

MGy. Sgt. William Michael Woods, USMC (Ret.)
122 Melody Lane, Jacksonville, North Carolina
Interviewer: L.J. Kimball
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L.J. Kimball: Interview with Retired Master Gunnery Sergeant William Michael Woods. 25 August 1999. 122 Melody Lane, Jacksonville, North Carolina. Interviewer L.J. Kimball. Tape one, side one.

M. Woods: I was born in Vidalia, Louisiana, December 13, 1922. Now I'm on the levee, swamp and, ah, that word swamp rat followed me for quite a while. That's why "Swamp Lagoon" or Camp Lejeune was nothing strange to me. I come from a similar type environment. And, ah, I went to school down in, ah, Louisiana. I completed as far as you could go down there which was to the eighth grade and then I went to Natchez, Mississippi where I attended high school over there. Ah, that was the closest one that was more economical for me. And during, ah, that time that was a lot of, ah, saying about blacks going into the Marine Corps and it created some excitement and a lot of 'em. . . Finally the president issued the Executive Order . . . ah, 8802 [6/25/41]. We would go in. And in 1942 they started taking 'em. I was in Atlanta by then. We didn't really start getting in there until 19. . . very well, summer of '42 and, ah, mostly '43. And a friend of mine, ah, by the name of Vernon L. Williams, he was the first one from there to go in. Then another one that I'd gone to school with and we had punched cattle together and whatnot, named Hardy Leek, he went in. And when he came home on leave I just felt as though this were more or less the band of angels and I wanted to be with them.

L.J. Kimball: Did you say band of angels?

M. Woods: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: OK.

M. Woods: So I decided I would go in and of course about that time everybody had to go in through the, ah, Selective Service system. Even if you volunteered you had to go in through them because we found that a lot of people were volunteering and going in and had registered with the Selective Service system. When they called 'em, they couldn't find 'em and they was about to prosecute 'em and they was already in the Service fighting. So, ah, in 19 ah, '43, 25 December, I, ah, joined and came to Montford Point. That was the beginning of that.

L.J. Kimball: Did you arrive in Montford Point on the 25th of December?

M. Woods: No, no. I ran down. . . I left from down Natchez. I didn't arrive there until after going through Camp Shelby for processing. I didn't arrive until about, ah, maybe 1 October somewhere. Along there. I don't remember the exact date.

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L.J. Kimball: 1 October what year?

M. Woods: Ah, in '43.

L.J. Kimball: '43.

M. Woods: Mmm-hmmm. Cuz it took us. . . I think we was in Shelby for three days or four. I know I was there an extra day because they spelled my name wrong and I didn't answer it. And, ah, they had to find me to get me out of there. Then it took a day later to get to Wilmington on a train and then we were over here for, I think, maybe it was about the first of October when we got there.

L.J. Kimball: OK. I just want to get some of these dates straight in my mind. You say you joined the Marine Corps on the 25th of December.

M. Woods: Yeah. The 25th of Decem. . .

L.J. Kimball: But you . . .

M. Woods: . . . My day of enlistment.

L.J. Kimball: Right. But you didn't get to Montford Point until October.

M. Woods: About October 1.

L.J. Kimball: What. . . what was happening during that ten month period?

M. Woods: Ah, no, wait just a moment now. It wasn't a ten month period. September 25, '43.

L.J. Kimball: OK.

M. Woods: And I got there October 1st of '43.

L.J. Kimball: All right. Misunderstood you. I thought you said December . . .

M. Woods: No. No. No. No.

L.J. Kimball: OK.

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M. Woods: Ah, it was just a case of, ah, you went on over to Shelby and you enlisted. And, ah . . . And you had to be processed there regardless of what branch of the service you sent in. You had to go to Camp Shelby, to Hattiesburg. And that was about a three to a four, sometimes five days, thing depending on how many of you there was. And then of course after they did that there, put you on a train and sent you out of there to Wilmington. And then of course from Wilmington by bus up here. And usually, ah. . . it was the 25th. I . . . I would dare say I arrived here maybe about the first of October.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm. Where did the bus drop you off? Do you recall?

M. Woods: Yes. Right out there. As you turn off, ah, where the cemetery is.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm.

M. Woods: And, ah, the gate used to be a little further out. And, ah, it had a bus stop there where the guys who was married would go into town and what have you. Over in the Piney Green area, they had to catch the bus at that stop. And that's where the bus pulls off.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm.

M. Woods: And, ah, the DI's came out and picked us up. And of course they drilled us on into. . . into Montford Point.

L.J. Kimball: Did you say they. . . they drove you into Montford Point?

M. Woods: Drilled.

L.J. Kimball: Drilled. You marched.

M. Woods: Drilled. Yeah. Ah, and we had, ah, the homosote huts down there at that particular time. Green huts and all. That's where everybody was living. Sixteen to a hut. Two huts to a platoon.

L.J. Kimball: What did you call those huts?

M. Woods: Huts. The green huts.

L.J. Kimball: Right. I thought you . . . you said howard [homosote] huts, something like that.

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M. Woods: No. No. I said green huts, the huts.

L.J. Kimball: OK.

M. Woods: One hundred of 'em were down there.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm.

M. Woods: And that was the hous. . . boots that was training. Out in the field at Boot Camp, at that time.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm.

M. Woods: I'm sorry you recording while I was hoarse.

L.J. Kimball: Oh, that's OK. Just let me know if you need to rest your voice.

M. Woods: (laughs) But anyway, ah, I guess I was there about . . . have to get your bucket and your sundry packs such as the things you needed to shave with. They'd assign you to a platoon. I was assigned to 202nd Platoon. Company A. And, ah, we started out from there. And it was nip and tuck from then on. And we went through the initial training and then from there we went to the Rifle Range where we was out there for two weeks training. We caught some snow out there and of course we were out there extra few days. And, ah, came on back. I think we arrived back at Montford Point, ah, in December. Then they started getting us ready for leave to go home for the first time. All that type of thing.

L.J. Kimball: How many weeks was your boot training there at Montford Point?

M. Woods: Ah, boot training, at that time, we went through. . . They had cut it. Had been twelve. They cut it to eight weeks and then two weeks on . . . Rifle Range.

L.J. Kimball: OK.

M. Woods: It was about ten weeks.

L.J. Kimball: And when you went down the Rifle Range, were you. . . Do you stay at the Stone's Bay Range?

M. Woods: Yes. We stayed at the Stone Bay Range in the. . . in the. . . not huts, but, ah, the barra. . . They had barracks over there.

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L.J. Kimball: Mmmm.

M. Woods: With the stoves. You'd cut your own wood and keep your. . . keep your heaters going. All that type of thing. Ah, one would see some bears out there but once in while. Cuz they, ah, used to do quite a bit of night drilling out there. If you goofed off and didn't shoot right and this type of thing. All of that was important to the game.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm.

M. Woods: And, ah, Boot Camp, ah. . . Any part of the Maine Corps never. . . never bothered me very much because I had come up, ah, from the time I was about twelve punching cattle, roping, riding, hunting and that kind of thing. It didn't bother me. Then I had a grandmother that should have been a sergeant major in the Marine Corps. She brought us up very regimented anyway.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm.

M. Woods: I didn't have any. . . I didn't have any great problems at all. The only problems I would. . . would have in my mind back then was why was I, ah, ah, treated different. And of course there was certain things that you could very well see that was different. And I, ah, had visualized in my mind that one day there would be a country that you wouldn't have all this.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm.

M. Woods: And I wanted to see it. And that being in the Marine Corps would be a part of speeding that day on. I wanted to be a part of it. And, ah, I guess I might say I was little bitter about that for awhile. Not bitter, but apprehensive.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm.

M. Woods: And then the day come when I was proud of the fact that I had trained with an all black unit. I recall when we was in Korea after everything opened up and integration came. And, ah, our people fought right along beside some of the, ah, others who said that we couldn't hack it. We hacked it as well as they did. And, ah, we did as well, when assigned or was permitted to. Then I remember by a quote by General Smith [Gen Oliver P.]. Would ask, ah, how did the black Marines stack up in Korea as opposed to World War II. He'd say they did exceptionally well. They did everything well because they was at the right place, right time and they were with the right people. And something clicked right here.

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If you've been trained with whites, they'd say you would measure up because of them. But you wasn't trained, well. . . . And they're not going to be able to say that. And I'm still as. . . as good as he was. So I'm proud of the fact that I was trained with my folk. By my folk.

L.J. Kimball: Were you raised by your grandmother?

M. Woods: Yes I was. Grandmother and grandfather raised me . . . saw my father . . . Occasionally he was skip hopping all over the country at that time. My mother, ah, went back to school for a while and then she lived in New Orleans but she always came on holidays and this type of thing. But, ah, I was pretty well set down on the farm with my grandmother and my grandfather with the horses and the cattle and the dogs and all that and I loved it.

L.J. Kimball: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

M. Woods: I don't have any brothers or sisters. Ah, I, ah, didn't . . . I was told I have a sister in Canada. Ah, never met her. But did meet her mother down in Los Angeles once. And, ah, she was a nurse. And, ah, she was my father's child. He married her. Lady in Canada and they, ah, had this one daughter from what I understand but I never saw her. She did come down, ah, in Oregon I think one time or Washington and she told me this in a letter. And, ah, seemed as though she met some Marines and she told 'em she had a brother at El Toro. And when she mentioned my name that I was, ah, Gunnery Sergeant. Apparently he knew a Gunnery Sergeant named Mike Woods. He was colored. And she said well so is my brother. And of course that was a kind of a set back to him. And, ah, he wanted to know how that could be. She said well I had to explain it to him then. If a white man had a child by a black woman, y'all call him colored. And if he had one by a white woman, he white. She said he happened to have one by my momma, who's white. A Canadian.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm.

M. Woods: So, ah, she said that's how you got to be my brother in case you didn't know. She wrote a letter and told me about this incident.

L.J. Kimball: What did your father do that he was traveling around so much?

M. Woods: Well, I don't know. He just a man that, ah, [indecipherable], ah race tracks. Ah, when. He, ah, worked railroads. Ah, you know, because he worked that for years. He run clubs and whatnot in various places. Used to have a club in Dallas. And

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one in Kansas City one time, I understand. Ah, various places. Particularly where there was work he'd go in and open up a lot of places. They call them the barrel houses. He made a lot of money at it.

L.J. Kimball: Labelle houses?

M. Woods: Barrel houses.

L.J. Kimball: Barrel houses.

M. Woods: A barrel house was . . . you go in where there might be a big log camp or some big camp or dam or something being built and you built up, ah . . . Just build your shack and put in there. And you take a barrel that's liquor and everything come in and put boards and whatnot across it and, ah, set up your bar. Because of the barrels being the support and everything, they called 'em the barrel houses. That's where the name the Barrel House Blues came from, ah, when they had to be out setting in the corner. And my father was a . . . He was an entrepreneur in his own right. He sold stuff on the road like. Sold encyclopedias for a while. Just any . . . whatever struck him, that's what he'd do.

L.J. Kimball: Going back to Montford Point you said it struck you that you were treated differently. Did this occur to you at Montford Point?

M. Woods: Yes it did.

L.J. Kimball: How were you being treated differently?

M. Woods: By being in a black camp.

L.J. Kimball: And just being segregated?

M. Woods: That was a . . . that in itself was different.

L.J. Kimball: Mmmm-hmmm.

M. Woods: And I didn't have to be in the black camp.

L.J. Kimball: Was there any way other than being physically segregated that you noticed that you were treated differently than other Marines?

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M. Woods: Ah, yes. When you got ready I wasn't personally, but . . . For instance from Montford Point, to go to Camp Lejeune, ah, you had to have a pass. And the only way you go over there was either on a work party or you . . . Some of the guys had wives working over there for officers. They could go over to visit their wives and they could spend the night but they had to have a pass. That within itself, to me, was different. I didn't have one over there personally. I only went over there on a couple of work details during the time that I was over at Camp . . . at, ah, Montford Point. But, ah, that to me was different. Why should I have to have a pass? The guys that came from Camp Lejeune could come over to Montford Point just to look around, drive, do whatever they wanted to do. They didn't have a pass.

L.J. Kimball: What kind of work details did you go on in Camp Lejeune?

M. Woods: The only detail I went on there. . . to bring back supplies. The supplies was picked up over there and brought back over to Montford Point. And I went over there with the supply truck one time to, ah, bring back supplies. And sometime when you go over there to pick up rations, they would pick a detail to take over. Then sometimes they would take details over to clean warehouses, rake areas, and this type of thing. But whenever they did, ah, one of our NCO's would take you over there. Then he'd turn you over to whites. Then he had to wait until they got through with the detail and then turn 'em back over to him.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm.

M. Woods: Ah, that was different. Ah, but, ah, on the whole it wasn't extremely bad. I'd say it didn't exactly strike me. Didn't hit me personally but I thought it was strange.

L.J. Kimball: Yeah.

M. Woods: It's the taxpayer's money. Preparing men to fight for freedom that supposed to be an inherent right. With liberty and justice for all. And when you think of the words that Thomas Jefferson wrote. Some of the most inspiring, I think, and probably the most inspired in the world. Then you saw what was happening behind those words. If you had the mentality of, ah, third grade student and you had traveled anywhere, the world outside of the plantation and whatnot, you knew that that was different.

L.J. Kimball: Well you didn't have any opportunity there as a boot to compare your experiences with the white Marines at Parris Island and San Diego. But over the years that

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you spent in the Marines Corps I'm sure you've had a chance to talk about it. Do you. . . do you think your . . .

M. Woods: . . . a chance to talk about it. Ah, a chance to go to school with many of 'em. Didn't do any better in school than I did. All the schools. . . All the military schools I went to I did very well. I come out at the top ten in just about all of 'em. They was a lot of them and while they was doing their talking I was doing my studying. The deal went down. Ah, a lot of them sucking the hind tit.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm. Do you think at your. . . Montford Point, how did it differ from the boot experience at San Diego and Parris Island? Do you have any idea?

M. Woods: No. We went through the same thing. The DI's. . . I think the black DI's was a little rougher. Cuz they was determined to make you do it. . . do it right. Make you as tough as it could be. Hashmark Johnson [Sgt. Maj. Gilbert H.], he would say it once, that when he got through with a Marine he would shame a soldier of the Roman empire. That was the goal. I think he did a pretty good job on it with the time span that they had to train the men.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm.

M. Woods: We were facing a lot of problems at the time. The country had lost a lot of our, ah, fort areas and the Pacific had dissipated to the Japanese. We was facing supply problems like we'd never had before. And they was intending for us to do just what you did, to be labor forces over there and fight if you had to. Put you in that position and they needed them there. So either way you hack it. The guy that shoot. . . It took a cook to feed it and it took ammunition people to give him ammunition and it took transportation people to get him in there. See. So he couldn't have done any shooting if these other people hadn't been giving him support. So when I hear all that stuff about bragging that I did that, thus and so, I know it's malarkey. The Montford people may not but I do.

L.J. Kimball: Were all your DI's black when you went through Boot Camp?

M. Woods: Yes. All mine was black. I didn't run into, ah. . . I ran into white instructor after I came out of Boot Camp and we went through, ah, Small Armed Weapons Course over at, ah, Camp Lejeune. Ah, Master Sergeant, ah, well Sergeant Major called designated by the name of Hensen. Quite a shooter. He had been on the range out there for a while. And, ah, he was a good man. I was concerned. . . He taught us small arms weaponry in school and whatnot. He was the first white instructor that I, ah, encountered.

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L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm.

M. Woods: And then of course, ah, I decided I wanted to go through to the Steward Branch. And I, ah . . . It was something that had just started up. And there was lots of rumors and, ah, they were getting a lot of people into the Steward Branch by telling them they were gonna get extra money. Had a couple of kids. Ah, well I had one kid born already and I was taking care of my . . . with my momma. And, ah, I wanted to, ah, go to work and make some money. So you could make money working in clubs and working around offices and this type of thing. But it didn't turn out the picture that they painted it. But then it wasn't so bad. I stayed with that for a long time and then I went into general food service and in clubs and that type of thing.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm. Um, I'm trying to focus in on your experience at Montford Point to see if you have any recollections, um, that you might recall about your . . . even though it was a brief stay. . . your stay there. Now were you told officially or unofficially that the black Marines were not going to go into fighting units, that they're going. . . .

M. Woods: Oh, no. I was never told that. But you knew that.

L.J. Kimball: When you completed Boot Camp did they give you an option as to what occupational specialty you wanted?

M. Woods: Yes. I could have. . . I could have gone into something else if I . . .

L.J. Kimball: But you . . .

M. Woods: I had started to go into, ah, the [75] millimeter pack howitzer but I . . . I opted for the steward branches. That's it because, ah, of the training you would get and the people you would be around. And just like people that decided to go into the Exchange. The Exchange, ah, stewards at that time was getting, ah, extra pay for extra hours and what not. But it wound up that you didn't get that extra money. That was something that was told to you in order to lead you to the slaughter.

L.J. Kimball: Well, I . . . I've heard some stories, some of which are more believable than others. Ah, somebody was telling me that the . . . they wouldn't let, ah, black Marines have rifles outside Montford Point. That you couldn't go through Jacksonville, if you ever had occasion to go through Jacksonville with your rifle, because, ah, the sheriff or whomever wouldn't let blacks with weapons be in Jacksonville. Did you ever hear anything like that?

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M. Woods: Yes. I did. That was floating around and I caught some flack once because I mentioned this on a radio talk show. I never had the occasion to have to take my rifle outside of Jacksonville. I couldn't say this but I heard men say it, including officers. Ah, when they first started the rifle range, ah, they used to go by trucks around to Stone Bay. And they would always leave a full day in the morning and come back after dark. And the word was circulated. I got it from no offi. . . no official source. Then Sergeant Major . . ., Sergeant Major Huff and some of the other people, ah, ah, that was there at that time and was more advanced in what was going on than I was. But this was the reason. Then later on, ah, a boat was sent down. From what I understand it went to, ah, Norfolk and then got these Higgins boats, you know, that they used to land, landing craft.

L.J. Kimball: Right.

M. Woods: And we started having to go down the river to a Stone Bay. Now there was two reasons given for this. And, ah, I've always been a person that tried to keep an open mind. Ah, cuz some people don't care how good something is, they can make something bad out it and don't care how bad it is. Ah, if you look at it from both sides and keep your mind open you might just see some good in it too. And, ah, it was said the Higgins boats was brought in so that we would get some experience in landing. And what we would have to do was wade out and get on the boats and they would take us down. I don't care what kind of weather it was. It'd come in so far to the bank and then we had to go out and go to the beach like we. . . we almost simulating, ah, simulating, ah, landing and what have you. And then you go on ashore. And, ah, this very well could have been the prime reason for that. Then on the other hand the prime reason could have been just what you said and what I had heard. And they used that to cover it up. All you got to do is do some thinking.

L.J. Kimball: Right.

M. Woods: And you could get all kinds of . . .

L.J. Kimball: But . . . but would they . . .

M. Woods: But I never. . . I never experienced. . . Now I've had some people who . . . prominent citizens . . . that attacked me when I said this. But, ah, when we had the fiftieth anniversary here we had some officers who served at Montford Point in those days. Bl. . . white officers and they say well I don't care what they say. He says this is the primary reason that they got the Higgins boats because of the fact that they didn't want them going to town. Wrong. Now I . . . as I said I heard

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this said. But I never could put my hand on it. So I quit using that issue and I kind of skirted around it because if I couldn't pin it down I don't want to impose something and put something or say something bad about a people. And a community that had nothing to do with some bad come out of the community even if a few might have done a bad thing.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm.

M. Woods: But you don't want to put it on the whole community. And the good God fearing people that might have felt the same way about it that you do.

L.J. Kimball: Ah, when the trucks went through Jacksonville, going down to the rifle range at dark in the morning and coming back at dark, would the black Marines, would they have their rifles with them when they went down there?

M. Woods: They had them then. Yes. They were carrying their rifles. Cuz you'd carry your rifle back then everywhere you went. Ah, they had them. But I . . . as I said I never . . . with the exception sometime if you was in a drill area and you see the trucks coming back or you'd hear the noise or whatnot, I never even remember seeing one of the trucks being loaded. That's why I'm saying I . . . I'm afraid to hit on that cuz I don't know what I would be saying.

L.J. Kimball: Yeah.

M. Woods: And, ah, I know what I've said and I've heard it said about blacks and whites. Some officers, some top ranking enlisted people. It never happened to me personally. I never saw. . . I know they went and I know that it was stopped. And from then on I didn't know what the real reason was.

L.J. Kimball: Now I've read in the history of Camp Lejeune around this period. You know how they. . . They were rationing strategic materials in those days because of the war and there was a shortage of certain materials.

M. Woods: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: Rubber for tires. Gasoline. Motor vehicles were pretty scarce.

M. Woods: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: And if somebody wanted to go from main side over to the rifle range in Stone Bay area it was a long trip by vehicle.

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M. Woods: Mmm-hmmm.

L.J. Kimball: And they initiated. . . now. . . I can't say that with regard to the black Marines this was a consideration. But they initiated from one side of Camp Lejeune to the other side across New River for all Marines and civilian personnel, landing craft taxies in order to save on vehicle rubber and everything else. And if anyone wanted to get from one side to the other they had. . . they had to take one of these boats. So I know it wasn't restricted just to black Marines.

M. Woods: Well, you see when I. . . Now you're bringing in the factor that, ah, I never really, ah, really never got into. I did hear that same thing said. Ah, but, ah, I never got into that. And I really don't know how the whites got over to Stone Bay. I know they were moved over there. When I. . . when I went over there, we . . . were staying over there. You'd go over by boat. And when you got through with your training you'd come back. You wasn't going daily, like they started out doing. When they started the daily moving. I wasn't there then. When I got here, they were using the boats.

L.J. Kimball: Tape one, side two. Some of the old timers were telling me that there was, ah, a lot of unwritten rules, you know, about the separation of blacks and whites in the South in those days. And I'd heard that one of the reasons that the blacks were segregated over here and the construction workers and everything else was that they wouldn't let a black sleep within two miles of a white woman. Did you ever hear that?

M. Woods: Ah, well, we know, ah. . . that was the, ah, primary reason for, ah. . . after your own kind. I was reading something about that, couldn't sleep last night and I happened to be reading, ah, creation versus evolution. And, ah, one of my. . . one of my books had so many things that man created. Like, ah, it became a written fact, you were born after your own kind. Now you can look at that two different ways. Ah, my own kind. I was of the human race, if I was born by the human race, I would have to be of the human race cuz you know I'm that kind. Then you say well your own race. The word race is not mentioned in the Bible. I think Peter mentioned the word race one time. And, ah, another place it was mentioned, I think it was taken out years later in the Bible. And that was somewhere back in the Psalms I believe they say it was. I'm not too sure about that. And, ah, it said after their own kind, their own nation. But to me that meant the genes. If, ah, my father is, ah, a white man and my momma is a black woman, then I go after my own kind, whatever gene. Then that's where I go . . . and, ah.

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We believe in Christianity which was really a more of a paternal thing than a maternal thing. Then the father is the head of the household and when Moses was told to take the census. All children would be taken in according to the house of thy father. But the white man established a different type of slavery. And if the child was his by the black woman then it had to take her name unless you had a few whites that stood up on the right side of history and was man enough not to lead the world in becoming the first dead beat dad. Ah, you would say, ah, why do we have to take the name of the mother. You know. Why are you going to deny after everybody when they see the child, you know. Dixie says aren't we always get things right and we keep the, ah, races separated and, ah, what have you. But if they did it so right, why did two thirds of the mulatto people that you have in the country come out of the South. Louisiana. Alabama. Kentucky. Virginia. Louisiana, Virginia led the. . . led the parade. You see what I mean?

Ah, I used to have a saying that the white didn't care about you going with his daughter. It was his *wife's* daughter that he didn't want you to have anything to do with. You see. Now, ah, that's not meant to be derogatory. But you knew it was fact.

L.J. Kimball: Right.

M. Woods: And, ah, so he said we would be where and what have you because the white woman didn't want you to be around. Now you just stop and do some thinking if you really want to go back into it. Was it the black that he didn't trust with the. . . white woman or was it the white woman he didn't trust with the black man? Now that's hanging words back a long time ago.

L.J. Kimball: Yeah.

M. Woods: But by the same token, that was a fact. But, ah, a lot of the. . . the black people are right up there. The masses was extremely loyal to 'em and I never knew a lot of, ah, a bunch of. . . raping all of this. People looked out for the white children and the black children where I came from as well as they did their own. You know. They wanted nothing to. . . nothing to befall 'em, nothing bad to come to them. That's the way I was brought up to be. Never brought up to be a racist that hate people or to dislike people because of, ah, skin color. Because it's only skin deep. It has nothing to do with, ah, your ability to achieve. The greatest commodity on the market is the brain. And that can be developed. It's just like water. Seeks it's own level.

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L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm. When you finish Boot Camp, OK, then you opt for the Steward Branch.

M. Woods: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: You stayed there at Montford Point and went through Steward School?

M. Woods: I went through the Steward School.

L.J. Kimball: How long was that?

M. Woods: Steward School was, ah, about six weeks. Ah, six to eight weeks.

L.J. Kimball: Did you leave Montford Point after Steward School?

M. Woods: Yes. I did. I, ah, stayed there a while and did Guard Duty and finally had a draft. Was going to Cherry Point. They had, ah, white Navy stewards and what not taking care of Cherry Point. And, ah, they was during the transition that they were putting black over there. So they sent I think, ah, 75 . . . sent 'em in three increments, ah, totaling 75. They went over there and they took them to the officers, ah, mess and the BOQ. And, ah, that entailed, of course, the policing. That entailed the transportation which, ah, they didn't tell you all of that you went over you see. And the whites was bailing out like nobody's business. Then we had those jobs. And then the security and guard around the BOQ and whatnot, we wound up having that too. So consequently sometimes we were working days. Then catch guard duty at night cuz, ah, when I first went over there, one of the first jobs I had was acting Corporal of the Guard. And, ah, then later I went into the facility, ah, the, ah, officer's mess there. Because that's where you get into waiting on little special parties and whatnot when you get in there. Little extra benefits.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm. When did you go to Cherry Point? Do you recall?

M. Woods: If I'm not mistaken, ah . . . I don't recall the exact time but I think it was about April. April of '44.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm. Now had the . . .

M. Woods: April or May. Now it was, let's see. It was 75 over there and we went, there was so much complaints about extending the people too far until, ah, we kicked it up to 85. Eighty five or eighty six. And, ah, it kind of lightened the load. But then

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they build another BOQ in there with a junior officer's mess and well up to field grade. And, ah, then they had the senior officer's mess and the same amount of people taking care of both. It's still doing your same duties you had before. And, ah, that's when we had the controversy over there. A group of blacks quit working. And, ah, went out and stood in the street. And, ah, Col. [Samuel A.] Woods came over, the CO, Col. Christian Schilt, ah, hell of an aviator. But, later became Lt. Gen. in the Marine Corps. He was a CO at that time on the Base. And he met with, ah, Gen. Schilt and. . . I mean Col. [P.E.] Conradt and came down and talked to the fellows. Shook hands with 'em. As a matter of fact, I see Col. Woods all the time probably at Montford Point coming and going. Never had a chance to say hello to him or put my hand in his until he came for that incident at Cherry Point.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm.

M. Woods: I don't know what happened, but within about a month we were. . . and the boys wasn't getting any rank. Every time the ranks came out and they'd say well. You're attached to the. . . for the Second Aircraft Engineering Squadron. And, ah, when he'd give the regular people rank is none there and they was doing this old frock business on blacks. And all of that stemmed into bringing this thing to a head. And, ah, they went to Washington. And eventually they came back and they set up what was the first black squadron that they ever had in the Marine Corps, which is MASS1. Marines Steward's Squadron, ah, Steward Squadron One. And we had, ah, Captain McLaughlin who was the officer in charge of all the BOQs there. Was a hotel manager out of. . . out of, ah, New Hampshire. They had Vince Sardi who was the second in charge there. He owned the famous Sardi's restaurants who it came down on my invitation for our fiftieth. And, ah, then we had a Col. Crocker that came in from Guadalcanal. He was with some company that had been shot to pieces and whatnot and he was supposed to be quite a hero. And they made him the exec officer who actually did the commanding. And, ah, we sent a First Sergeant from here over there by the name of Warren Morton who became a Sergeant Major of the squadron. And of course back in those days a squadron had a First Sergeant and a Sergeant Major. And we had a guy by the name of Joseph Banks out of, ah, Atlanta. He became the First Sergeant. And we used to drill parades at Cherry Point together on the field. We didn't have the segregation at Cherry Point in aviation that you had over here. You went anywhere. Went to the same slop chute. Did have a small one down there in that area for. . . for the, ah, for the blacks. But any whites that wanted to come there, they came down and was welcomed. We never had an altercation. So now we drink together and have fun.

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L.J. Kimball: When did this incident occur? When the black stewards, ah, went . . .

M. Woods: Ah, this was I think '45. Because I left there right after this cuz I was one of the thirty that was kept up there. They transferred all of 'em out but 30. Then they sent some 100 and some over there about two or three days later and replenished the whole place.

L.J. Kimball: Did the promotion situation get . . .

M. Woods: Yes. It became much worse. I mean much better. Ah, we had good boxers over there. We had hell of a good basketball team over there. We had a baseball team over there. I played a little bit of baseball myself til I got kicked off the team . Cuz it was a girl friend that I'd rather see her than go practice one time. And the coach just . . . just give me the boot so I'm not going to argue about it. But, ah, we had I thought a terrific set up at Cherry Point. I liked it.

L.J. Kimball: When you were at Montford Point had the 51st and 52nd [Defense Battalions] already left.

M. Woods: No. Ah. The 51st was still there when I was at Montford Point. They were over at Camp Knox opposite, across the creek [Scales Creek]. And, ah, I got to know, ah, a few of the guys. I was out of Boot Camp when they left, ah, from over there. I remember the night when they had the shooting between the MP's and the 51st. It took place in, ah . . . the guy that later became the lawyer out in the MGM, ah, movie industry. Name is Curtis. Called him "Speedy Curtis." Curtis was very industrious and was one of the few blacks over there with a college education. And he was bringing his platoon out of the woods. And there had been an altercation between the base boys over here and the MPs and, ah, the 51st. And the 51st went back across the way and got their carbines and their rifles and came back through the woods. And the MP's was called out and they went across the area out there. And quite a bit of firing at each other. And Speedy was . . . ah, Curtis was coming out of the woods with his platoon. And he got caught between the two fires. The MP's thought he was the 51st and the 51st thought (laughed) thought he was the MP's. I think one of his people got hit but not serious. And, ah, Speedy, I think that he was hit himself, ah, superficial wound and what have you. But, ah, that was just before the 51st, not too long before they left out.

L.J. Kimball: Were the MP's white?

M. Woods: No.

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L.J. Kimball: They were black?

M. Woods: They was all black. Both. . . both sides was black.

L.J. Kimball: And including Speedy's people, they were black too.

M. Woods: Yeah. Oh, yeah. They were black.

L.J. Kimball: Um. Now we know where the trailer camp Camp Knox is.

M. Woods: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: Right on the other side of Scales Creek from Montford Point there was a . . .

M. Woods: Down to the right. There was an old CC [Civil Conservation Corps] camp down there.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm.

M. Woods: And they had to house dogs down there for training during the. . . for the war. And that's where they took that and turned it over to, ah, Col. Woods. Turned that over to Col. [Floyd A.] Stephenson for, ah, the 51st Defense Battalion.

L.J. Kimball: There. . . There's the area where the trailers are still now. That was known as Camp Knox.

M. Woods: That was. . . that was a part of Knox.

L.J. Kimball: Right.

M. Woods: That whole area.

L.J. Kimball: Yeah.

M. Woods: Was called Camp Knox.

L.J. Kimball: There was a series of barracks right on the other side of Scales Creek.

M. Woods: Yeah. Right. Mmm-hmmm.

L.J. Kimball: And that. . .

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M. Woods: That's where the old CC camp had been. And the dog training area.

L.J. Kimball: Um. There. . . some of the accounts when the 51st moved over into Camp Knox. They said they moved into dilapidated buildings. And I wondered what they could be talking about since Montford Point wasn't build until the early 1940's.

M. Woods: Those were left over buildings from the CC camp.

L.J. Kimball: Was it? OK.

M. Woods: Ah, this book right here tells you all about that. Have you read this?

L.J. Kimball: I read that.

M. Woods: Ah, they had another group of men that I admired. Few people even remember. We had what you call the Malaria Control Unit.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm.

M. Woods: Back in the swamp between 17. . . I mean 24. . . It's coming in there to Scales Creek. They lived back out there in tents wearing boots. They're all the bad asses. Very incorrigibles. Sgt. Major, later became Sgt. Major Jim "Sleepy" Reed, when he was a Corporal and made Sergeant. He was Acting First Sergeant out there with that group. And, ah, those boys would come in . . . and drill 'em all in to get their sundry things. Certain days that they exchange them. When you went over there you had to keep the rest of the people, keep 'em back. And you could hear them when they hit that concrete when they come out of the woods. They hit the pavement. And they had to call no more cadence. You can hear 'em coming. And, ah, every once in a while someone would say something to make sure the cadence were kept in a proper stride. And, ah, they would come in. They would drink the beer and this type of thing and get what they had to get. And went back over to the area, they had a little tent over there from what I understand. I never saw the area.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm.

M. Woods: But from what I understand they had a little tent and somebody that sold them their beer and everything, they stayed back over in that area. Very seldom they came when they come over there.

L.J. Kimball: You said they were bad. Was . . . did they put the disciplinary cases in that . . .

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M. Woods: They were disciplinary cases that, ah, not the kind bad enough to throw out but the kind that stayed in trouble.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm.

M. Woods: You stayed in trouble.

L.J. Kimball: I've got a map here of Montford Point if you need to refer to it. You can see here's 24.

M. Woods: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: Here's Scales Creek.

M. Woods: Mmm-hmmm.

L.J. Kimball: Here's the Point.

M. Woods: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: Do you have any idea where that, ah, Malaria Control Unit was?

M. Woods: Should have been right back in . . .

L.J. Kimball: So it was on the Montford Point side of Scales Creek?

M. Woods: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: OK.

M. Woods: It was on the Montford Point side.

L.J. Kimball: Now you look on here and here's Camp Knox.

M. Woods: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: All right.

M. Woods: You go right. . . right out that old back gate there.

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L.J. Kimball: Right. And you notice this area here. That this was Area E. And all the buildings have been torn down since then.

M. Woods: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: And I was trying to find somebody who could verify the black Marines were in that area besides the main site of Camp Knox also.

M. Woods: There might have been some, ah, blacks in here. I really, ah, I really couldn't say and know what I'm talking about. I might have, ah. . . I've got some maps that's a little earlier than these and if you want me to while I'm digging in there trying to clean out that monstrosity of a den of mine, I might, ah. . . If I run upon 'em I can get one run off for you. Then I'll save 'em for you.

L.J. Kimball: I'd really appreciate that.

M. Woods: Mmm-hmmm. Cuz I know I had 'em. I had that whole area. Because I took one of 'em over when I was having to walk off Montford Point when we were in the process of, ah, going to get Congress to make the historical site. Ah, so if the land ever was given up, just had a develop it or whatnot, get it to revert to Montford Point Marines so that we could do what we wanted to with it. And that was headed by, ah, Jimmy Johnson, who was the first black Assistant Secretary of the Navy that we had, we had to be on the committee. And I, ah, worked that area with him. But I knew it was something down in here and I'm trying now to. . . I'm trying now to visualize. It's been so long you know. When you get 77 years old things begin to dim a little bit.

L.J. Kimball: Right.

M. Woods: Have to sharpen your mind just like you need glasses.

L.J. Kimball: We've talked about this before. This is . . . Up here is Area 3 Montford Point. OK. Now do you know where the Base Artillery Activity was?

M. Woods: The Base Artillery Activity. . . The first, ah, building main site. . . I'm curious. Went 100 years now that used to be Col. Woods. And after he moved up to the new headquarters, then, ah, artillery unit moved, ah, headquarters moved into that building. We could hear them shooting. They was somewhere down near the water. Back down in there somewhere. This very well . . . mmm-hmmm. . . and, ah. . . cuz they had to carry their guns out to, ah, out. . . out. . . out, ah, Onslow. . . Onslow Beach and whatnot when you got ready to fire and what have you. But I

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really. . . I really couldn't say. I might mislead you. But this old map of mine that I had has a lot of that stuff on that. If I can find it. I still got one of 'em. I certainly know I have.

L.J. Kimball: That'd certainly answer a lot of questions. Now you know based on the old maps and everything I know these were gun sheds here. These buildings here.

M. Woods: Mmm-hmmm. Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: I don't know what they're talking about when they talk about the Base Artillery Activity because apparently it's some place in Montford Point.

M. Woods: It was in Montford Point. Ah, I'm going to. . . Mmmm, I'm trying to think of who I can talk to about that that's still living that was an Artillery man here. We should have a couple still around that's living. One of 'em just died the other day. Ulysses King. I know a man in Durham I can call and ask. I know he could us a verifica. . . give you verification on this.

L.J. Kimball: Just one of those little bits that. . .

M Woods: This was one of the questions I hadn't exactly been posed with and as I said I know there used to be something back down in here cuz I remember we used to go. . . We used to walk out through here after we got out of Boot Camp. And sometimes they let us through that gate and then sometimes they wouldn't. Sometimes it'd be closed and run your butt from down there.

L.J. Kimball: There was a bridge over Scales Creek.

M. Woods: Yeah. Yeah. A little bridge.

L.J. Kimball: Now it's in the book that you referred to there in a couple other places, ah, the. . . that there was a Corporal Gilbert Fraser.

M. Woods: Fraser. That was the first man killed. Fell off the ship.

L.J. Kimball: Amphibious Mockup down there at Onslow Beach.

M. Woods: Yes.

L.J. Kimball: But they said that they officially named the road from Area 3 to the Base Artillery Activity at Montford Point, Fraser Road.

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M. Woods: Fraser Road.

L.J. Kimball: After Corporal Fraser.

M. Woods: Right.

L.J. Kimball: I have not been able to find any . . .

M. Woods: I have not. . . When I went back over there to try to help the people in some of the area things that came in here doing this. . . this historical thing, I could not find that road. But that was the time it was there. I know it was cuz I seen it up. And Sgt. Major Huff was the one that did. . . did the naming.

L.J. Kimball: Mmmm-hmmm.

M. Woods: I don't remember when it came down.

L.J. Kimball: And all the maps I've been able to find at Montford Point, even period maps during the 1940's, I can't find the Fraser Road. I'd just like to know.

M. Woods: Yeah. Well. There was a time when there was a Fraser Road there cuz I remember seeing that. But I looked for that road. I drove. I walked. Since then I looked for it. And, ah, it disappeared.

L.J. Kimball: Right. I'd been in touch with Headquarters Marine Corps on a lot of historical issues and one of them I called 'em on was do you folks have anything on Corporal Fraser or where the road was. And I got the news releases. And I got the death notification. And how he died and that sort of thing. But nobody knew either what happened to Fraser Road.

M. Woods: Mmm-hmmm. Yeah. Well this is right. And the funny thing is a lot of people remembered being. . . assigned being there and nobody remembers when it was moved. Ah, somebody told . . . and I'm trying to think of who that was. Said it was moved during the time that the camp was, ah, everything was integrated. I said no it wasn't during that time. Cuz I have seen that sign since that time. But I don't know when it was moved.

L.J. Kimball: I was reading the transcripts of the official Marine Corps interviews of Sergeants Major Huff and Johnson.

M. Woods: Mmm-hmmm.

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L.J. Kimball: And, ah, Sgt. Major Johnson was on. . . when they were naming roads in Montford Point, he was apparently a very well read man, he assigned the names and he said those names were given to those streets and those streets were still in use today.

M. Woods: Mmm-hmmm.

L.J. Kimball: This is what he said during his interview which probably wasn't more than twenty years ago.

M. Woods: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: But the streets' names were, ah, Pushkin after a Russian poet, Dumas after the French author, Tubman after Harriet Tubman.

M. Woods: Yeah. I remember that.

L.J. Kimball: And of course there was Fraser. And I can't find those roads either.

M. Woods: Mmmm.

L.J. Kimball: I've never seen. . .

M. Woods: You got Chowan?

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm.

M. Woods: That's been there a long time.

L.J. Kimball: Yeah. I understand that a lot of the roads were named, ah, because they had some kind of affiliation with black history or culture or something. Obviously the one that's Harlem.

M. Woods: Yeah. I think it is something about Harlem.

L.J. Kimball: That was one of the main roads. Always thought it was kind of interesting. . .

M. Woods: I never got into, ah, high wasn't enough up to get into that. But I do remember that Hashmark and Huff and, ah, Mortimer Cox and several of the guys got together. They had their little committee and they were . . . They did lay out and name a lot of the roads. And, ah, through what you might say tales being handed

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down, I tried to remember most of that stuff. And, ah, but some of it got away from me. Some of the paperwork that I had got away. I had a lock box with a lot of stuff in it. But when my house down in Natchez, Mississippi burned I lost some of that because I lost about half of the box.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm.

M. Woods: In the house. My mother tried to pull it out and, ah, they was able to pull part of the end of the box out but most of the stuff was all charred.

L.J. Kimball: You're out of Boot Camp so you get liberty.

M. Woods: Yes.

L.J. Kimball: Where did you go for liberty?

M. Woods: Well when you went for liberty, I primarily went, ah. . . I started going up to, ah, New Bern was my first liberty. Ah, I went to, ah, Raleigh. And, ah, I went to Richmond a time or two.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm.

M. Woods: I went to Kinston once or twice. I only went downtown in Jacksonville twice. Just for the sake for liberty I went down there to get some soles put on the shoes once. And, ah, something else. But just to say go out on liberty. Some of the guys from Natchez, Mississippi and in that area had come out of Boot Camp and of course me being senior to them then, I went with them down to the old, ah, building down there. The Ash [Inn, Poolroom] building and drank some beer and what have you. But I never did a bunch of liberty here during those years.

L.J. Kimball: Was it because there was nothing for black Marines or because there was nothing at all?

M. Woods: Well, there wasn't too much for black Marines and, ah, I don't know. There was a lot of. . . a lot of fighting was going on. Something I always felt that civilized people should be able to live without. Ah, the place just didn't impress me as being the best liberty town.

L.J. Kimball: Mmmm-hmmm.

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M. Woods: In the world. Ah, I went to a couple of houses in town during those years. I did go back up here to, ah, what's it called, Dewdrop. I went back up in that area. Ah, one night with a group of Marines. Ah, I didn't do much liberty in Jacksonville. Now I went and did a lot of liberty after I got in Cherry Point in New Bern. Like it almost became my second home. Ah, as soon as I got in New Bern the first thing I found out was it was the Marines fighting against the civilian. Every 4-F in the world was in New Bern and didn't go in the service. And, ah, Marines just couldn't win a battle there. Unless a bunch of Lejeune Marines was in town. And sometimes that didn't even enforce us enough. One day I just sat down and said there's got to be a better way to live. Then, one Saturday I went down and met a gentleman, a Professor Stanley, he was principal of Oriental High School. We started talking, he invited me over to his house, they were in only family in that white area then. Great big 2-story house.

Tape Two, Side One

L.J. Kimball: . . . side one. Go ahead.

M. Woods: And, ah, he took me home. Told me anytime I wanted to come to town, spend the night, have Sunday dinner with 'em, went to church and I began to meet, you know, some people. Then I met another lady who took me to her, ah, meetings on silver tea. She would belong to the Elks at that time. And she took me to that and introduced me to a young lady. She gave me practically . . . her son was in the Army. . . his room to stay in any time I wanted to come to town and all you do is go out there and chop your own wood. They had, ah, heater there. She was named Ms. Adeline Jenkins. I never will forget now. Later on when her son came back from service I met him. He died not too long ago. We used to go see him. Name was Charlie Jenkins. And she was just like a mother to me. Very nice lady. And I just met so many people in New Bern it was pitiful. And whenever now I still go up there and look up some of the old. . . some of the old groups that still alive. And shake hands with them. Reminisce for a while. Most of them are dead out now.

L.J. Kimball: You said the Marines couldn't win a fight in New Bern. Was that because they were outnumbered?

M. Woods: Outnumbered. Oh man. It was grossly outnumbered. But then things began to settle down now. Never will forget a guy by the name of Gene Pool, used to say, and he say well, you know, he says, you kind of responsible for that he say. People like you he say and then Pete. . . I'm trying to think what Pete was named. He came in there at Cherry Point. He saying, ah, that a few other guys and then

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some guys started getting married around there just like they did down in North Harlow.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm.

M. Woods: He said, ah, you met some of the nicer people he say. You guys never go around with a chip on your shoulder. He said that made a difference. He says the people started to treat you different. I'm proud of that. I never had any problem in New Bern. . . I never had any problem in Morehead City which I got to know, oh, numerous people up there. And still go to see some of them every once in a while, the ones that still living. And, ah, I never had any problem. As I say, I never believed in. . . I had to go and prove something . . . fight. I figured, ah. . . I'd go to see my girl on Sunday. I don't want to go to see her with half of my face round here and all that stuff. I want to be looking good. And now what's there to fight about. I'd rather just walk on down the street. I've walked from fights I know I could won. You know, but I. . . if you give me a chance, I just walk on out.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm. You said you went to the Dewdrop Inn once in a while. Where was that located?

M. Woods: That was up. . . You know where the automatic transmission place is, ah, where the railroad cross 24.

L.J. Kimball: Crosses 24. Yeah.

M. Woods: Yeah. Well right back over in that area that was called the Dewdrop.

L.J. Kimball: Is the building still there? Or was there more than one building.

M. Woods: Well, this . . . this. . . this was a built up place. . . It was more than one building then but there was one place in there that was a, ah, a joint.

L.J. Kimball: So the area was called the Dewdrop?

M. Woods: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: And there was an inn there called the Dewdrop Inn also?

M. Woods: The Dewdrop. Yes. Mmm-hmmm.

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L.J. Kimball: OK.

M. Woods: But that whole area was known. . . was called Dewdrop.

L.J. Kimball: Now getting back to Montford Point, you got black DI's and the blacks have advanced up the ranks. They've got dependents. And there's some housing for black Marines.

M. Woods: Mmm-hmmm.

L.J. Kimball: Was that at Piney Green.

M. Woods: That was Piney Green.

L.J. Kimball: And where exactly was that located?

M. Woods: Well, you go to . . . you go to Piney Green Road where the new gate is. You make that next left turn and then you see a place there. You see a place called the Rice Bowl. Next to it is 108 Club. Right back in that area, that was where the Piney Green houses were.

L.J. Kimball: Is that where Club 51 was located?

M. Woods: Club 51 was located back down in that area. Run by a Jackson.

L.J. Kimball: The Jacksons?

M. Woods: A guy by the name of [George A.] Jackson. Who was of the. . . He was one of the first six drill instructors.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm. The Piney Green housing, did it have. . . was it called Dog Patch? Or did it have a name assigned to it other than the black military housing?

M. Woods: They might have called it that but that's not what. . . It. . . it was just called, ah. . . They just called it Piney Green. That separated it from Midway. They just referred to it as Piney Green cuz that was. . . Piney Green it was only, ah. . . It was called Piney Green area. That was the only black military housing out there. Now I never had an occasion to go into Piney Green because I was very reluctant unless somebody took you out there to the house and everything. For single Marines roaming through the area. You could get picked up you know. MP's run you out or something of the sort. I never went. . . I never had an occasion. As I recall I

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went out there one time with somebody. And, ah, don't really remember too much about. . . One thing that I do remember about it. I think Mrs. Huff could give you more info on that than anyone else. They used to bring wood and they would throw it off each side of the street and the women had to go and get the wood. And, ah, bring it to the house. Of course the husbands would cut it because they didn't give them the cut wood like they did in Midway . . . just bring them and throw them out uncut. You know they cut wood over the Midway area. Now going back again, ah, that is quoting someone else. Cuz as I said I never. . .

L.J. Kimball: I think at one time when I talked with you on the telephone you said there was a gentleman that ran a barber shop downtown that could. . . knew more about. . .

M. Woods: Named Wilson.

L.J. Kimball: Wilson?

M. Woods: Yes. Mr. Wilson's wife was the first black teacher out there in Piney Green. She taught the first black military children in a little school they had out there.

L.J. Kimball: And the school for black children was located in the. . . at Piney Green area.

M. Woods: At . . . in the Piney Green area. Ah, Wilson could give you more on that. He has a barber shop right. . . They call it Little's Barber Shop.

L.J. Kimball: OK. There's. . .

M. Woods: Right across in front of the mo. . . the depot.

L.J. Kimball: There's a Mr. Little there also is there not?

M. Woods: Well, Mr. Little died.

L.J. Kimball: He did.

M. Woods: But, ah, Wilson bought the barber shop from his wife but he maintained the name Little cuz Little was legendary in the barber world.

L.J. Kimball: OK. Um. Where, even though you yourself did not go on liberty in Jacksonville, where were the black areas where black Marines would go for liberty?

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M. Woods: Well, black areas as far as I knew was Ash downtown. You had, ah, several houses across the track built in and, ah, there was a place somewhere in Sandy Run but I never. . . I never went there. To be honest with you I never really know . . . knew too much. I didn't get too much into Jacksonville there.

L.J. Kimball: How about Georgetown? Was that. . .

M. Woods: Well Georgetown. I understand there was a place in Georgetown the blacks used to go. But I never went in Georgetown. I never went in Georgetown until I came back here after 24 years. Then I ventured into Georgetown cuz then I was. . . began to do a little work with poli. . . politics during the water . . . the water controversy they had over there. My wife and I kind of got into that to try to get the people water because that was unsafe you know and the water over there. The water was bad. That they were getting. And of course Gov. Hunt even had water brought down here with tanks you know to put water over there for them for a while until the county decided to do something about the water.

L.J. Kimball: What was the problem with the water that. . . other than it was bad? Why was it bad over there?

M. Woods: Well, we don't know. There was a lot of gas and stuff that leaked that way that had an awful smell.

L.J. Kimball: Did it come out of wells in Georgetown? Is that why?

M. Woods: No. They were . . . the people. . . you had wells. The people had sunken wells but they were shallow wells.

L.J. Kimball: OK. So it wasn't city water then.

M. Woods: No. No. Didn't have city water there. Didn't have city water or no county water. You had your own individual, ah, pumps which I still maintain mine because whenever we get droughts and they start putting restrictions on water. Then I just. See I keep my pump going. That's when I . . . I keep my car and water in my yard and all that type of thing and try to keep my water bill down. I, ah, use . . . I use my pump for that.

L.J. Kimball: You mentioned Sandy Run. Where was Sandy Run?

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M. Woods: Sandy Run is in the area what they now call Bell Fork Road. That stretch of land through there where Sandy Run Baptist Church is and that's called. . . All that area now is called Sandy Run.

L.J. Kimball: And apparently there was a train stop there or a platform or something where they let troops off. Ah, did you know about that?

M. Woods: Seemed to me if I remember the troops used to get off. Now this I should be able to remember the many times I saw them getting on and off the trains. I don't know if that was through the Sandy Run area where the train used to stop somewhere out there. And, ah, boxcars and whatnot out there. I can't remember exactly where it was. But I know that Sandy Run ran through that whole area all the way up to, ah, all the way up to 17. It was called Sandy Run.

L.J. Kimball: Because there was. . . I think they just removed it recently. There was a platform where they unloaded cars run from the railroad track up there.

M. Woods: Yeah. I remember when they used to do that. I couldn't really tell you and I'm glad you mention that. Cuz I really forgot about that.

L.J. Kimball: Sandy Run Baptist Church. That's on Hargett Street isn't it?

M. Woods: Ah, no. Yes. Yes. It's on Hargett Street.

L.J. Kimball: OK. And. . .

M. Woods: Webb. That's the street I meant to say. I said . . .

L.J. Kimball: Bell Fork.

M. Woods: It's Hargett. That area from. . . All the way Hargett Street into 17. Further over used to be houses and whatnot sparingly where people lived. You know how country people lived. And, ah, those was Hargett Street. That was called Sandy Run area.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm. OK. Your . . . you left. . . You're at Cherry Point as a steward.

M. Woods: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: And when did you leave there?

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M. Woods: I left there, let's see, I believe it was July 4, '45. General [Louis E.] Woods was leaving Washington, D.C. as Commandant for Air and his successor was Gen. Field Harris coming from Guadalcanal. And, ah, he was looking for stewards. And I, ah, was available. So when he came in Washington, ah, General Woods and they sort of had me and another guy, John Clark line up to join.

L.J. Kimball: What rank were you then?

M. Woods: I was a Corporal.

L.J. Kimball: Corporal.

M. Woods: Mmmm. Was a Corporal.

L.J. Kimball: And where did you join them? You left Cherry Point. Where did you go?

M. Woods: I went to Washington, D.C.

L.J. Kimball: Washington, D.C.

M. Woods: Yeah. And I, ah, took over running his household.

L.J. Kimball: And, OK. Whereabout in D.C. was that? Do you recall?

M. Woods: Eighth and I.

L.J. Kimball: Eighth and I? [Marine Barracks, Eighth and "Eye"]

M. Woods: I was among the first eight blacks to go there. I also served in the first black funeral detail. And I had the District of Columbia, operated out of Eighth and I.

L.J. Kimball: At that time, were . . . you'd be sent on a burial detail for whites? Or just for blacks?

M. Woods: No. No. Only for blacks because when we got up there the whites didn't want to bury the blacks. And they started sending their war dead back from overseas and they got a group of us together to go out and . . . Really I think I made Buck Sergeant then. I'm not sure. And, ah, I was the only guy that could fold the flag. Because I became NCO in charge. And we were really the General's stewards but they used us for that too. Only difference is that when we got through with funeral detail, we had to go and, ah, take off uniforms and the dress. Then go back to work. To Generals' houses but the rest of the boys got the rest of the day

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off which is another one of those black marks I put down. Now I encountered more prejudice in Washington, D.C. than I did Camp Lejeune and Cherry Point put together.

L.J. Kimball: Really?

M. Woods: I never had anything at Cherry Point. When they got so bad that, ah, in Washington until . . . they issued an order that we take the back seats in movies. And, ah, I got in trouble. I didn't like that. And, ah, it just kind of escalated. And they wanted special area for the blacks to eat in. Over in the mess hall, the ones that they deeded to general housing that they would work on that. Of course I started going over there to eat. I didn't have to. I did. And, ah, went into the movie one night and I went down front. They told me to leave or either go in the back seats and I wouldn't go. And the next time I did it they drug me out. The third time they drug me out though Mrs. Vandegrift told the MPs to leave me alone. I went off.

L.J. Kimball: This. . . was this. . . this was a military movie? A Marine movie? As opposed to . . .

M. Woods: At the military, ah, theater.

L.J. Kimball: At Eighth and I?

M. Woods: Mmmm.

L.J. Kimball: And there was a Marine Corps order that said then that the blacks had to sit in the back of the theater?

M. Woods: Yes. NAACP took it up to it's. . . all the way to the top of the Navy. Then I had the controversy about my hair being cut. They didn't cut your black's hair in the, ah, barber shop. And I, ah, went over there. I knew a guy everybody say looked white. I mean he was from Vicksburg. . . ah, Greenville, Mississippi. Name was Clark. I knew him back in Natchez because his brother in law had a tailor shop and a dry-cleaning in Natchez. And during the summer months since Clark wasn't in school he'd come down to Natchez. See if I wasn't down in the swamp with my grandmother and them on Saturdays one night I come to Natchez and I could . . . I knew dry-cleaning I even started to be a tailor one time. I knew how to use the pressers and, ah, alterations. And he and I got to know each other pretty well. Then I didn't see him anymore until Eighth and I and he was working for Gen. Shepard at that time. Gen. Lemuel Shepard. And, ah, I, ah, coming down with him I told him I was going to go over and get a haircut. He said they're not

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gonna cut your hair over there. I said why. Cuz his hair was pretty much like mine but his hair was thinner.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm.

M. Woods: Ah, you know, more closer to his head. My hair at the time was everywhere. And I said why. He says, well, he say, a guy told me that they wouldn't cut the blacks hair cuz it break the teeth out of his comb. Well, we'll see about that. So I went over. I carried a comb with me. Civilian. And he told me, he said, boy, tell your people I don't cut your hair. Y'all breaks the teeth out of my comb. I said well I thought you was gonna say that. I said that's the reason I brung my own. And he called the Adjutant and they sent security down there and he ran me out the barber shop. It was 30 cent to get your hair cut there. You went in town, it was a dollar. Another one of those black marks I put down that I didn't like.

L.J. Kimball: This was a Marine Corps barber shop?

M. Woods: Yeah. *The* Marine Corps barber shop. And I set on that and I nursed it. And then when the funeral detail thing come they put a order out that he would not have to cut . . . He had the right to refuse cutting anyone's hair in the barber shop unless they had all the showing that they was on a military assigned detail. And soon as I got my orders with the funeral detail business, I took 'em with me and I went over there and I set down. And he wanted to know what I was there for. And I told him. He said, well, I'm only supposed to cut people's hair whose serving on some kind of a detail. I said I thought you was gonna say that. I say here's a copy of my orders. He threw the orders on the floor. I picked 'em up. And he got on the phone and he called down there to Sergeant Major, and Sergeant Major said well it must be Woods. He say yeah it is. So he come down there and the Warrant Officer came down there. And Adjutant came down. And Adjutant say this man, this order say you cut this man's hair. And, ah, the Warrant Officer turned around and looked at the Captain who was there and he say I ought to arrest you. He say you ain't got no cap on with your uniform. You're out of uniform. Then they got into it. And while they getting into it, I better got on out of here.

So I should have gone to the General I work for. He probably could have solved the whole thing. But I, ah, got up a petition. Got all the troops to sign against all the things that they were doing. And, ah, then I went to the NAACP. I went downtown. It was Beatrice Reed who was Executive Secretary of the NAACP and, ah, President at that time was Judge Hayes. The first black appointed judge, a Truman appointment. Ah, they took me downtown, give me a haircut. Because, ah, Lou Wilson [Gen. Louis H.] was my CO at that time, him and C.C. Crossfield.

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And Crossfield told me better have a haircut next time he see me. And I told him about the barber shop. And he said I don't give a damn about that. He say I want you to have a haircut next time you see me. I said OK. That's what you want, you gonna get it. So I went on downtown and got in the barber chair and they cut my hair. And the newspaper was there and they caught me right on the front page and I was stepping out that chair with the NAACP and that dollar for that haircut. And Vandegrift was eating breakfast and opened that paper. All kind of stuff hit the fan. They cut set of orders on me twice up there to send me back to Camp Lejeune. General said I ain't sending you back nowhere. You entitled to what you asking for. And what I worked for.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm.

M. Woods: And, ah, I stayed and eventually started getting my hair cut and what have you. And off took another one of the black marks, you know, for my side. And often wondered why you have to go through all of that. What does it prove. To prove nothing.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm.

M. Woods: I live to be as good. I've done some pretty good things. Made some pretty good contributions. More than they did without attempting to hurt anybody or rob anybody of his civil rights or anything. So what did it prove?

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm.

M. Woods: I prevailed and now I'm 77 years old and proud of it. Still don't hate nobody.

L.J. Kimball: Must not have hurt you too badly because you were a Master Gunnery Sergeant when you retired, were you not?

M. Woods: Yeah. Yeah. Master Gunny.

L.J. Kimball: Ah, what year was this? That you were at the barracks? What years were that?

M. Woods: I was at the barracks from, ah, '45 to forty. . . '47.

L.J. Kimball: And you were a Sergeant. You made Buck Sergeant there.

M. Woods: Buck Sergeant. Ah, Staff Sergeant. And, ah, well, it went from Gunnery Sergeant E-6, to Tech during that. . . during that period if you remember. Everybody

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became a Tech Sergeant, you know, instead of having old Tech and the old Gunnery Sergeant. Then they changed Gunnery Sergeant and then they changed to Tech Sergeant if you remember. And, ah, they had Master Sergeant and designated you Sergeant Major by orders if you remember that period at the time. And, ah, I, ah, I got along all right. The General left there. I went with him. We went to Korea together. All that. A lot of the people that was up in D.C. I ran into 'em from time to time in different places overseas and what have you. Some of 'em spoke as if nothing had ever happened. Of course I never let that take me off guard at that time. I knew better.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm. You say you went with the General to Korea. Was that Vandegrift?

M. Woods: No. No. General Field Harris.

L.J. Kimball: Field Harris.

M. Woods: Mmm-hmmm. He was Assistant Commandant for Air. He left there, went to Cherry Point and from Cherry Point, to El Toro. And then he took the wing to Korea.

L.J. Kimball: OK. How about summarizing your career for me after that. Ah, where you went and what you did.

M. Woods: Well, from there I, ah, went to, ah, we come back from Korea. Went to, ah, Quantico, Virginia.

L.J. Kimball: Was your . . . when you . . . You say you went to Korea. Was that just a . . . a visit or you . . . your assignment there?

M. Woods: No. No. I . . . I was over there for the whole assignment. Now from there to Quantico, Virginia where I was at the Air Station. I was in charge of the Officer's Mess there. Did have some problems with a Warrant Officer there. From South Carolina.

L.J. Kimball: What kind of problems?

M. Woods: Well, the way he talked he said to me when I checked in that he did not like people who had worked for Generals which I thought was a little bit on the ignorant side. Ah, he and I didn't get along because I was right there in the office. He would write me a memo and put it out on bulletin board. See if I was reading

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the board. Then I started answering him, putting mine on the bulletin board. And, ah, I found out he wasn't. And, ah. Just one, ah, one thing after another. All little bitty things.

L.J. Kimball: Do you think he treated you this way because he was from South Carolina and you were black?

M. Woods: Well, ah, he didn't treat all of the rest of the blacks the way he treated me. But I didn't exactly approach him the way a lot of them did. I approached him in a way of giving him respect as a Warrant Officer and I wanted him to give me the respect as a Gunnery Sergeant. I'd already made Master Sergeant. It was waiting for me. And they held that up as long as they could. General [Merwin H.] Silverthorn had to bring it to me. Ah, but I finally got it. Then I went to, ah . . . We had some furniture shipped in from California. And, ah, I told him that I wanted . . . when the furniture came in I wanted to take off . . . You know be there to receive it. And I did. Was Gunnery Sergeant there and he and I worked together. He worked in my place. I worked in his many times. And he told me as long as one of you here, that's all right. And he said that in a . . . a meeting before all the troops. Well that morning I got most of the furniture set up and everything in Washington and then I, ah . . . Coming in that morning, a fuel pump, I think a the fuel pump or water pump. One of those pumps busted on my car. Right up there about Woodbridge. And wouldn't go any farther. I pulled it off to the side. I was walking and hitchhiking. Bus came along. Bus driver, he stopped the bus and picked me up and took me into Quantico. When I got to Quantico I had to walk over there and everything was traffic was heavy that morning. Couldn't get a cab. So I walked from there on down to the Air Station. And I was about as far from where I work . . . maybe from here to the corner out there. And he came into work. Cuz he always came in a little earlier. And he passed me walking and wouldn't give me a ride. And when I got to the Base, I mean when I got to work, he had orders . . . he had, ah, written up a report on me that I was late. And I went over, ah, I went before the Major, Major Hayes. Later Col. Hayes. And, ah, he told him I was restricted. I said what about my car. I got a car setting out there on the road. Well ain't you got no friends that you get out there. Not my friend's responsibility. I said the car's my responsibility. Cuz car's mechanical. I say one day if it hasn't happened to you, something will happen to yours and you gonna have no control over it. Have no control over a water pump . . . I believe it was a water pump or a fuel pump. Whatever one it was called it quits.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm.

M. Woods: And, ah, he said well you go and git that car off the road. He say you come back and then you start serving. He said on your honor. We not gonna take your card

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or nothing. No problem there. So I went and got the car off the road. Well, really it was already off the road cuz I called a girl I knew in D.C. And she'd already had it hauled in. But I to had to go get it fixed and bring it in. I called, ah, General Harris. Instead of retiring, he was going to be the Commanding General of that command they were setting up in Norfolk, Air FMFLANT. I called Mrs. Harris and told her the situation. The general called me back the next day and asked me if I wanted to go to Norfolk with him. I said yeah and went down to join him, late '51.

(end of tape)

Tape Two, Side Two

M. Woods: . . . with the General there up until he retired which was in '53. And I got orders back to El Toro, California. And I set up, ah . . . I first had the Officer's Club at El Toro. Then when we set up what is called the Closed Mess and did the separation. Put 'em all together but I had two messes. One for the bachelor officers, the commissioned officers mess, closed. I'm sure you're familiar with that old system. And, ah, I took over as NCOIC [NCO In Charge] Commissioned Officers Mess Branch it was called. All the personnel came under me. And that's where I was for. . . until '57. In '57 I went to Parris Island.

L.J. Kimball: Did you go there as. . . to be a Drill Instructor?

M. Woods: No. No. They sent me there. When I got there I found out that they wanted me to work for General [Robert B.] Luckey. And I wasn't working for no more Generals. Resolved that. And, ah, so, ah, instead of working for General Luckey I went to the. . . to the BOQs and, um, I became NCO . . . Assistant NCOIC of the Commissioned Officers Mess down there and what have you. And, ah, they wouldn't give me a house because I wouldn't work for the General. So I thought it's all right. Leave me go. So I was lucky enough to stay with a guy that was the undertaker there until he found me a house in town. And, ah, I stayed in town. And I stayed in Parris Island I guess a little over a year. And then opened a new air station down there. And, ah, I wasn't getting along the best there either. I'm a funny kind of a person, you know. If you too good to me, I get suspicious.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm.

M. Woods: Why's this guy good to me? If you ain't good enough to me I get suspicious. Why you treating me so differently than the rest of the people? I think I'm ordinary people. Ample intelligence and what have you. Well, anyway, we had a

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guy by the name of Col. [William H.] Rankin. I don't know if you read about him. The Man Who Rode the Thunder. [Col. Rankin wrote this book, which described his experiences in bailing out into a thunder storm.]

L.J. Kimball: I . . . I know of the man who rode thunder but I don't remember the individual's name.

M. Woods: Col. Rankin. A good friend of mine ever since way back in the early days at Cherry Point when he was a lieutenant. And, ah, he was Lt. Col. and Commanding Officer [Marine Fighter Squadron] 122. No. 222. And, ah, he happened to come over to Parris Island. Was having a big affair that night. He came over, him and Col. Phillips from the air station. And looked up and saw me. What in the hell are you doing over here with this bunch of grunts? I said well, you know, take all kind I said, ah. I think I'm a better person if I learn all kind I said. I was with them, you know, in aviation, but you been with aviation ever since I know you one place or another. How'd you like to get the hell out of here? I say I'd give you a month's pay. He said I'd do it for nothing. He said I want you at the air station. He said we need somebody over there. I say well, you got your man. He say well I be in Washington, D.C. on a board next week. He saying, ah, you get set on and showing up. And sure enough, I got a set of orders to go to the air station.

L.J. Kimball: Was that Beaufort?

M. Woods: Beaufort Air Station. And I went over there and I became NCOIC Commissioned Officers Mess, branch over there. BOQs and the whole works. And I set up the inventory system, that big long BOQ. I put most of the furniture in there. The whole works. And I was there for . . . until 1960. And got the award for being one of the best commissioned officers messes. Then when General, Commandant left there, Fred Washington was his steward in D.C. It was before that. . . [Gen. David M.] Shoup relieved him . . .

L.J. Kimball: The Commandant's name?

M. Woods: Yeah.

L.J. Kimball: [Gen. Randolph McCall] Pate.

M. Woods: Pate. Well, anyway, when he left, Shoup got rid of Fred Washington. But Pate reassured him. . . told him to get on a plane and go to all the bases and find out what mess he wanted. When he landed there. . . he lived in Beaufort. And he saw

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we were rated number one. He went back and they sent me to Quantico and give him my mess. Which he messed up in short order from what I understand but I went on to Quantico. This time at Quantico it was a different ball game. I went to O'Bannon Hall. Lou Wilson then had become a Colonel. He remembered the altercation we had, all that back at Eighth and I. Sent for me and set down and talk. Ah, Steward Branch was integrated then. We was having a lot of problems in Steward Branch that we had never had before.

L.J. Kimball: Because of integration?

M. Woods: No. No. Disciplinary actions had broke down and all of that. And, ah, he told me I'd like you to work for me. Run organization here. Think you can do it. I said I can run it. If I'm gonna be able to run it without interfering. And I'm gonna run it the same way with all people. Well you got my backing. So, ah, I went to work for him. Then he left and another Colonel came in. I stayed there until I fell with a kidney attack. I had to go in the hospital. Didn't want to abuse the kidney when I come out of the hospital in Fayetteville. I had to have light duty. And, ah, they sent me to, ah, Liversedge [Hall]. And I stayed the rest of my time in Liversedge. And I got orders from there. I went to Hawaii. Kaneohe.

L.J. Kimball: What year was this you went to Kaneohe?

M. Woods: I went to Kaneohe I think in '62, sixty, no '65.

L.J. Kimball: '65.

M. Woods: '65. And, ah, that's where my wife and I got married. And, ah, our reception was held at the 19th hole at the golf course out there. And of course I stayed out there two year. I came back. And I came back to Camp Lejeune.

L.J. Kimball: That was in '67?

M. Woods: Mmm-hmmm.

L.J. Kimball: What did you do at Camp Lejeune?

M. Woods: Well, when I got here, ah, General Joe [Joseph O.] Butcher was here. He knew me as a Colonel in D.C. during some of the turbulent times. He was a good friend of Field Harris'. Had been. And he had been CO at Eighth and I before the guy that all the trouble was caused under. And Gen. Butcher sent for me and he had an interview with me. He told me instead of going through food service he said.

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You got a BOQ background. He say you been to school. I said I went to Pax [NAS Patuxent] River. I been to all of 'em. He said I want you to take a house. . . another housekeeping quarters. He say you be attached to BOQ. He'll be your boss, a civilian. Ah, where you live son? He said both of you come under the house. He said the BOQs come under the house. And that's a problem. So we got out. Everything set up. I sent him off and everything and that's where I was until sixty . . . '69. And in '69 I got off to go to Vietnam. I went to Vietnam, spent my time over there, and I came back here. I went to Force Troops [predecessor to FSSG], with Gen. [Joseph C.] Fegan.

L.J. Kimball: What year was that you were at Force Troops?

M. Woods: I went to Force Troops in seventy. . . let's see it was '69. Seventy. I went to Force Troops '70.

L.J. Kimball: '70.

M. Woods: Between, ah, it was between the time of, ah, September and the end of the year. Cuz I took a leave when I got back here and all that type of thing.

L.J. Kimball: Was Force Troops over at French Creek by this time?

M. Woods: No. We went into French Creek after I got . . . after I got there. They were beginning to build over there.

L.J. Kimball: So you were still over in Geiger?

M. Woods: No. No. We were at Mainside right where, ah, across from the old 58 building that used to be the Credit Union. The old Credit Union used to be there. Fifty eight was the Officer's Mess there one time years and years ago.

L.J. Kimball: OK. Right. Yes.

M. Woods: Well, that's when Force Troops were there. And General Fegan was the Commanding General. And, ah, he knew me. I went and talked with him. Assigned me to, ah, FSR [Force Service Regiment] and I went in there as the NCOIC for a while, a food tech. And when the Warrant Officer retired I took his place. And then the Captain left over at Force Troops Headquarters. I was Food Service Officer I had just made Master Gunny. I hadn't got it yet. And, ah, send me a set of special orders and made me the Food Service Officer, Acting Food Service Officer over there. He told me it would be about six months but while

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I'm doing the rest of his tour, and the rest of Gen. Poulrier's tour, and the rest of Gen. Nichols tour. Cuz all three of the Generals maintained me to continue the . . . continue the work. And then of course I came down with this Achilles' tendon. Ah, which I lost and they had to make me one. By then I had my thirty years. Almost thirty-one. So I just put in my letter and I was going home.

L.J. Kimball: And when was it. . . what was the date of your retirement?

M. Woods: '74. Fourth. . . the first of July, 1974.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm. Looking back over your experiences at Camp. . . er, Jacksonville and when you were first there as a boot and going to Steward School, of course there wasn't much there. And then you came back again, what was it, in seventies?

M. Woods: Yeah. Seventies. Well, ah, seventies, yes. Sixty. No. Sixties really. Sixty-seven.

L.J. Kimball: What'd you think of Jacksonville at that point?

M. Woods: It was a whole new ball game. You could get lost. Ah, I had to learn to maneuver. It wasn't the case that it was so big you could get lost. But you could lose a lot of time going the wrong way. (laughs) And I, ah, rather enjoyed Jacksonville. Met a lot of people and the few people that I had met before. And coming in and out of here, even though I wasn't stationed here whenever, I would come down here from time to time from up Cherry Point when I was up there you know. And, ah, my wife rather enjoyed. . . She immediately went to work here. She enjoyed. . . she had worked for years and she enjoyed, ah, working more or less on her own. She started setting up demographics for this on her own on black voter registration and all type of thing. She just come out of Chicago where she was running one of the largest community action agencies in Chicago appointed by Mayor Daly. And, ah, she established black history studies on this and she taught. And, ah, had all three of the Generals over there received certificates from her black history. This was when they was getting together the. . . this program they had, ah, teaching tolerance of blacks and whites and trying to . . .

L.J. Kimball: Was that the Human Relations Program?

M. Woods: Human Relations. My wife played a big part in helping to set that up. Over. . . over there. And, ah, I rather enjoyed the. . . One time I enjoyed Camp Lejeune.

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L.J. Kimball: When you retired did you . . . is that . . . Have you been here ever since then?

M. Woods: Yes. I've been here ever since. When I retired I had commenced to get a little tied into politics. As a matter of fact when I retired I was already third Vice President in my precinct down here in Southwest. And later on become the President of the precinct which I was reelected once in absentia for ten years. And, ah, I organized the Montford Point Marine Association during those years here. Ah, right after that my wife and I, ah, founded the Sickle Cell Program cuz she got interested in that. And, ah, Dr. Washington came in here to do a survey and found a need and we put on a drive. And we got that started.

And we started the first Onslow Sickle Cell Association. And we broke off into three other counties. By that time I become the President of the Sickle Cell Association Board. And, ah, that was started and we finally got a grant and some money. And, ah, then I became the, ah, Administrator. Ned Hurst became Chairman of the Board. And we had one girl working office then trying to, ah, do counseling. Who's Marsha Wright. By the way, ah, she was the second one we hired. I hired her. She had just got here. She was very brilliant. Very brilliant woman. Young woman at that time.

And, ah, they had allowed a salary for me. But I couldn't afford a salary for me and hire someone else. So when I did I forewent my salary except just expense account. And hired another girl and let that salary go. Then we had one in the field and one in the office and they both qualified to take walk-ins. By then my wife had helped organize a state organization and she had been appointed by the Governor out of the 33 counties on the eastern seaboard from South Carolina line all the way to the Virginia line. And of course being up there she was able to get a lot of help to the local area. Cuz we set up the political action, Ned Hurst and my wife did that political action committee. Not as cellular organizations. We got into . . . I was a part of . . . I, ah, one day I'm gonna find my resume and try to update it. But, ah, give me another . . . I'm fixing another one for my wife now. This is the brief copy of her bio. And, ah, it needs updating cuz there's several things that they didn't put in there.

L.J. Kimball: Impressive looking one here.

M. Woods: Mmmm?

L.J. Kimball: It's very impressive. By the time you retired from the Marine Corps, of course there had been a tremendous change in lots of respects.

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M. Woods: Right.

L.J. Kimball: Did you find by the time of your retirement that there was any different treatment between blacks and whites or or that there was still some difference. . .

M. Woods: Oh, definitely. Definitely so. I, ah, I did a talk show on that out in New Bern a couple of years back. Some of the people didn't like some of the things I said. Because I didn't lamblast anybody. Ah, I thought to myself, gross changes from the time that I first came into this area. And now they wanted to know about law enforcement. How did they treat the people? And I told them I had never had any trouble with law enforcement. My wife had never had any. We always got the greatest respect and knew most of the people. Ah, and I even said this is a speech down in Natchez, Mississippi briefly that they asked me to say a few words. And this was one of the subjects I was talking on. I think we have one of the finest law enforcement groups anywhere in the country. I said I'd put 'em up against anybody anywhere.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm.

M. Woods: Ah, when I did this one up here Ed Brown was the sheriff then but before it was Bill Waters was the sheriff and I helped him get elected. And he was from our precinct so me and him worked very closely together at the precinct. And I never had, or saw, anything that I could call racist. I'm not saying it didn't happen cuz you gonna have some. . . about half of 'em don't care how good you are. There's not gonna be one hundred percent and not gonna be solid gold. I told him I had never . . . never had any trouble. Well I was called on that by a couple of people who . . . well you know better. I said now wait just a minute. I said did you hear how the question was framed? Have *you* ever had, or witnessed any? I have never witnessed and have never had. Then one guy went so far, he got kind of blue. Well that's because of your color. You. . .you. . . you go out there and go anywhere. I said but I don't go anywhere. I said ain't no sense in you coming with that. I say because anybody see that black woman walking around with me, they know what culture I identify with. I says. . .I said oh, don't hit me with that one. If you do, I say, I think that's the end of our conversation right there. I say I saw it the way. . . I saw it. . . I didn't go on with a bunch of stuff. Well I heard this. And somebody come and told me this. Sure, I've heard many things. But what is true? And they true when I can go back and research it, put a pen or put a pencil on it. And when I can see it or it be witnessed by what I call people who was of integrity. People of character. And I'm not saying that there are not nasty officers. I'm not saying any of that. I'm saying what *I* encountered. And I felt and still feel about our police force.

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L.J. Kimball: Well, as far as the treatment of Marines go, by the time you retired, . . . could you see any difference in the treatment of Marines by virtue of the fact that they were black or white? Were the whites getting preference or the blacks . . .

M. Woods: You mean as far as when they got out of the Marine Corps.

L.J. Kimball: No. While they were Marines.

M. Woods: While they was in the Marines Corps.

L.J. Kimball: Yeah. Were they . . . were they treated any differently?

M. Woods: Oh, no. I . . . I . . . By the time I got out of the Marine Corps I found that we were just, ah, a bunch of guys. We had so many black top Sergeants that one night in the Marine Corps then they would fall on a black guy or a white guy just as hard as he would anybody else. And, ah, I recall not too long before I got out, the First Sergeant down there in one of the companies having his office hours on a couple black kids and he wanted me down there. And I went down there. I want . . . want you to see that they getting, ah, a square deal. I said well this is up to you. I said well I'm gonna tell you something. I said I bet you I ain't gonna call you if I have office hours on some white kids. I'm a do what I'm supposed to do. I said if his ass had to go to the brig, get busted, or whatever, that's the name of the game. I said I'd do the same thing on a black, but I'm not gonna call you. I don't think you should had to call no black in here to try to prove something unless *you* have something on your mind that you worried about. I said I don't have anything of mine that I'm worried about.

L.J. Kimball: Do you have any general, ah, impressions about the quality of the Marine Corps overall and the quality of the Marines from the forties until the time you retired?

M. Woods: Ah, overall, I think we have improved the Marine Corps in some areas. And I think that we had some breakdown in others. I think that during the years of the cat. [category] fours that was brought into the Marine Corps. . . I'm sure you remember that turbulent era. Ah, I think the disciplinary machine broke down. Ah, guys was getting away with things that they wouldn't got away with doing another time. And when you break down. . . your disciplinary machine breaks down, then the rest of the things are going to follow. Slowly but surely if the disciplinary. . . Something in that particular chassis, ah, or that particular piece of the machinery that seamed the whole thing together. And, ah, I still think that, ah, we kind of lost it a little bit where . . . where discipline is concerned. But I still

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think we got a good Marine Corps. It's got to be different because we in different times, fighting different types of wars, more highly technical and logical equipment and what have you. And, ah, we are dealing with supposedly a group of Marines now that are smarter, higher IQs and what not. And of course when you dealing with people that, ah, you might say more intelligent, you can't just take them and push them as far as you would a guy that had that lack of intelligence because he gonna start to question things. He gonna start to read things. Cuz if he can read and he can't get them in there to read, then you can keep them ignorant. You can do pretty much anything you want to, to him. So I think we have a good Corps. And I think it's in good hands. But, ah, I still think that our disciplinary machine kind of broke down somewhere along the line back in the early years.

L.J. Kimball: Now you and I both served during that unfortunate period and I think you're probably referring to part of it when you say the discipline broke down and we had all those racial problems in the late sixties and early seventies.

M. Wood: That is, ah, that is part of it. We hid a lot of racial stuff but that was during the cat four era.

L.J. Kimball: Yeah.

M. Woods: Ah, you was bringing people in who really didn't know anything about discipline. Come from the ghettoes . . . They didn't know how to talk. I never . . . I never run into so . . . I thought I was in. . . sometimes I talked to several guys who came before me, I thought I was in a different country. Well, now, "you know" and, ah, "I see that ain't my bag." And this was ridiculous. I guess I . . . what is this guy trying to say? You know. And, ah, it was just a ridiculous era to me. But I don't see why they put all those people in the Marine Corps. Cuz I didn't see where it did any good. And I do not believe that, ah, I'm just wondering. Take the word back believe. Did we salvage as many people as we supposed to have? Because they was putting people out of the Marine Corps right and left. You had a few of the smart ones who was teaching the others instead of teaching them the right way. Teaching 'em how to do the wrong thing. And then we got to Vietnam, you had problems over there with those . . . And, ah, all of this helped to break down the machine cuz if you had got hard on them the first day and they gonna say it was because of the color. I got hard on one guy with no color. They didn't like the system. And I've told several guys. I've had a couple blacks tell me I'm prejudiced. Yeah, I'm prejudiced against certain things. I had one white kid tell me one time that I was prejudiced. I said I sure am. I said well if you want me to cease being prejudiced, I said, go wash your funky ass. Oh. I say because I'm

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prejudiced against people that don't take baths. People that I have to go in and make 'em change the sheets on the bed and things of that sort. I said I'm very prejudiced against that. I said I'm not prejudiced against you. All you got to do is come out here and present yourself, get to work on time and do your job. I say you see the prejudice disappear. I've been that way now all my life.

But, ah, as I said I think we probably have a better Corps today than we had. But it's not as tight. You don't see the camaraderie I think that we used to have where Marines were concerned. And even in the days of prejudice we kind of looked out for each other, ah if it was somebody of a different breed that attacked us like Army, Navy or, ah, something of that sort. I can recall a time you could come down that road and a trooper would be behind you. You knock your lights off and hit him three times. You went through the gate. No Marine in the world saw that car go through that gate. Saw that at El Toro. But now you don't see that closeness anymore where you look out for each other anymore. Maybe that's good and maybe it's bad. I don't know.

L.J. Kimball: Well, Master Gunnery Sergeant, I really appreciate you giving me this time and . . . talking about the Marine Corps and your impressions . . .

M. Woods: Are you familiar, ah, with, ah, the first black officers that . . . they attempted to commission?

L.J. Kimball: Ah, yeah. I heard a story. Sgt. Major Huff or Johnson related that particular experience where they were gonna promote somebody but he exactly had the same name of the person they intended to promote.

M. Woods: No. No. I'm talking about the first, ah, . . . Fred [Frederick C.] Branch was the first black officer. . .

L.J. Kimball: Right.

M. Woods: . . . which was on the Marine Corps birthday, 1945.

L.J. Kimball: Mmm-hmmm.

M. Woods: And of course they done put him on inactive duty the very next day. And he came back during the Korean time. All that is in the book. But then we had some other . . . other cases where, ah, that we saw . . . there was Charles F. Anderson who was the first black Sergeant Major we had in the Marine Corps. There was a guy by the name of Davis. All of these men that . . . highly educated men from some

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prestigious university. But every one of them went to Quantico . . . and they flunked out. Charles Anderson. Ah, Harvey Mann went on back to Harvard and got a law degree after it was over. Had graduated from Morehouse already. They couldn't flunk him academically so they said he had a heart murmur. But he didn't have a heart problem, went on to live for years. Ah, there was Rudder [John E.], he went to Quantico. When he went into the pool, everyone came out. I believe that was in the 50s. And of course Peterson [MGen. Frank E.], when he came through, he had not much of a problem. Those things had to change. But in the very early days, we had six guys that went . . . Col. Brewer, he was the one . . .

(end of tape)