

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: General Robert H. Barrow

COLLECTION: 4700.0097

IDENTIFICATION: [1922-2008] Major General in United States Marine Corps

INTERVIEWER: Peter Soderbergh

SERIES: Military

INTERVIEW DATES: Session I: March 24, 1992; Session II: April 1, 1992;
Session III: May 1, 1992; Session IV: September 25, 1992;
Session V: October 31, 1992

FOCUS DATES: 1922 - 1992

ABSTRACT:

Session I:

Tape 120

The long term effects of the Civil War, Reconstruction and the Depression on Barrow's family; his father's life; sharecropping on the family plantation land; isolation of the rural environment; closeness to nature; Barrow's love of reading; being without electricity; Barrow's early religious devotion; attending the St. Francisville consolidated school; school segregation; memories of school teachers; learning the guitar through his Black friends; Barrow's sense of the importance of the accomplishments of his ancestors and family; St. Francisville area parties and dances; his early interest in the military; how Barrow funded his LSU attendance; being a Freshman; memories of ROTC; hazing; getting into the Marine Corps; reasons for choosing the Marine Corps; the influence that attending LSU had on him; the positive influence of diversity; what Barrow feels are his are his personality traits and characteristics.

Tape 121

Attending Marine Corps basic training in San Diego, California; the need to be involved in the war; view of Japanese during early part of war; where Barrow was when he heard the news of Pearl Harbor; Marine Corps basic training; zoot suitors; being made an assistant drill instructor; being selected for officer candidate school; attending officer candidate school; his brother's involvement in the military; view of women in Marine Corps during World War II; receiving a regular commission; being sent to China; impressions of Colonial India; getting to China; working and living with Chinese nationalist recognized guerrillas.

Session II:

Tape 154

Working on an oil exploration company; marching into Yo Yang after end of war; what Barrow wore while in China; working in Shanghai after the war; ordered to North China to work with the

Third Marine Amphibious Corps; becoming General Rockey's aide; living with General Rockey in Tientsin; going with General Rockey to San Francisco and Norfolk, Virginia to work in the Fleet Marine Force Atlantic; going to Quantico for Amphibious warfare school; assigned to the Second Marine Division Camp Lejeune, North Carolina to command A Company First Battalion, Second Marine, Second Marine Regiment; the status of the Marine Corps in between WWII and the Korean War; meeting his wife.

Tape 155

The start of the Korean War; preparation and leaving for the war; working under General Louis Burle (Chesty) Puller; landing at Inchon and the move inland; attacking Young Dong Po; having to defend themselves inside enemy lines; an act of bravery by a Sergeant George B. Gordon that helped to save their group; moving into Seoul; being caught ahead of the other units in Seoul defending against a regiment's worth of North Korean forces; David Douglas Duncan reporting some of Barrow's actions in Life; being pressured by command to unwisely push forward; attitude of men in his company; some of Barrow's military philosophy; Barrow's thoughts regarding Chesty Puller. Using Japanese manned former U.S. Landing Ship Tanks.

Session III:

Tape 168

Inchon-Seoul operations; pushing northward into North Korea; working under Chesty Puller; the effect of the cold weather on the troops and fighting; details and combat plans which were part of the Cho-San Reservoir campaign; the fighting spirit of the marines; the thought behind retreating to the rear; assignment to the infantry desk, enlisted detail; promotion to a major; working a covert assignment in the Da Chin Island complex.

Tape 169

Missions on the Da Chin Islands; working with the local warlord and pirates; getting married; assignment to operations and training G-3; assigned to the Second Battalion, Sixth Marines, as the 8-3 operations and training officer; assignment to Tulane University, Naval ROTC; earning his undergraduate degree in Military Science from the University of Maryland; the involvement and support of his wife during his long absences; the birth of twin girls; the birth of their youngest son; being a father to five; getting a Distinguished Alumnus Award from the University of Maryland; working at Tulane; working on a master's degree at Tulane in Southern History; being called upon to write updated training manuals; assigned as the assistant G-3 operations, training and plans, for the Third Marine Expeditionary Force; promotion to lieutenant colonel; ordered to the Headquarters, CG Fleet Marine Force Pacific under General Crewlack; Vietnam. Working for General Crewlack.

Session IV:

Tape 252

Working at the Fleet Marine Force Pacific under General Crewlack; writing Vietnam campaign plan of I Corps; attending the National War College; assignment in Vietnam to the Third Marine Division to command a swing regiment; General Ray Davis; views of the enemy; intelligence as critical factor in war; Barrow's Vietnam strategies and campaigns; the moral of the enlisted ground troops; entering Laos for a raid; assignment to the Third Marine Amphibious Force headquarters; promotion to brigadier general; going to Okinawa as the commanding general of

the Marine Corps Base Okinawa and Fleet Marine Force Bases Forward; the impact of "Project One-Hundred-Thousand"; philosophy on career advancement.

Tape 253

Assignment to Marine Corps Recruit Depot in Parris Island; changing policies at Parris Island due to abusive treatment of recruits by drill instructors; the quality of recruits; what recruits learn from training; the spirit of being a marine; resistance to policy changes; positive changes due to Barrow's reforms; being a maverick.

Session V:

Tape 261

Assigned to Washington as the deputy chief of staff for Manpower; farewell assembly on Parris Island; considered for the Marine commandant; promotion to lieutenant general; duties as head of Manpower; policy changes that were made during his time as head of Manpower especially those involving recruits; assigned to be the commanding general of Fleet Marine Forces Atlantic; ordered to back to headquarters to be assistant commandant; duties as assistant commandant; process of becoming commandant; interview with President Carter; Senate confirmation hearings; changes to the duties of assistant commandant; thoughts on assuming the role as commandant; duties of the commandant; accomplishments and changes that he made while the commandant of the Marines; process of getting budget approval; working with the Joint Chiefs of Staff; how he handled speaking on Capitol Hill in front of the House Arms Services Committee; ceremonial responsibilities as commandant.

Tape 262

Taking a positive leadership role; recruitment changes; taking a personal interest in things; changes made to discharge Marines who were reoccurring problems; the influence and input of his wife regarding needed support for Marine families and wives; making changes so that families would be allowed to be in residents with Marines stationed in Okinawa; dealing with the drug problem in the Marines; implementing program where ships ready with supplies would be placed near potential areas of conflict; retiring from Marines; view of Marine Corps today; view of women in the Marine Corps and in combat; Barrows final reflections on his career in the Marines; what sets the Marines apart from other military organizations; reflections on the future of the Marines.

TAPES: 10 (T120, T121, T154, T155, T168, T169, T252, T253, T261, T262)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 12 hours, 10 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 509 pages

OTHER MATERIALS: Correspondence; photographs; hand written corrections sheet for tape 154; handwritten abstract for tapes 261 and 262; biographical information sheet.