodies and I

thought, gee I thought these guys worked, were civilians that worked for, you know. They weren't, they were Marines. They were being hid at night. Of course it wasn't the colonel's responsibility they just kind of did it. These guys just volunteered and all that. The Marines at night shift loved it. They didn't have school or anything. They just work, they didn't work, I mean there was no inspection for these guys. In the morning, when we had a normal formation with the rest of the squadron and they were already secured, were gone. You didn't see them until later in the evening. We were securing, the day Marines. It was considerably different. A lot of things that was against regulations, I thought and I put all this down on a list for the colonel. I said, Sir, we need to look at this, this is bullshit. We need to correct this. Some of these things need to be fixed instantly and not to waiting, because they're incorrect, they're wrong. So, I started a remedial program, put everybody on a weight program that needed to go on a weight program. I ran the fat bodies three days a week. Put everybody in the same PT uniform, the whole squadron. Well, 302 is a training squadron. So, you get those aviators that come there for their training and then they leave. They go to technical squadron. So, they're there for a short period of time. But, they were not happy with me, because they thought I was a grunt and one of the pilots, I remember, a young captain says, "well, what's the Sergeant major trying to do, make us grunts?" I'll never forget that statement. No, we're just trying to get everything in some kind of order.

L. J. Kimball: Just trying to make them Marines.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Yes, and you know what's amazing about it? The young kids loved it. It was great for them to get away from those damn wrenches. They loved to do the Marine things. It was wonderful, I enjoyed it. Built a, not one PT table to be found in Tustin anywhere, so we built one. It was great. I had a good assignment there, a good CO. And the colonel backed me up. He actually seen what I tried to do. But, he was in aviation. The amazing thing about aviation is, when is an officer of command? As a lieutenant colonel! And the grunts, you know you have a young lieutenant that's got people underneath him that he's in charge of. There's a progression there, that unfortunately doesn't exist in the wing. It's too bad and I don't know what the secret is or what the solution is. But, I think, a lieutenant colonel is too old already to be able to be in command, do you know what I mean? That's the problem with it, I think.

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L. J. Kimball: What other idea? Do you remember any other ideas that you had for remedial action for the aviation community in Tustin?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: My beef was always with the colonel. I'd say god damn it Sir. We concentrate on maintenance. How about maintenance for the bodies? That's important. We've got to do that. We've got to find time to do that. Luckily it's not my real rare stuff.

L. J. Kimball: Remedial actions, anything there to talk about?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Well, it's a simple thing like checking on the duty NCO and he's got his wife there and they're eating dinner. I said, no, you let that young lady go home. What is this, you want to bring them a bag lunch, I don't see any problem. They lounge around in a duty NCO room. Come on. One thing, the remedial which is so important. A normal scheduled PT session, I told the colonel, I said, god damn it Sir we've got to, maintenance not only on the aircraft but the bodies. It's so important. We try to do a lot of the grunt things. As a matter of fact we, we had a company, they come to us from Pendleton, 6th Marines. We sent, we couldn't send them all. We sent most of our kids over there. They spent one full day with the grunts. It was wonderful. These grunts that came, they learn what these mechanics do. I didn't know myself until I went to two or three, what it takes to get one bird in the air. It's just, you know it's a young Marine, freezing his butt off and getting wet. It's one of the LZ's which I do not recall any more, waiting for a bird to come in and like a half an hour late, I said those god damn fly boys. But, it's not the same when you're on the other side. They're some of the hardest working Marines I have ever ran across. I've ran across just about all MOS's. Unbelievable. They're hard working. We put everybody, I told the colonel, we need to do the red shorts and boots. We're tired of running in tennis shoes, how about the boots? We're never going to do it in tennis shoes when it hits the fan. We need to periodically do it in boots. Boots are not designed to run in, colonel, I know that, but we need to do short shuffles and not long distances and do it in boots. Little things like making sure that their socks are rolled over properly, so that all the socks are uniform on every Marine. T-shirts with our 302 logo. Everybody had it. Of course that squadron is the largest training squadron in the Marine Corps. So, when you put everybody together, you're looking at, Christ, 300 some odd people. About 360, 370. The majority of them were, probably more than half were students.

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L. J. Kimball: O.K. How long were you in Tustin?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Two and a half years.

L. J. Kimball: Then you came to New River.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: No. My mother-in-law who stayed with us, she used to come see us every year, for a month, five months however long she wanted to stay. But, that one year she had a massive heart attack and the doctors said she could not be alone so we decided to go out to Ohio, liquidate her home and we moved her here, and she stayed with us. She was getting worse and worse. I called up monitor and said look, I've got to get back. I didn't move my family, I lived there myself for two and a half years. In Tustin. That's a decision that we made. It's not the Marine Corps's fault. And I could not take my Mom out there in that rat race. So, she's got a place here and all that. I tried to get back earlier, I couldn't, but they cut my tour short by six or seven months. So, I spent two and a half years with 302 and then I got orders to 2nd FSSG [Force Service Support Group], came back here.

L. J. Kimball: What year was it you came back here?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I want to say 1990. I got assigned to Sgt. Maj of 8th Motors. I spent exactly three years with them. Towards the end I took 8th Motors to Desert Storm. Almost three years to the day. After Desert Storm, we spent seven months in Desert Storm. They needed vehicles after the war, so we were responsible to police the desert. I told the colonel, I don't understand it. Why do we have to do this? Where's the Kuwait's, where's the Saudi's that had so much money. Well, the general said, we're going to help, so blah, blah, blah. So, we collected a lot of crap that was spilled everywhere. 155 rounds that were in crates they would fall off the flat beds and they just laid there until after the war. All that stuff was cleaned up. Ammunition disposal people were there, which the majority of them were civilians that stayed much, much longer to round up all this ordinance that was unfired, unexploded and we provided a lot of the vehicle support for that. And that's not even talking about the support at the time of war. Kids busted their butts, driving around the clock. Nothing, you know, aircraft, nothing happens without trucks. Nothing happens without trucks. We probably delivered also during the war, the largest group of prisoners. We gathered every flatbed that 8th Motors had. 6th Motors, the reserve unit that was attached to us. We must have had 50 LVS's [Logistics Vehicle System]. You know what that looks like. And

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every LVS was full with prisoners. We escorted them, I can't think of the name of the place. From a prison holding area, to a big prison right outside of Al Jaber. I don't know, we just delivered literally thousands of prisoners. It took us three days to do this operation.

L. J. Kimball: For the benefit of the non-initiated for the tape.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: They call it the Dragon Wagon. I can't think of, it's the biggest truck that the Marine Corps has.

L. J. Kimball: It's probably some acronym, vehicle system or something like that.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I can't think of it right now. My memory doesn't go too far back I'll tell you, forget the stuff. We had only one Marine that died in the unit and not because of the war, but because of an accident. Three, one, two, three, three trucks, just burned up in an accident. That's unfortunate. He was a reservist too. Seen him and another Marine, me and the colonel went to visit him in the hospital before they were shipped out. Burnt, terribly burnt. One Marine died soon after that. The other one, I guess he lived, later, and I just lost track. We should check on him and see how he's doing. He's from New Jersey. I spent a great time with, I had one, two, three, four commanding officers during that three year tenure. Then from 8th Motors, I got orders to MAG 26 [Marine Aircraft Group 26].

L. J. Kimball: Is that over at the air station?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: At the air station. One of the two MAGs. The other one is MAG 29.

L. J. Kimball: What year was this?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: 1994. Great assignment. I had three CO's under that assignment. A lot of coordination in MAG 26 between the MAG headquarters and of course nine squadrons under MAG 26. 204 being the only training squadron. Of course 204 now is as you know, the new MV-22 Osprey training squadron. Good assignment. A lot of coordination between the headquarters and. . .

Tape 2 Side 2

L. J. Kimball: What year was this?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: 1994.

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L. J. Kimball: O.K. You got a year and a half of your tour at MAG 26. Was that 1994?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Yes, 1994.

L. J. Kimball: Cement truck runs a light. [Sgt. Maj. had just explained how his wife was killed at the Main Gate of the New River Air Station by a cement truck running a red light.]

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: My world just fell apart. I got married right out of recruit training, had three kids, with all the, she seen all the promotions, private to Sgt. Major, you know all the deployments, separations, moving here and there. All of a sudden I was kind of lost. She took care of the household. I never paid anything. I always gave her the money and she spent it, she paid all the bills. I'd never written a check, all the time in the Marine Corps. The only time I had a checking account was when I was employed. That was it. And of course assignments came and I talked, and I don't remember the general's name. I wanted to go to 2nd FSSG as a 2nd FSSG Sgt. Major. My desire was always to work for a general. I accepted the 2nd FSSG job at a 6th regiment change of command. I seen the general and he said, Sgt. Major I've heard about you, blah, blah, I'm glad you're coming down. I said, well, we're looking forward to working for you general.

L. J. Kimball: So, you were able to get a tour as Sgt. Major 2nd FSSG?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: No, I told the colonel, my boss down there, MAG 26, you know I always wanted to work for a general and I want to accept this assignment. He said, Sgt. Major, he said, he was leaving too, he had like six months left. He said, think about what the hell you are doing. You've got a 12 year old at home, you've got a sick mother-in-law, you're two miles from work, because I lived right by the air station. He said this is going to be 20 miles or 18, to 2nd FSSG from where you're assignment is going to be totally different. He said, in your particular situation I know they allow you to, because I used to go home 2, 3 times a day to check on my mother-in-law. I thought about it. He says, you don't have that many years left before you retire, and why do you want to burden yourself with this? I think you're going to create a lot of problems for yourself. I thought about it. He's right. Well, just got to do the right thing. So, the colonel talked to me and I sat there and I said, you know, he's right. I don't have that much time left. So, I called general's aide, and said, I've got to speak to the general this is the next day. The general had a function at the O' Club [Officers' Club]. He said the general will be here, but he'll be here probably about 9:00. I said, look, I need to really talk to him, it's kind of important. So, I

came in and sat around waiting for the general. He came in and said hey, Sgt. Major, how's it going? You've got something important, I hear. We sat down. I felt like an idiot, you know? I said, you know general, I think you already know my situation. I've just kind of not been thinking about accepting this assignment. I can't do it. I explained the reasons why. He was understanding. He said, you know what? Marine Corps is not forever, Sgt. Major. You take care of what you've got to take care of at home. He said, once you retire, the Marine Corps is not going to take care of you. I think you're doing the right thing. As much as I wanted to be with you general, I can't. So, we parted, shook hands. He spent about 3 hours with me talking about his situation, and his wife. It was just a great, great, almost 3 hours. I didn't get out of there until midnight. I left there and of course I told the colonel that I'm not going, so he was pretty happy. I told him, I think it's pretty smart, the right thing to do. I said, I agree with you. Also, then of course they wanted, there was an opening for a LANT [FMFLANT] Sgt. Major, so I called this Sgt. Major of the Marine Corps and I said, look don't assign me to none of these things. Because I've only got a year, maybe a year and a half. You know my situation and I mean, everybody knew my situation. The Commandant called my house when he found out about my wife. So, I said, I just want to finish my time here. You know there's no way I could move my family and definitely no way I could move my mother-in-law. She's pushing 90 almost and she's not in good shape and we got a hospice that comes in the daytime and took care of her for a few hours. The rest of the time you got her. Weekends. So, then the monitor called and said, hey, I need to know when you're going to retire because I'm looking for other plans, other assignments for other Sgt. Majors. So, I said, O.K. So I put my letter in. Had a great ceremony. Had quite a few generals come down to see the retirement. It was a great, great retirement I had. Quite a few people from as far as California, friends of mine, Pennsylvania, New York, and Ohio. Had the ceremony right on a flight deck. One other thing that I need to mention that I didn't talk about. When my wife passed away. We had gotten to know a lot of people in this community. My wife was also pretty active in helping in schools and pretty active with the Girl Scouts. So, I've never seen so many flowers at Jone's Funeral Home. I mean they were lined up against the wall. I mean people had to order flowers from Wilmington, because all the flower shops ran out. I couldn't believe that. I didn't know that until later. Plus the Marines, and their support. They came in from the base, they put up a two giant tents right on my front lawn and brought desks, tables and benches for all the people. The food was overwhelming. And it was extremely hot at the house and the air conditioning went out.

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Somebody, I don't know who it was, came in and fixed it. It was just an outpouring that I couldn't believe. And the food, two times a day they would bring me food. I knew the lady that took care of all this. I said, look, please don't worry. You're putting a burden on all these people, this is going to be done for a month until you get your feet wet. I said, look, I'm fine. I can, you know they did it for about a week. I said, just call all the people. I highly appreciate it, but I can't eat all this stuff anyway. They made big casseroles and all that stuff. I can't eat all this stuff and I have nowhere to store it, plus I really appreciate it. Thank them for me, and I'll thank them. It's O.K. So, let's. . .

L. J. Kimball: Your date of retirement was?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: September 1996. This club was in operation a year prior to my retirement. My son ran it.

L. J. Kimball: Does he live here in Jacksonville?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Yes, he sells furniture for Furniture Plus.

L. J. Kimball: How many years did you have in the service upon your retirement?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Almost 33. 32 years, 8 months, and 18 days.

L. J. Kimball: Let me say something now, Sgt. Major. I know you've got some errands. Some time ago you said, a half hour whatever. I still have a lot of questions I'd like to talk to you about. Could we say, could I come back next week maybe?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Not a problem. Let's do that. I've got these people coming. I think that's good.

L. J. Kimball: O.K. So I'll give you a call next week and we'll find a mutual convenient time and we'll come by and we can talk about the Scarlet and Gold.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Thursdays at the same time would be good, because I have to be here because all my deliveries come in. So, if you've got nothing else on let's say 1300 on Thursday fine.

L. J. Kimball: I'll make myself a note and I'll give you a call and let you know one way or another. That's good.

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Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Or, later on in the afternoon on Tuesday like maybe 1500 on Tuesday.

L. J. Kimball: For some reason I've been carrying my damn calendar with me everywhere I've been going and I didn't think I was going to need it today, so I can't look and tell you.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Well, call me and I'll try to make it fit. On my schedule.

Continuing with Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk on 8/3/99.

L. J. Kimball: Well, the last time we talked we had a chance to go through your career. There are still a lot of points for expansion for parts of your career. Principally dealing with your impressions of the Marine Corps and how it's changed. Particularly how you feel Camp Lejeune and Jacksonville have changed from the times over the years that you've been here and what you think about the average Marine and how they've changed over the years also.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: My personal opinion is that I believe that, well the Jacksonville community has changed considerably. I mean there's a lot more retired people. There's a lot more new business, a lot of new outside business to add to the locals of course and a lot more retirees. The business has grown. I mean the community has grown and it has grown naturally because of Camp Lejeune and not because of anything else. Jacksonville, before the base was built was a community like Maysville, Richlands, it would have stayed that way if it wasn't for the base, I'm sure. Marine Corps brought monies, people got to know where Jacksonville is because of the base, etc., etc. One thing led to another and the town of Jacksonville is secluded away from main thoroughfares. They're building freeways now with better connections, etc. I think the base has put Jacksonville on the map. You can't say that for other areas. The other towns similar to Jacksonville, there's Ocean Side right outside of Pendleton, but Ocean Side could disappear tomorrow and not be missed. Because it would be gobbled up by the surrounding communities, but not this base. It's quite a bit different. I believe that the Marines, I think that the Marines have always reflected the product of their environment. We had a lot of racial situations out in civilian community, and with that was included drugs and of course we had a lot of those problems in the Marine Corps and in the early 70's and late 70's. Of course I believe that the Vietnamese War probably disrupted this country more so than any other

conflict. It dragged out for 10 years and it accomplished nothing. A lot of Marines and a lot of service people died, for what? It created a lot of racial problems. It was created really in the bush in Vietnam and continued with the Marines coming back from overseas. With the usage of drugs there, compounded the use of drugs here. A lot of problems in the Marine Corps in the early 70's, late 70's. I lived through a lot of that. I was at the point where I was ready to get out. Sometimes I wonder what happened to leadership, well, at that particular time. It's not only me saying this, but many, many other people. A lot of good Marines that I've known over the years, both enlisted and officers did get out because of the big, big drug problems in the Marine Corps. Well, we had our problems, but I believe that the other branches had even more as far as racial. But, I think it's a different Marine Corps. Things have changed, time marches on and time has a tendency to change things. I think the Marine Corps now is better than it's ever been. I've been through recruit training in two different locations in two different time frames and I believe there's more physical training done in recruit training now than it ever was. I think the demands on a recruit are probably much more so than they ever were in the older days. When you talk to some of the "Old Salts," I think they, a lot of the leadership there was done through harassment, maltreatment, hazing, and actual physical abuse. I've seen it, lived through it. It was never legal. I think that many of the situations, the drill instructors took it upon themselves to teach recruits the way they thought the recruit should be taught instead of what the SOP told them to do. And we've gone through cycles over the years and my belief and I think I've mentioned it before that the cycle, anytime there's a conflict there's more hazing and abuse that happens in recruit training. I don't know if we'll ever get over that, but it has a tendency to come back to us. It's happened before and I think that it will happen again. But, I've been back to Parris Island numerous times, observed training and seen my son graduate in the early 90's and it's not different, it's no difference for the young man that goes to recruit training. It's only different for a man that's been through training ten years ago and he's training now, for him it is different. For that individual that the Marine Corps is the first thing that he's ever experienced, that's all he knows. The Marine Corps still, I think trains good basic privates and basic Marines. I only have one problem with the training. I think too much stress is emphasized in recruit training on combat skills. When I went through as a young Marine, we had very little stress. All the stress, all the emphasis on combat skills was done at Infantry Training Regiment, ITR or School of Infantry now. I think too much stress, or too much emphasis is put on the young man on combat

skills when he's not even a Marine yet, really. I think that's a problem. I think that needs to be looked at.

L. J. Kimball: What, in your opinion, should they be spending their time on?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Everything else. History, drill, the uniforms, UCMJ's [Uniform Code of Military Justice], they hit history but they hit it lightly. I think history should be. . . customs and courtesies. That should be stressed more. More on physical fitness. I can't say more on physical fitness, because they do a lot of that. Basic military skills, I think need to be stressed constantly and they've got time, I believe when they graduate to get the rest of it in School of Infantry.

L. J. Kimball: How long is Boot Camp now?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I believe it's 12 weeks.

L. J. Kimball: How does this compare to what it was when you were on the grinder in earlier days?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I can't compare it because I'm not familiar with what the schedule is like. I know that when I went through, we spent 2 weeks on the rifle range, as you were, 3 weeks on the rifle range. I know that they spend 2 weeks now on marksmanship. I don't know if it's good or bad. I think maybe it's less emphasis on marksmanship. I know it was more emphasis on marksmanship. We fired more different weapons than we do now, I believe. I think it's lower stress now than it ever was before. At least from the time I can compare to 35 years ago.

L. J. Kimball: Is this an advantage or disadvantage for a Marine, going on his initial tours and schooling. Does he profit from being in more stressful or less stressful environment in recruit training?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I think there's got to be something said for fear. I, and that not only goes to recruit training, but it goes to, bringing up young people, bringing up kids. I think you've got to have some fear. There's some folks that you can teach without fear. Just tell them no, or to do it this way and they will. But, I think it's human nature not to want to do it, but want to do it your own particular way. So, I think there's, I think you can't separate fear and leadership. I think they're both kind of combined. There may be a little bit of it, maybe a lot of it. It depends on how much. I personally believe

that there's no fear, and. . . look at the chaos they have in schools and all grades. The kids aren't afraid of the teachers. It's very simple. I think that's really important, and I think we've gotten somewhat away from that and I think that the society as a whole and the mothers of America and the government and the Congress and everybody else, I think has changed recruit training.

L. J. Kimball: What you said, I believe was that recruit training is 12 weeks now. Back when you went through Boot Camp, you recall it being 12 weeks or more?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Well, when I was in San Diego it was cut down to 8 weeks because of Vietnam buildup. They did cut it by a month. Everything was compressed. When I went through in 1964, it was 12 weeks. As a matter of fact, I think it was, might have been 13 weeks. We prepared to graduate in 13 weeks.

L. J. Kimball: It's interesting the remarks you made about the drugs in the Marine Corps around the 70's. It's just reinforced a lot of things, having gone through the experience myself. I saw a lot of very good officers also leave because they just didn't want to put up with that nonsense anymore. If you want Marines to act like Marines you've got to have support from headquarters.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: No, the support wasn't there. Too many areas, I believe that too many people were running scared and I think that if you were coined as a racist, you're career was over. I think that's part of the problem. There are racists in this country and there are racists in this whole damn world. I mean the Kosovo situation is proof for example. I think as long as there's the human race, they're going to hate one another because of the different tongues and the different customs, the different religions with the different colored skins. I think it's going to continue. I think it's only human nature. Will we totally alleviate it? I doubt it. Maybe some day, but I believe that the Marine Corps situation in the 70's was probably less racism as it was leadership.

L. J. Kimball: Were you in Camp Lejeune during the latter 60's or 70's?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I was on recruiting duty in the early 70's and I pulled a tour in Okinawa. We really had a lot of problems there. So, I know, and of course I read about the problems back here in Lejeune. Actually I came back from Okinawa, it was like race riots all the time there.

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

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Yes. And when I came back from there, of course I didn't see that because I went to Parris Island. Parris Island of course or San Diego is really very much controlled environment. So, nothing like, you don't see nothing like that.

L. J. Kimball: I was in Okinawa during that period, like 1972, 1973. In my mind, that was the height of racial turmoil. I was up at Camp Schwab.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I was at Hansen.

L. J. Kimball: It was a hell of a time and I'm sure your experiences bear this out too, we're talking about troubled waters. If you stopped a group of black Marines and you were by yourself as an officer or staff NCO, you didn't know if you were going to get assaulted or not. They filled up football fields at night. Groups of hundreds of them milling around. I went on a deployment once. We had what almost turned out to a mutiny aboard a Navy ship because the blacks sailors and Marines were going to take charge of the LST. All in all a very distasteful situation. I was wondering if you had any stories like that, that you could relate to your Camp Lejeune experiences about the racial situation here.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Not exactly, because I was not here at that time. Of course leaving recruiting duty in the early 70's and going to Okinawa, I had a taste a whole year of that situation. Of course from there I went to MSG duty in Germany. No, wait a minute. Let me go back a little bit. Finished the Okinawa tour in the 70's. **Next tape 3 side 1.** At DI School we'd never seen anything like that at all, none. And then from the DI school I went to Germany. Frankfurt and when I came back they were almost non-existent, and that was in 1982.

L. J. Kimball: You were over with Marines, I think you were with 8th Motors in Desert Storm?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: That's correct.

L. J. Kimball: You had the opportunity to observe the Marines, in a combat theater. Did you derive some impressions from how well they performed under those circumstances? I think you said you even lost a Marine over there.

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Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Yes. I, I'll tell you what. Those young Marines especially mine, really didn't even know that they had that much in them. When you know what, hit the fan, they were there and very little sleep. I mean they were always, always more than accomplished their mission. I never seen as much young men as motivated and dedicated as. . . but I did have some problems with my females.

L. J. Kimball: What kind of problems?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: We had, well, they shouldn't have been there period. Out of about 40, 56 females I had in the battalion, I had maybe 10 were hard chargers and they could do anything. The other ones, they tried to get back early, they had all kind of problems. Medical problems. We did send some back early. The attrition rate of our female Marines was poor. If that was the same thing with males, our battalion would be combat ineffective. That's it.

L. J. Kimball: Did you have problems with pregnancy?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Of what?

L. J. Kimball: Pregnancy?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Yes. I don't think there was a problem in my battalion. I think there was only 3, I think if I can recall, out of 54, so it really I didn't consider. . .

L. J. Kimball: When you're talking about medical problems with women Marines, can you generalize what sort of medical problems?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Female problems with some type, something or other that they were always running to doctor about. A lot of leg and feet problems, which males had too, so I can't say. But, relatively speaking that on their part was much more.

L. J. Kimball: Over the years, during your career, you had undoubtedly contact various times with women Marines. Was there something that you can say that's constantly been the case or has improved or gotten worse over the years as far as their ability to identify be Marines and act like Marines with all the esprit and dedication that goes along with it, as opposed to some of the women Marines in Desert Storm, where they were looking for reasons to get out of it?

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Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I guess I come from the old school. I believe that a female Marine should be like a male. Short hair, the same standards in the PFT, which they now, I heard recently are getting back to, so it's the same standard for the PFT [Physical Fitness Test] for the males and females. I don't think you're going to find that. I just don't believe that they have the toughness as males and really I don't expect them to be like males. I don't want them to be like males. I want them to be like feminine. I don't want them to be masculine. I think they're hardships in the woods and the dirt. They've not experienced that. I don't think they're the proper gender for that type of situation. We can say all we want and say how wonderful everything is and all that, but it isn't. You, I mean the males, the females in the academies don't do what the males do. They never have, and they never will. And why are we trying to make it like they're equal. They're not. I don't want them to be, personally. Trying to make it, they're trying to deploy more women now, because years ago it was really bad. They never deployed women and the males of course got an opportunity to deploy more than their share. Now, I hear that they're sending more women out especially with the MSSG's [Marine Service Support Groups] and stuff and support units. I think it should be that. They should be deployed equally like men, males. Are they doing that now? I'm not sure. Maybe they are, or they've started. I think it's, it leads us to a whole different ball game that really is not, the decision I don't believe is made by the Marine Corps anyway. I believe it's made higher up and we have to follow suit. I know that one thing, we have to go first. If anything happens, we're called on to go first and I think that is going to be a problem with a lot of females.

L. J. Kimball: I can sit here and tell you a lot of stories, impressions, encounters with women Marines. But, this is your dime. When I had most of my contact with women Marines, it was in the 70's. It seemed to me that they were more interested in being women Marines as opposed to Marines, with separate standards, lower expectations, a kind of a privileged clique that we couldn't really call upon to act like Marines.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I believe that's true, but we also created that too. I know when the male Marines would counsel female Marines, they, would be a lot more easier with them. They would walk on pins and needles. They wouldn't chew butt like with a male Marine, because they were a female. And, so I think we, we were at our own fault. Now, I think it's an inherent nature to treat women lighter and softer. I think it's a natural tendency, that's just built in the system, I believe. You know?

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L. J. Kimball: Did you see a trend as you approached your retirement time, that women Marines were being treated and in fact acting more like Marines as opposed to a category of Marines?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Well, me personally, I always tried to treat them equally. I mean, from day one. But, I can't say that for the Corps as a whole. I think there's still too much preferred treatment given. I don't know when it's going to end. I think it still exists. I believe there's a lot of resentment on the male side of the house. I know of a perfect example, a Sgt. Maj. who had an adjoining post in Tustin. As a matter of fact, I had 302 and she had 301. She's been nowhere. I mean nowhere. Not deployed, now she's a Sgt. Major of a squadron. You know? I think even the generals, female generals, where have they been? What have they been? I mean I can show you a lot of full bird colonels that are highly, highly decorated, but will never see one star, never will. They pick a female, O.K. I guess she's good in logistics, but there are men have been through everything that are also good in logistics. You know what I mean? That's just the way it is. But, I think, the problem is there and I don't think it's a Marine Corps problem. I believe it's a problem in society. I just don't, the camaraderie when you PT'd, Uh-Rah, Uh-Rah and all that, it's just not there with females. And I don't think it ever will.

L. J. Kimball: When you first joined the Marine Corp, you saw blacks in boot camp did you not?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Sure.

L. J. Kimball: You thought nothing unusual about there being black Marines?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: No. As a matter of fact, I graduated from Lincoln High School up in Cleveland. There was 3, it was basically an all white high school. There was 3 blacks in the high school. I didn't think about it as anything. I never and where the school was, it was on the West side of Cleveland. There weren't any blacks there that I can recall. There are now, in 30 years, but I think there's 4 or 5 in my platoon. Over the years have been more and more. I've trained more in my platoon. When I was a drill instructor, I trained many, many black drill instructors in DI school. I never, just never looked at race as any kind of an issue. I always treated people equally and if they performed well, I tried to punish them equally too. If they didn't perform they got it. I didn't care who they were. If they were hard chargers, I'd bend over backwards to do anything for them. If

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they were dirt balls I supported them in nothing and that was it. That's the way it was.

L. J. Kimball: I'm sure the fact that you spent most of your growing up years, if not all of them in Ohio, probably had an influence on your attitude, and one would suspect as we've observed if you were raised in Georgia, you might have a different idea on the subject.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Sure.

L. J. Kimball: O.K. You treated blacks, whites without difference. Did you see any difference in the capability of performance or attitude, black or white?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I seen, no. I've seen bad Marines, black and white and good Marines, black and white. I really see no difference. Both in recruit training and in schools. The ones I attended, and DI school. I had some hard chargers in all my units that were of color, all colors and I had problem people that were both black and white, so.

L. J. Kimball: We both know that not everybody in the Marine Corps that we ever served with or under or above, shared our attitudes on a lot of subjects. Did you experience a racial attitude on the part of senior staff NCO's that you dealt with? Was there a conspicuous racial attitude on a lot of their parts?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Yes, yes. I'd have to say that I did. But, I also seen black senior staff NCO's too that were racists and it really turned me off, big time. I've seen it on both sides, which is distasteful seeing it on both sides.

L. J. Kimball: Was this particularly true, say early on as opposed to later on in your career? Or did it continue?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: No, I think I seen it probably more so earlier on than I did later on, yes.

L. J. Kimball: Did you observe the treatment either by officers or staff NCO's of black Marines earlier on to be different than the white Marines were treated?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: No. I've not seen that at all. I've heard a lot of talk, but as far as treatment or punishment or awards or rewards, it was fairly pretty darn equal.

L. J. Kimball: I think you said at the beginning that you thought that the Marine Corps was better now than it ever has been? Why would you say that?

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Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Well, I believe that the training, well, let's remove hazing and let's remove harassment and let's remove the maltreatment and really physical abuse away from what training is. This particular training was supposed to be removed away from all of those things 30 years ago. I got physically abused as a private. It was not legal then like it is not legal now. I didn't know any better myself. I just took it and that's it and continued on. I believe that there is less of that now, than probably ever before and I think the training now is much more so realistic and I think people get treated more as a man than they were.

L. J. Kimball: Tape 1, Side 2

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I seen a lot happen in recruit training that really had nothing to do with training recruits in basic training. Hazing, just some bullshit, playing games, etc., that was not necessary. We could have accomplished the same thing without it.

L. J. Kimball: Eliminating those and the harassment and all sorts.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I think that the Marine now or the applicant private is much more knowledgeable and smarter now than he was 20 years ago. I think he's gotten smarter over the last 35 years much more so than then. And I think the treatment is probably, I think it's probably much more easier maybe, to motivate these people. I don't know recruit training right now, today, I can't speak, but we just got, it's better gear I think. The instructors, a lot of stress is put in DI school on what the instructors put out. He's tested now. I know at one time there was no psychological test given. I know they do that. They repeat a lot of, if they have some type of problem or they could be abusive, or have a problem mistreating others. So, I think the schools have gotten better over the years. I think the demand to put out more much more professional drill instructors. The schools are better, much better than they were. Also the gear, the uniforms, the equipment they have now. It's just so much better than it was 30, 40 years ago.

L. J. Kimball: How about the chow in the mess halls?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Unfortunately I believe that what we're providing now is what the young man is familiar with before he came into the Marine Corps. The fast food lines, you know. That doesn't exist at Boot Camp of course, but it does when he goes anywhere on his first assignment.

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L. J. Kimball: How about quarters?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Well, I believe that the biggest mistake we ever made is making little rooms for people. Still think open squad bays, we got much, we got control, we got the squad leaders, you got the team leaders. They see everybody. They field day together. They go on liberty together. I think now, it's much more difficult to be a leader. Now, it's much more difficult to inspect the areas because everything is all cubed up. You've got corporals in their rooms and you've got the lance corporals in their little cube and nothing military about opening one of these little rooms and looking in them any more compared to the tight racks and 18 inches of white, laundry bags in the end. But I think being closed up where you do whatever the hell you want in the evening after work is the biggest problem. I don't think you'll ever see it go back to the way it was. It's tough, it really is tough. I'd like to see open squad base. And the reason why, and I don't care if the Air Force had it first. I mean the Air Force has been living in cubes for many, many years before we got condo style living. Because we go first and I think the cohesiveness has got to be more so with the Corps than it is with any other branch.

L. J. Kimball: Well, here's an area that you can probably address. The care and keeping of the dependents by the Marine Corps. How has that changed over the years?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Well, the Sgt. Major of the Marine Corps got chastised for his little comment. I personally believe that right now, a Marine comes in he is taken care of and that's it. If he wants to get married he's strictly on his own. I believe that once he re-enlists then he gets quarters, he gets rations for the wife, he gets medical for that. But, right now I don't think a young man, you know he gets married, now the wife is pregnant, he graduates from recruit training and he goes on leave in Iowa and talks to his little sweetheart and says, hey, come down to Camp Lejeune they got a house for us, they got commissary privileges, they got a doctor. So, I think we are at fault saying all these things are going to be good for you to get married. We're not encouraging marriage, but we're, we provide these things and once the darling gets here, it's not quite as easy as that. She finds out that 6 months later he's getting deployed and now she's by herself. I personally believe that the first four years, when he's given everything like he has been for many years. Once he reenlists then he gets all these bennies. Then he can afford to get married because he gets the medical, go get building provided, he'll get rations. I think that should be

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coming, but I don't think he should be given it right off when he comes in, because it becomes a problem.

L. J. Kimball: You probably agree with General Mundy [Carl E. Mundy, former CMC] and his ideas.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Yes. Unfortunately that'll never happen in this society. I'd like to see it happen. The problem is, a young Marine right now he lives in TT [Tarawa Terrace, a base housing area], he's got a little baby. His priorities are not with his platoon, or his section. His priority are with the little one and the wife and how is she going to get to the commissary on pay day. He's got mixed priorities. He's not totally 100% dedicated to his unit and it's only human nature that he's not. And I don't think that's good.

L. J. Kimball: Do you think, once again from your perspective as being a married Marine that the PX [Post Exchange] and commissaries and medical care provided to the dependents, has that increased, decreased, is that sufficient?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I think it's decreased. I believe that, there is a difference, I think if you go and you spend \$100 in the food line and spend \$100 in the commissary, you'll get a bigger bag at the commissary. I believe that. I go to the commissary, I shop there. Not all products, but just about all. If you're a smart coupon type buyer and you check prices, you can do better. There is a difference. Some of the clothes, yes and no. I've already compared prices on cameras. They're cheaper because there's no tax. You can get cameras at almost the same price in the camera department at the PX with Walmart or Kmart, except there's a tax and from that standpoint, it is cheaper. The medical, I've not had any problems in the medical. I've always been taken care of as a young Marine right up to Sgt. Major. My wife had problems, medical problems over the years and she was taken care of. Of course being retired, it's a whole different ball game. I don't know if I should even bring that up. It's not quite the same. You wing it I guess. The best thing to do is not to get sick.

L. J. Kimball: I remember you talking about other retired Marines and they probably know exactly what you're going through.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I've got Champus Prime and I'm glad that I did buy, because it's relatively cheap for what they offer. And I've got the dental package also which is extra. Which is also a pretty good deal. My wife uses it and my daughter uses it. It's really relatively cheap or what's been done, we've not really

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been that sick, but still. So, I guess the best thing for any of these programs is to stay healthy.

L. J. Kimball: How would you contrast the way the Marine Corps took care of it's dependents 30 years ago than they do now?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Well, I personally believe that years ago. . .

L. J. Kimball: O.K. How the Marine Corps takes care of dependents.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I believe that the emphasis on family has been, again in my particular situation, I can't say because I've never had a problem. When I got married on recruit leave out of Boot Camp and we got stationed together, she got pregnant, which was not planned and then she joined me in 29 Palms. We'd not had any problems that I can recall, but I know the emphasis on the families over the years has just gotten so much better. With the key wives. When I was a young Marine there was no such thing. That program is really sanctioned by the Marine Corps. You'd better have a good program.

L. J. Kimball: For the benefit of this oral history, could you explain what the key wives organization is?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Well, there's a lady in charge in the unit. If there's a problem, especially, this works great for those that are deployed. She's got all the wives phone numbers and they periodically get together. Now, if there's a problem with a lance corporal's wife not getting mail or anything. A problem with pay, she's got somebody to turn to and the key wives coordinator has somebody in the battalion headquarters for people that are in the rear or regimental headquarters if one of the battalions are gone. That's a point of contact for these ladies. Networking, I mean, I've seen it work quite well. Every unit has got wives. It's all volunteer work of course, they dedicate their time and they get together and it really does work quite well. It's a super program. I'm all for it. It's got bigger and bigger. I don't think that there's a unit in the United States, in the Corps, that doesn't have a key wives program and it worked quite well. But, I think the emphasis of family overall, since, of course over the years there was only two people in my platoon out of 60 that were married when I first came in. Probably right now there's probably two or three times that. Totally over 50% of the Corps is married, on the enlisted side anyway. Young Marines, so, the Marine Corps has been paying close attention to the problem. Young

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Marines, young wives. They've got bride school on the base. I don't think they ever had that years ago. So, and a lot of money has been spent over the years to help the family. To make the wife understand what the husband does, understand that this is what he has to do, he won't be home, blah, blah and who she could contact and who's in charge. The unit chaplain is always in the play with key wives program. The system works quite well and I think the Marine Corps has made money over the years by having this in place. It's now invaluable.

L. J. Kimball: You, yourself have one daughter?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Two daughters and a son.

L. J. Kimball: How old are they?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Well, my son is 34 and my daughter is 33 and another daughter, the youngest daughter is 17.

L. J. Kimball: O.K. You're re-married now? How long ago did you re-marry?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: About 10 months.

L. J. Kimball: So, a relatively young, married couple here.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I never thought I'd do it again, to tell you the truth. Well, you know I just didn't want to be alone in my old age. We were married 30 years, almost. A month shy of 30 years actually. 29 years and 11 months when she got killed in the accident. My world kind of fell apart, because she took care of business. Many times I was here there and everywhere and she. . . raised the kids, did everything in the household. She was also the type of person that contributed to the community. Helping school, helped with the Girl Scouts and stuff like that. She left, it was hard. And, I don't think I'll really, really get over it I guess. Kind of hard to forget about her. But, I really could never forget about her. Then I was by myself for awhile and then I started to go out a little bit with some ladies. When I met this, my wife now, was the right thing to do. We got along real well and everybody said it wouldn't last. Look, it's been 10 months, hard to believe.

L. J. Kimball: Tell me about collecting, how you got into this?

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Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Started collecting in '69. Went home on leave. A big flea market there. It's held in the day time in the drive in. I found a couple of emblems that I have displayed now, as you entered the door. Not having any intention of collecting. They were the old 1932 droop-wing emblems which cost me \$2.00.

L. J. Kimball: What was the droop-wing emblem?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: That was the style in the 30's.

L. J. Kimball: For aviators?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: No, for all Marines. They were called droop-wings.

L. J. Kimball: Droop-wings?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: When you get a chance, look at them you'll see what they look like.

L. J. Kimball: When you mention wings most people think about aviators.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: No, the eagle, right it's just the style of the eagle with the droop wings that make it so unique. There up there, they're probably a couple of hundred now. I picked up a few more things here and there, and started collecting. Within about a year I had a lot of stuff and never, that I think would come to a place like this, but then two years, three years later I really started to get serious with it and I'm glad I did because some of the stuff I have here now, the prices have sky rocketed. It's very difficult to come by, you know the Marine Corps was always small, so they always made less gear for the gear of course than they did for the other branches. Then, the dream about putting a place like this together, a 25 year old dream. I never thought I'd do it here in Jacksonville. But, ultimately my wife is buried here, I bought a home here, my son is here. My daughter is in Wilmington, she is in the movie business. My daughter still lives, she's a senior this year and this place came open, it was up for sale. It was ideal to house my collection. I personally believe that I've got the largest, private collection of the Marine Corps in the United States. And I know I have the largest Marine Corps movie poster collection in the United States. I'm pretty sure. If there's somebody that has a larger collection I don't know about it.

L. J. Kimball: What did this place use to be?

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Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: It used to be a club, also called the Tiki and somehow just, over the years, dwindled, the business just got worse and worse and it changed hands for about a year. I talked to the owner. I said, hey I'm kind of interested and one thing led to another and I got in here, relatively cheap. The rest is history, I guess. I probably have at any given time about 2000 members. We cater to anybody, of course. It's a private club. We go by some rules and regulations. Dress code is a requirement. Profanity is not allowed. We play music soft here, so you can be by the bar here. You don't have to go out and dance and you can hear the person you're talking to. That's kind of important compared to a lot of places where all you hear is that loud boom sound and it's terrible. Our drink prices are relatively reasonable. I think I could charge a hell of a lot more than I'm charging now. We have done everything imaginable here over the last 4 years. As a matter of fact in September I'm going to have my first marriage ceremony which will be conducted here. We've had wedding receptions, you name it. Marine Corps balls. We've got 5 balls scheduled for November. Farewells, weddings, birthday parties, raffle type drawings for St. Francis. We've had two of those, one a year. You name it, we've had it here so far.

L. J. Kimball: From an economic situation would you say you're feel fairly comfortable that your collection is going to be in Jacksonville for a few more years?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Yes. I believe it's here to stay.

L. J. Kimball: Have you ever had your collection valued, appraised?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: No, I haven't and the reason why, well. . . there's very few people in this country that can do that. That's why it's so difficult to insure this place, because the insurance company can't tell me, they know less about it than I do. I mean there is a value for an M1, there is a value for a 1957 Chevy, but there's some. . . . There's some value for Marine Corps posters. There's a little book catalog that has prices, etc. There's so many other things here that you couldn't put a price on, a uniform, for example from 1900. It's just, but whatever the value is, it's just increased ten fold over the years. Like I said, there's only so much of that gear made. A lot of it was destroyed, lost, thrown away. There's just not a lot of it around anymore.

L. J. Kimball: Is most of your clientele older, retired Marines?

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Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: It's a mixture. Still have a lot of young Marines that come in here.

L. J. Kimball: Ladies?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: We've probably got the largest mix of ladies that come in here than any other club in Jacksonville.

L. J. Kimball: Do you have, as a sort of then and now perspective. Do you have pictures of yourself in your personal collection when you were a young Marine? If they want to compare a Sgt. Major to a private? Do you have some old pictures?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I wish I did.

L. J. Kimball: Were they all destroyed in the fire?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Not all of them, but most of it, yes. Yes, the fire did me in. 1981.

L. J. Kimball: Could you walk me around here briefly and point out those particular things that are treasures to you? Maybe things that relate to Camp Lejeune?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Sure.

L. J. Kimball: When they come up with the general history of Camp Lejeune, it's much more interesting if you have something that relates to the history of Camp Lejeune, some kind of photograph, for example.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I do have some photographs of early times at Camp Lejeune, I think they're upstairs. I believe. I do have.

L. J. Kimball: Your George's Medal over here, how did you come by that?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I got that from another collector. There's really nothing downstairs here that, let's see. This particular picture here, reserve Marine Corps private. This picture here was taken at Camp Lejeune. It's on the back. 1942, I believe. Upstairs, I have some items.

L. J. Kimball: So, you were able to get a lot of your material from other collectors that sold you their collections?

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Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I correspond with other collectors and that's just generally where the majority of the stuff is. But, too many of those collectors are in it strictly for the money. I mean they know what they have and they want, I mean you can have it if you pay their price. Let me see here.

L. J. Kimball: First off, where did you get these pictures?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I bought them in, some of these actually I bought awhile back in flea markets. But a lot of them were from other collectors. I got some of these from photo shops on base. Just different places, not any one particular place. I've got a great collection of, I've got four posters like this. I have other pictures. They're getting developed now. Too bad I don't have them here, but they're from Camp Lejeune, 1940's. Four different companies, which I'm waiting to get. Let's see what we got here. I've got some stuff, you know, I don't even have all this stuff here. I have some stuff at home. I thought I had something. . .

L. J. Kimball: What sort of stuff do you have at home? More private photographs?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I've got a some photographs of WM's in the training area from the 40's. Let me put a light on over here. My lights go all the way around upstairs, or downstairs. This one here is probably the one you need. From Camp Lejeune. This is the Globe [Base newspaper] from 1945. The bottom portion of the Globe is when Roosevelt visited the division. That's the old parade ground and of course soon after that he died and the top portion is the funeral procession in D.C. That's the 1945 Globe. That's probably the most unique piece I've got from 1945.

L. J. Kimball: That's April 18, 1945. I've got that one framed, that was always my favorite.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Do you know that's really rare?

L. J. Kimball: Is it?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: J. Walter Thompson advertised, of course they were the advertisers for the Corps. When this first came out, the Marine Corps didn't like it. They said they don't want to put out that image. So, a lot of that stuff that went out, the rest of it was destroyed. So, if you've got it, hold on to it. I have this one and a smaller one. These are all, the rest of the stuff up here is all, Marine Corps, Marine Corps posters. I've got some old photographs from

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Camp Lejeune at home. In fact I've got a nice book from, and this is an original book that I picked up when they built the hospital. It's all the construction and, but it was done by a Navy officer, I'd like to bring that in for you to look at. It's all original, it's really neat. It's the nicest piece. I know that the base would like to have it.

L. J. Kimball: So, probably when you began your collection, monetary consideration was never a factor, if it dealt with the Marine Corps and you wanted one of them.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I've got some pictures of the base at home. What I think I'm going to do, see a lot of people come in here and say Sgt. Major we can donate something for you if you make an 8th Marine area. I said, look, I can't do that because I wouldn't have any room to make some other unit's area. But, I think I need to put, to make a Camp Lejeune wall. And strictly everything from Camp Lejeune needs to be displayed. I think I will do that. But, I'm always constantly moving things around, you know, anything that's Marine Corps. But, I think I will make a Camp Lejeune section, strictly photographs from Camp Lejeune.

L. J. Kimball: Looks like a 45-70 there. I got one of those.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Springfield, Kraig, Enfield.

L. J. Kimball: Does anybody come and ask you that they would be willing to donate things if you'd just give them credit for the donation someplace on the artifacts?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Yes, I hear, they come up across, and everything, but most of the stuff that people want to donate, I really have already and it's not unique. I've very careful with them, I say, I'm sorry I can't use it because if I accept it, I'll tell them, I'll accept it but I won't display it, because I have it around. I might use it to trade for other things. So, I'm going to be up-front with them and honest because next time they come in they want to see it hanging.

L. J. Kimball: We have the same problem at the Onslow County Museum as far as accepting donations like that.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: But, unfortunately the museum gets everything free. They pay for nothing and they've got some neat stuff. And rightly so, they should.

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L. J. Kimball: Like you, they've got more stuff in the warehouse than they have on display.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I've been in the basement. They've got rows and rows of oil paintings from Commandants to battle scenes. They've got weapons down in the basement. They've got so much stuff it's unbelievable. And it is the Marine Corps Museum, they should have a lot of unique stuff. I don't even compare to them of course. I'm not trying to compare to them.

L. J. Kimball: Well, like you say, it could be and very likely is the largest private collection.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I believe it is.

L. J. Kimball: Which is something.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Yes.

L. J. Kimball: I appreciate your time. Off the top of your head what are the top things, top most valuable from a heritage perspective that you have?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: In this place? I had a Sergeant that was in China that I met in San Diego, he's dead now. He was 91 when he died. He gave me this little pennant. He told me that this hung in the Shanghai NCO Club. There was a little pole that it was on too, which he could never find. I framed it. This is personally dear to me. I've never seen another one like it. It was made out of silk, made in China. It has the officers of the different nationalities, in the Boxer Rebellion around the turn of the century and is very unique. I've never seen one like it. It's quite rare.

Tape Two, Side One, 03 August

L. J. Kimball: Go ahead Sgt. Maj.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I've been doing a little research on him to find out where he came from, where he's buried but everything that you see here belonged to this corporal. I didn't get the campaign cover, but I received this Kelly helmet, 2nd Division patch of course is on the uniform like it is in the photograph. The most unique thing is the golden compass you see there. Everything is engraved, his name and all that. He's got the engraved Marine Corps emblem.

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L. J. Kimball: How did you come across this?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: I got it from another guy, who I paid him money for it and he had it. He's strictly a guy that deals and does this. My other collection, my 1895, the only thing missing is the chin strap and I'm still looking for it. It's difficult. The chin strap would look like that. Medals. Those are all the medals that were issued by South Vietnam to all the forces that fought Vietnam. It's complete, it's kind of unique. I don't know of other collections like it. I'm sure probably are, not many. I wouldn't think. But, there's more than one item here that's near and dear to my heart.

L. J. Kimball: Yes, it's like trying to pick out who your favorite kids are.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: Just like this, I got it out at Harper's Ferry. It shows the naval uniforms of 1898 and that's kind of neat. And of course it shows the Marine which is here. An item right here. Years ago when a Marine was discharged, he would get this leather pouch. It's really unique and everything that's his discharge, and also some other pertinent paper work. This is a division patch and all the medals that he rated. That's how you'd get mustered up. Signed by the 2nd lieutenant.

L. J. Kimball: This is 1945. That's not bad.

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: How many? I mean there were literally thousands of these put out. I know there are some more in private hands because it belongs to them. Where are they all, you know? It's going to be unique. You just don't see too many anymore. These are military watches from three different periods. What's unique about this one, I flipped it over and it said 1917. I mean at that particular time nobody wore wrist watches, it was all pocket watches, so that's very, one of the first wrist watches ever made. Then of course that replaced this one with the old plastic and the most current one is this one.

L. J. Kimball: Off the top of your head, do you recall any of the movies for which you have posters that took place at Camp Lejeune?

Sgt. Maj. Sywanyk: No, you know, I can't. You know the majority of those things, except for like the DI which was shot at Parris Island, a portion of which was shot at Parris Island. A majority of them were made on the West Coast. In the 30's, 40's, majority of them were made on the West Coast. Well, the majority of all the movies were made on the West Coast. You know, it

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didn't happen until later where they started to shoot on location. Everything was shot around LA or the deserts down there. It took quite awhile for them to go on location and shoot. I can't recall, no.

L. J. Kimball: Well, like you say it's getting close to opening time here, so I won't take any more of your time. I appreciate you giving me your additional minutes and I've got some of your thoughts on tape. If you leave me with an application, I'll take it home and fill it out and bring it by.

End of Tape