

Transcript for El Toro DVD

Opening title:

Scratch a Marine and they've got a great story. – Mrs. Ann Quilter

Selections from the El Toro Marine Corps Air Station Oral History Project

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Section One: I used to say, Someday, something's going to happen. Someday, I'm going to be a pilot. I just know it. I just know right there. - LtCol Jack Herber

1. **Capt Dick Ferree:** In fact, I'll say this, and I think I've said this to you before. You know one thing about anybody who's been in the Marine Corps. There are good people and there are bad people in the Marine Corps, but you know one thing for sure. They didn't take the easy way out. Nobody goes into the Marine Corps thinking it would be easy.
2. **Col Jacques Naivaux:** That was my inspiration and really—the Battle of Britain and the pilots. And so that was—that was all I really ever wanted to be was a fighter pilot.
3. **PFC Norris Gwin:** At that time, the recruiting center was in the post office in downtown Miami. And, went down to fill all the paperwork out. And, uh, then, after you do all that they send you in for a—a test. And, at that time, he said I didn't make it because my eyesight wasn't good enough. So, I went home. I think for three months all I did was eat carrots! (laughs) Really I did. And, went back and passed the test. And now, this is the early part of March—this is—this is the [good] part. I kid about this, I never trust another Marine sergeant. He said—he said, “Oh, you'll have plenty of time to graduate in June before they call you up.” Ten days later I got my notice, (laughs) Report to Beaufort, South Carolina. Here's your bus ticket going to Parris Island, [South Carolina]. So, I always kid—I say, I've never trusted a Marine sergeant since then. (laughs)
4. **Sgt Sam Romero:** Right-uh and in Logan, being Hispanic families, a lot of 'em-uh were large families. And-uh, you would put a little flag in your window how many you had serving in the military, a star—one person. We had several that had four stars, three and four stars. So, there was quite a representation in the Armed Forces from our neighborhood. In fact, one of the first ones that was-uh killed in action was from the Logan neighborhood. I think he—he—he-uh got killed in-uh—in Italy. His name was John Arcadi I believe was his last name. So, we lost one of the first ones, you know, out of our neighborhood. And, they—they lived just about maybe 150 steps away from my house.
5. **PFC Norris Gwin:** I think one of the *greatest* stories that I—I like is that '44 was an election year. And, uh, us out—three hundred and forty-something people in our squadron. And, uh, representatives of the United States came out, (coughs) and they

were island hopping all they could with the troops about their right to vote with an absentee ballot—you know, send a vote back. And, they were coming out to take the votes and absentee ballots, have the men make ‘em out, and then take ‘em back to the United States for the presidential election. Well, we had about a half-hour speech, they went and muster called us all to—about what we’re fighting for, our right to vote, *we should vote*. And, they dismissed us and told us to go vote, and then go back to your duties. So, we did. About an hour-and-a-half later, we got another call for another muster to come up. And, the guy went through—and he said, “You know, I just went through this, about your right to vote”—(coughs) excuse me—and he said, “You know, of three hundred and forty-something people, I’ve only got forty-seven votes.” And he said, “I’m gonna try it, again. I want you all to go vote, you know?” Uh, the major in charge of us said—of the squadron—said, “There won’t be any change.” He said, “That’s all we have at, uh, twenty-one or over. Everybody else, psh, twenty and nineteen.”

Section two: Just before we were married he received his wings and his commission into the Marine Corps. I pinned his wings on him. – Mrs. Coralee Hobbs

1. **Mrs. Ann Quilter** (4053 – 5:04-5:53) Marine Corps wives or wives of Marine Corps career officers or enlisted, they have to be strong. They have to be self-sufficient because when the husbands go away they’ve got to be husband, father, and mother. They have to take care of everything, and they cope. And, if you are in an area where there are other military there is a huge support system. [KG: Okay] And, the biggest length of time I can remember was when we were in Tallahassee, and that was my mother’s hometown. And so, she had support with people she had grown up with. But, they are strong. Marine Corps wives are strong. You know, don’t mess with a Marine Corps wife.
2. **Capt Dick Ferree**: That reminds me of another thing. Once when I was a—you know, you have your officer of the day—uh, which means when the—when the commanding officer goes home for the evening, there are certain things—somebody needs to be there to man the phones and to be the officer that’s—that’s there. It’s a twenty-four hour operation. (clears throat) So, the officer of the day—I was officer of the day, and that meant that you stayed there for twenty-four hours, and I was—uh—my wife came up to the base with my son in an infant seat. They didn’t have—they didn’t have the kind of, you know—it wasn’t even required that you have a seat for a baby. But, she had one of those things called an infant seat, and she brought this little boy, a little, baby boy out. And, she had—in order to get me a—a—a hot meal—’cause I was gonna have a sandwich or something—she brought the—the biggest—uh investment we had made in kitchen utensils, an electric skillet. (laughs) And, she had cooked my dinner in an electric skillet and brought it out to the base for me. [KG: How sweet.] Now, that was really above and beyond for—you didn’t see many guys that got hot meals. Every—every—all the guys that were around at that time just couldn’t get over that—that she had done that
3. **Mrs. Coralee Hobbs**: It was really funny. Um, we were living in Garden Grove when he went to Vietnam, and—um the next door neighbors were very wonderful to me. And—uh, they had children the same age as—as my children were, and—um Christy, my youngest

one, was about three years old at that time and Gene came—that's the husband from next door—came over one day. And, he asked her where her father was. Well, at that time-uh Victor was sending me-uh tapes, and they were on the reel to reel tapes, you know? So, he would send me tapes once a week, and he would read the kids bedtime stories and—and tell 'em stories, you know, that he would make up and things like that. So, it—it was pretty nice because, you know, it—they heard him all the time. So, when she came over, he said, "Well Christy, where's your dad?" And, she pointed to it and said, "He's in there." So, sometimes kids get the wrong idea, but that's where she thought her daddy was.

4. [Capt Dick Ferree](#): Oh hey, that reminds me of something. [KG: What?] Um, our son was less than—excuse me—he was less than one year old, and we were invited—a guy in our squadron was marrying a member of the Irvine family. And, we were invited to the party. And, it was in Corona Del Mar. Um so, we had to get a sitter. Well, the base had a-uh—a nursery for—that you could drop your—your child off. For whatever reason—and I don't remember that—it was because it was a certain day of the week or whatever it was. The base nursery wasn't available. And, I'm a first lieutenant which is pretty low on the totem pole, but I walked into the guard house (laughs) and there were—they just happened to be the—were nearby the nursery, and a couple of sergeants there on duty said—and I explained to them, "Gee! I'm so—I'm really bummed because the-uh nursery is closed, and my wife and I wanted to go to this wedding." They said, Don't worry Lieutenant, we'll take care of him, and they did! (laughs) We didn't stay very long, but-uh— [KG: So, they watched him in the guard house.] Yeah, he spent—he spent a—a time in a guard house.
5. [Col Charles Quilter \[audio with photo montage\]](#): I think in my parents first, uh, uh, four years of their marriage, I think they were only together, like, um, fifteen or eighteen months, which is, uh, (laughs) you know, when you think about it that was a reality of a military existence in World War II...so, when the father goes away, and it was fathers in those days, you know, the mom steps up and runs things. And uh, you know, so, it created an interesting family dynamic.
6. [Mrs. Coralee Hobbs](#): I'll never forget that he sent me a—a picture, and it showed-um his helicopter. And, evidently, he'd been shot at, and it went—the mortar went right up between his legs. He said he could feel the heat on his legs. But, it didn't—and it—and it must've gone through the rotors of the helicopter he was in 'cause-uh he—it didn't—the helicopter didn't come down. (laughs) And, I was looking at that, and I thought, Somebody's trying to kill my husband who is a really nice man. They don't even know him, and they're trying to kill him. And, I guess that's war is about. It's-uh not easy to go through something like that. I really feel for the young wives that have to go through it with their husbands in the—in the Middle East. It's not easy.

Section three: That's the beauty of the Marine Corps family as well as the United States. It's perspectives that bring us together as a country. – Major Quang Pham

1. **Capt Dick Ferree:** As I've said before, the camaraderie thing is very real. And the reason is because you counted on that person, you knew you might face death, and that person was either going to be with you or not be with you. And once it was established that they were with you, were Marines, you don't ever forget that. That's a bond you don't ever forget.
2. **MSgt Bill Borne:** It's just—it's something that we have that nobody else has. Here again it's that *esprit de corps*. It's that closeness, it's that brotherhood that we have that no other service has. They try, but they'll never have it.
3. **Maj Quang Pham:** I think this project will help other people learn what the base meant to Orange County and the veteran community. It could be a kid like me listening to my dad's tapes years after he died. It could be a grandchild who's listening to somebody who flew in the Vietnam War or Korean War twenty years from now. It's treasured, and I think it's important that the veterans who are ahead of my generation get that time now before they're gone. Once again we're all going to bring different perspectives – that's the beauty of the Marine Corps family as well as the United States. It's perspectives that bring us together as a country.

Thank you to everyone who has participated in the
El Toro Marine Corps Air Station Oral History Project