

Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
Robert C. Fuller  
Radio Operator, Marine Corps, Cold War, Pre-Vietnam War  
2004

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**Fuller, Robert C.,** (b. 1942). Oral History Interview, 2004.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 40 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 40 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder)

Military Papers: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder)

**Abstract:**

Robert “Bob” Fuller, a resident of Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin, discusses his service as a radio operator with the 9<sup>th</sup> Marine Corps in Okinawa (Japan) between 1961 and 1964, during the Cold War and just before the Vietnam War. Fuller grew up on the south side of Chicago in Cook County (Illinois), but his family moved to Fox Lake (Wisconsin) just after he graduated high school. Inspired by two childhood friends, Fuller enlisted in the Marine Corps in Milwaukee (Wisconsin) in 1961. Fuller reflects that he hoped the Marine Corps would help him decide what to do with his life. He describes attending boot camp in San Diego (California), where he made lifelong friendships. He states he completed advanced rifle training at Camp Pendleton (California) then went overseas on the *USS Bexar* to Okinawa Island (Japan) via Hawaii and Guam. Fuller discusses at length his jungle training and escape and invasion training at Okinawa, where he was stationed for nineteen months. He touches upon operating the PRC-10 radio, commenting “I was quite proud because I was with the captain” in the field. Fuller notes that the Cuban Missile Crisis and assassination of President Kennedy occurred while he was in Okinawa. During his escape and survival training, Fuller slept in sleeping bags with no tents, carried M14s, and learned to “live off the land.” He addresses relations between officers and enlisted men, stating he did not respect the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenants who came straight from ROTC but he did respect seasoned NCOs like his platoon sergeant who had seen combat in Korea. Fuller repeatedly comments that his officers used their experiences fighting the Japanese and Koreans in World War II and the Korean War to convince the Marines to take jungle training seriously. In contrast, Fuller states “they did not discuss Vietnam or the Vietnamese” because the U.S. was not yet at war. After survival training in Okinawa, Fuller describes his snow training on Mount Fuji (Japan) and helicopter training in Mindanao (Philippines). Fuller explains his training was so varied because “we had to be ready for anything.” While Fuller never saw combat, he tells an unusual story of his entire Marine battalion landing in Cambodia in World War II landing craft. They stayed in Cambodia only three days. Fuller explains there were rumors the North Vietnamese had been terrorizing Cambodian villages, but he was later “told that the United States wasn’t supposed to be in Cambodia at that time.” He states his unit did not find any North Vietnamese and gave Cambodian villagers candy bars. In January 1964, Fuller returned to the U.S. and was discharged. He reveals he turned down reenlistment three times during the Vietnam War because he wanted to “make some money” and get married. He also states that, despite his patriotism, he did not feel “compelled to go back in at that time.” Next, Fuller discusses his reaction to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack and reveals he tried to reenlist but was too old. He expresses support for George W. Bush and the Iraq War and states his belief that the war will bring democracy to the

Middle East. Fuller mentions he belongs to the Marine Corps Association, and he gives several reasons for not joining the Marine Corps League or the American Legion. Finally, Fuller describes a hat he donated to the Wisconsin Veterans Museum, which a woman in Okinawa sewed for him out of Fuller's camouflage Marine poncho. Fuller also describes in detail his collection of Marine Corps posters and memorabilia and mentions he enjoys reading history books about the Marines and *Leatherneck* magazine.

**Biographical Sketch:**

Fuller (b. 1942) was born in Chicago (Illinois) and graduated from Oak Lawn Community High School. He moved to Fox Lake (Wisconsin) after high school and joined the Marine Corps in 1961. Fuller, a radio operator with the 9<sup>th</sup> Marine Corps Reserves, spent nineteen months training on Okinawa Island (Japan), Mount Fuji (Japan), and Mindanao (Philippines). In 1963, he participated in a three-day landing in Cambodia. After the service, Fuller returned to Fox Lake and married. He declined reenlistment and worked as a prison guard, then as a salesman, to support his family. He is a collector of Marine Corps posters and illustrations and is a member of the Marine Corps Association.

Interviewed by Jim Kurtz, 2004

Transcribed by Mary Lou Condon, Wisconsin Court Reporter, 2006

Transcript edited and abstract written by Darcy I. Gervasio, 2010

**Interview Transcript:**

- Jim: Today is October 7, 2004. My name is Jim Kurtz and I'm interviewing Robert C. Fuller on his experiences in the United States Marine Corps. Bob, where were you born?
- Fuller: Cook County, Illinois, 1942, June 14<sup>th</sup>.
- Jim: And where did you graduate from high school?
- Fuller: Oak Lawn Community High School in Oak Lawn, Illinois.
- Jim: And then how did you get to Wisconsin?
- Fuller: My parents moved up here upon graduation from high school, and I joined them for a few months before entering the Marine Corps.
- Jim: Did you enlist?
- Fuller: I enlisted.
- Jim: And why did you enlist in the Marine Corps?
- Fuller: I grew up on the southwest side of Chicago, which was a rather rough little neighborhood, and two of my best friends were brothers, one a year older and one two years older, they both went into the Marine Corps, and I always admired them and they seemed to do well. When they came home they looked so proud that I too wanted to be a Marine.
- Jim: Did you have any relatives that served in the Marine Corps previously?
- Fuller: No. All my relatives—my uncles and my father—all went to the Army.
- Jim: And so you've got a history of military in your family, then.
- Fuller: Yes.
- Jim: So when you joined the Marine Corps where did you join? Did you sign up in Beaver Dam?
- Fuller: No. I was working in Milwaukee going back to Fox Lake on weekends, and I signed up in downtown Milwaukee at the old post office when that was still in existence.

- Jim: And were you concerned about the draft at all, or is it just that you wanted to go in the Marine Corps?
- Fuller: I just wanted to be in the Marine Corps, yes. I figured I'd get a chance to find out what I wanted to do in life, and I looked to the Marine Corps to be of help there. I wanted to be a Marine.
- Jim: When did you enter the Marine Corps?
- Fuller: January of 1961.
- Jim: And where was your first duty assignment, where you went to Boot Camp?
- Fuller: San Diego. Recruit Depot, San Diego.
- Jim: So when you went to the Boot Camp, did you have to get there on your own?
- Fuller: No, we went there by train.
- Jim: So there was a group of people that enlisted.
- Fuller: Yes, from La Crosse, Wisconsin.
- Jim: Are there any things that are particularly memorable about your Boot Camp experience?
- Fuller: Well, it scared the hell out of you when you first walked through those gates and you had the drill instructors screaming at you, yes. But my "Type A" personality and my stubbornness made me think no one's going to get me down, I'm going to get through this. Thousands before me have, so I could too.
- Jim: Did you make any friendships in Boot Camp that were lasting?
- Fuller: I made very close personal relationships with two individuals. One lives in California, one in Detroit. We e-mail on a weekly basis and I've remained friends with them throughout my entire life.
- Jim: That's good. You mentioned that one of the people that was in Boot Camp with you ended up being a significant figure in the Marine Corps. Could you tell us about that?
- Fuller: Well, the name, as I'm sitting across from you right now, escapes me. But yes, he became the top sergeant in the Marine Corps later in his career.

Some of the other ones that I've gone through Boot Camp and had contact with have drifted off through the years, and I really don't know where some of them are. I know one is a police chief up in a small town in Wisconsin. Others have gone into being lawyers and doctors, et cetera, but I've lost contact with most of them. But I firmly believe that any of their successes along with any meager success that I've had, we all owe to the Marine Corps and what it taught us.

Jim: After you completed Boot Camp did you get further training?

Fuller: Yes. We went to advanced rifle training at Camp Pendleton. We took an escape and evasion school, and when we got over to Okinawa we had another escape and evasion school, plus we went to snow training in Japan on Mount Fuji. And we went into Mindanao in the Philippines on jungle training, et cetera. Is that what you're looking for?

Jim: Yes, exactly. What was your job in the Marine Corps?

Fuller: I was a radio operator carrying a PRC-10 and I was a company captain's radio operator. I carried a .45 and a PRC-10 radio which weighed 9.5 pounds plus an extra battery. And I was quite proud because I was with the captain on a constant basis whenever we were in the field.

Jim: What range did that radio have? How far could you—

Fuller: You're asking me to tax my memory. To my memory, we had constant problems with interference, so I would say a couple, three miles at the most. At the most.

Jim: And so you were communicating with the platoons and the battalion, I assume.

Fuller: That's correct. That's correct. We also had wiremen that would run out and bring wire back so the captain could talk to his lieutenants via telephone and via radio.

Jim: So you were at Camp Pendleton. Then did you go on leave before you went to—

Fuller: Yes. I was able to come home, I forgot the duration, it was anywhere from 14 to 21 days, I think it was 14 days, and then shipped out immediately upon return to California for Okinawa for 18 months.

Jim: Let's see, the Cuban missile crisis was going on at that time.

- Fuller: That's correct. And once we were on Okinawa, President Kennedy was also assassinated.
- Jim: Now, during the Cuban Missile Crisis were you at home here on leave or were you in Okinawa already?
- Fuller: I was either on ship or in Okinawa.
- Jim: So how did you get to Okinawa then?
- Fuller: Troop carrier.
- Jim: Do you remember the name of the boat?
- Fuller: U.S.S. Bexar, B-e-x-a-r.
- Jim: And how long did that take?
- Fuller: Boy, Jim, we stopped in Hawaii. We had a stop there. I think it took us well over two months to get to Okinawa.
- Jim: Did you make any other stops in the Pacific?
- Fuller: We stopped in Guam, to my memory.
- Jim: And did they let you off the ship?
- Fuller: In Guam, yes. We got off the ship in Hawaii. We had a very limited time off, R&R. We had some training on Guam. We did have some field training, guerilla warfare. We had a fake war on the island.
- Jim: And in this training was it focused at Vietnam or was it just—
- Fuller: No. Vietnam had not really flared up to that extent, at least not to our young minds. Maybe the officers knew more than what we knew, but the training was simply to get ready to be over there and to be able to go afloat. A Marine Corps battalion goes afloat for three months in the Pacific and ready to make a landing at any moment's notice. So I believe we were on Okinawa about six months before we went afloat, six or seven months.
- Jim: So what kind of training did you have that first six, seven months in Okinawa?
- Fuller: Well, we had constant jungle training. We would go out and be schooled on what to eat, what not to eat out of jungle, the snakes to eat, how to

escape. Not how necessarily methods to escape, but once you escaped how to evade the enemy and to live off the land.

Jim: What kind of sleeping arrangements did you have when you were in the field?

Fuller: We simply had sleeping bags. We had no tents, not on Okinawa. In Japan we had tents, but not in Okinawa. We spread them out wherever you could find a spot.

Jim: What was your impression of living in the jungle?

Fuller: Well, I was 18 years old, an athlete in high school, and I thought I was tough as nails. It didn't bother me. In fact, I liked it when others complained because I wanted to be a leader. I don't know if that's what you're looking for.

Jim: Sure.

Fuller: No, the jungle did not bother me.

Jim: Did you have any impressions of the animals, vegetation, ants, snakes?

Fuller: The ants bothered me whenever we ran into those. The snakes, I grew up with fields all around me on the south side of Chicago, and we would go after and grab and kill some of the grass snakes. So the snakes didn't necessarily bother me because I wasn't so cognizant of the poison that they had. I was more sure of myself rather than snakes. Rather foolish views, feelings.

Jim: Was your company and battalion pretty close to table of organization strength?

Fuller: Yes, we were.

Jim: And did any of the people that you served with in Okinawa stick in your mind?

Fuller: Yes. We had a sergeant that was a platoon sergeant who had fought in Korea, and he made a big impression on most of us that this wasn't fooling around, our jungle training, that you could very well some day be out there fighting the enemy, and hand-to-hand. So whenever we got instructions on hand-to-hand combat or bayonet training we certainly listened to him because he not only fought in a war but he also was stabbed with a bayonet and was shot. He had medals to prove that. So we kind of looked up at him like our big father and our guiding figure.



- Jim: And what was he, a gunnery sergeant?
- Fuller: Gunnery sergeant. There were others that impressed me. Certainly my drill instructors in Boot Camp, the head drill instructor, I can't remember the pronunciation of his name, but he was a big ol' brute of a guy, and he too had fought in Korea. So he impressed us with his toughness and scare tactics, and it was more to scare us into the fact that we'd better pay attention rather than scare you into being afraid of him.
- Jim: So was the training-- when you're talking about bringing the realism, was it just the history of the people that were fighting in Korea and World War II? Is that what they tried to drum into you?
- Fuller: Yes. There wasn't a lot of talk--as you referred to: Was Vietnam a problem at that time?-- where we were being prepared. They did not discuss Vietnam or the Vietnamese for whatever reasons at that time. But yes, there was a lot of talk about how the Japs fought in the Second World War and how the Koreans fought in Korea against us.
- Jim: So tell us a little about your training in Japan.
- Fuller: Well, I believe that every battalion that goes to Okinawa goes through this snow training, at least that's what I was led to believe. We traveled by ship to Yokohama, Japan, and then traveled by truck up to a site about halfway up Mount Fuji where there was a tent camp. And it was cold and snowy and icy, and if my memory is correct there was about eight of us to a tent. And we would go up the mountains every day at least five days a week. We were let out on R&R some weekends, but we took our snow training and warfare training up in the snow of Mount Fuji.
- Jim: Did they describe what mission the Marine Corps might have in snowy conditions? I mean, were they talking about—
- Fuller: Other than that you could be called any place or plain. And that I'm sure was the reason why we trained in the jungle and on the icy slopes of Mount Fuji.
- Jim: So they never talked about maybe, well, Korea I guess was another reality again and that type of thing.
- Fuller: Yes. Yes. We had to be ready for anything. I take it that was the purpose of Okinawa, to have all these battalions over there.
- Jim: So how many battalions were on Okinawa?

- Fuller: There were three battalions on Camp Schwab—I'm sorry, Camp Schwab was one battalion, Camp Hanson was a battalion, and then there was another base on the far southern tip of Marines that I believe was the third battalion. There were three battalions on Okinawa.
- Jim: Was the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne brigade there in Okinawa?
- Fuller: The Airborne was there, to be perfectly honest I don't know if it was the 173<sup>rd</sup>, I don't remember that.
- Jim: Yeah, that was them. Did you have any training or conflict with Army people there?
- Fuller: No. It seemed like the northern jungle of Okinawa was kind of Marine Corps territory, and they had camps set up up there for the training purposes. Whether the Army used it or not I don't really recall ever being told that. But no, we did not have any conflict with them, nor did we train with them, which was, as I reflect back, kind of unusual.
- Jim: What was the equipment that you had, a typical Marine rifleman?
- Fuller: The rifleman at that time still carried the M1 rifle. Only one time we were issued M16s we boarded troop carriers to go over to Cambodia, off the shores of Cambodia. And at that particular time on ship they took our M1s, we turned our M1s in and they gave us M16s, which really did upset most of the Marines because we had never fired an M16 and here we are given ammo.
- Jim: Was it M1s or M14s?
- Fuller: Probably 14s. The 16s came after the 14s. Yeah, we were given the 14s. And we did go into the jungle with the 14s but never made contact with anybody.
- Jim: So you did land in Cambodia.
- Fuller: Well, I've been told that the United States wasn't supposed to be in Cambodia at that time, but we did go on shore into Cambodia. We were in there about three days, came back to shore and boarded ship.
- Jim: Can you describe that? How did you land, in landing crafts like World War II?
- Fuller: Yes, we had the World War II landing crafts.
- Jim: And what was your mission there when you were in Cambodia?

Fuller: Well, I believe it was two-fold. We were told that we were going in for a training session, but that the Vietnamese, the North Vietnamese, were in Cambodia and they were doing damage to villages and perhaps other things, and that we were going in there to see if there was anything we could do. But we only went so far and never made contact. We were in some villages, but there wasn't any problem.

Jim: Was the Cambodian Army attached to you?

Fuller: No, we were alone.

Jim: Did you have interpreters with you?

Fuller: Yes.

Jim: Were they Cambodians or Marines?

Fuller: They were Cambodians, or Vietnamese that could speak—

Jim: And was this a whole battalion or just your company?

Fuller: Our whole battalion was aboard ship, and I believe the entire battalion went down the nets and in. Now, we didn't all go deep into the jungle. Many of them made a base. It still puzzles me that I'm told, I forgot where I was told this, but it was another veteran that the United States was not supposed to enter Cambodian territory.

Jim: What year was this?

Fuller: About '62, perhaps '63, maybe '63.

Jim: What was your captain's reaction to this? You said you were his radio operator.

Fuller: Well, I told the captain before I went down the net that I wouldn't go down the net with a .45, I wanted a weapon, and he got me a 14. Other than that he was strictly a Marine and gave orders and did not give any indication that he was upset about anything.

Jim: So you went out, you landed, and so you spent three nights in Cambodia.

Fuller: If my memory is correct.

Jim: Were you patrolling? Did you go out ten clicks this way and go to villages?

- Fuller: No, we kind of made a forward move through the area and made camp, and made another move, made camp, waited, and went back and stayed overnight and went back to the water.
- Jim: And did you have any contact with the Cambodian people?
- Fuller: Yes, we hit a couple. When I say hit, we did go through a couple villages, but they were friendly. We gave them candy bars.
- Jim: Do you know what part of Cambodia you were in?
- Fuller: No, I don't.
- Jim: Was there any scuttlebutt after you left? Were there any rumors or anything about what was going on?
- Fuller: Jim, to my memory no. We went from there back to Subic Bay and had a hell of a time on shore on R&R.
- Jim: So that was part of your deployment on a ship that they put you into Cambodia when your battalion—
- Fuller: That was part of it. We did go into Mindanao, Philippines. I got helicoptered up into the northern jungle area of Mindanao, which is a high mountaintop, along with I would say either one or two platoons with us. I was with the captain, and we came down from the top of the mountain of Mindanao down to the water and going through villages; very, very poor people living on that island. We lost some men on there, too; snakebite and heat exhaustion.
- Jim: Going back to Cambodia again, were there any aircraft supporting your mission?
- Fuller: No. Not to my knowledge, no. We went on a landing craft and came back in it.
- Jim: Did you have vehicles?
- Fuller: No.
- Jim: Did you have c-rations or did they have a mess hall set up?
- Fuller: C-rations.

Jim: Did your uniform have all the insignia on and everything like that so if somebody saw you—

Fuller: Yes.

Jim: So this was not that type of an operation.

Fuller: No.

Jim: And you said there were no shots fired or anything like that?

Fuller: No.

Jim: Did you see any animals? There are tigers in Cambodia and elephants.

Fuller: I didn't, no.

Jim: Because I had a chance to see that.

Fuller: Did you really?

Jim: Yeah. A tiger in the wild is pretty impressive.

Fuller: Wow. Did it come at you?

Jim: It was in a tent by an air strip and ran out the back end of the tent. It was cool.

Fuller: Geez.

Jim: So when you were in the Philippines on Mindanao, there's been some guerilla problems in the Philippines, were there any issues there?

Fuller: Not at that time, no. What we were told was this was strictly a training exercise. We did not have live ammo. We had all of our weapons, but we did not have live ammo.

Jim: Did you work with artillery or anything like that in your training?

Fuller: No, not to my memory, other than Boot Camp.

Jim: Did you do any helicopter training?

Fuller: Yes. We made a lot of landings on the two helicopters. It was six or eight to a helicopter. In fact, that's how we got to the top of Mindanao. We

actually went down the ropes from helicopters, but then we walked back to the water.

Jim: So did you do any helicopter work in the jungle? I mean, I know the Philippines is jungle, but like in Okinawa was any of the helicopter training there?

Fuller: The only training we got, if my memory is correct, in Okinawa was getting on helicopter, and being taken to another spot, and going down the ropes, and spreading out in an attack mode in a perimeter. But no, other than that we didn't actually take the helicopters into a northern jungle area and go down. It was strictly training purposes.

Jim: So did you spend your entire enlistment, then, in Okinawa after training?

Fuller: Yes. I was in three years, so I was over in Okinawa about 19 months by the time I got back. Then I only had, I believe I got out a month early, came back here and spent a month in the States, and was discharged.

Jim: And you say again that there was no real—when did you leave Okinawa? Was it in '64?

Fuller: I was discharged in January or February of '64, so I came back the end of '63.

Jim: And there was no discussion about Vietnam, because President Diem was killed when you were in Okinawa?

Fuller: No, they tried to convince us to re-up. In fact, I was offered another stripe to stay in Okinawa. I chose not to, and I came back here and they again tried to get you to re-up, and I decided I wanted a discharge and go make some money. We weren't concerned. I don't recall anybody being excited about Vietnam at that time.

Jim: Have we covered everything in your active duty experience? I know one thing. What was your impression of the Marine Corps officer corps?

Fuller: Well, in all due respect I didn't respect many of the lieutenants. It seemed like after 18 months in Okinawa I came back to the States and we went out on training, and it seemed like, to my feelings, that I knew a hell of a lot more than these lieutenants did, and all they were interested in was being the boss. I'm talking about second lieutenants in particular, no offense. From first lieutenants on up, it seemed like they had more experience and they either straightened their act out and knew they wanted to be a career Marine.

I think these second lieutenants, to defend them a little bit, came out of ROTC and came with the I'm-in-charge type of feeling, and many of them didn't have the maturity, I don't think, to respect the fact that the line Marines, some of them were two, three, four, five, six years' experience, should have been treated with a little bit more respect. They forced the respect on themselves, which is not the way to get respect.

Jim: Right. That's absolutely true. What about the NCOs?

Fuller: The NCOs I had all the respect in the world. I went to Okinawa with a bunch of NCOs that had served three or four years and re-upped, and many of them were in there 10, 12, 15 years. So they knew the story, they knew how to treat us, they knew how to get respect from us. So many of them you would've followed anywhere. I can't say the same, other than strictly respecting lieutenants' orders, that you'd want to follow some of these second lieutenants at that time.

Jim: You got out of the Marine Corps because you said you just wanted to make some money and get on with your life.

Fuller: And get married. Yes.

Jim: What was your reaction when the Vietnam War heated up? Were you tempted to go back?

Fuller: Well, I'm trying to think of my feelings. I was 22, 23 years old, engaged, and I had two recruiters come to my house. I had a small home in Fox Lake, Wisconsin, that I was renting, and two recruiters came from Beaver Dam. And they came back three times trying to get me to come back in, I'm assuming because I was a radio operator and Vietnam had broken out, and they probably needed that kind of expertise, if you will. I chose not to because I was a prison guard at the time, and I thought that was going to be my military career. I didn't stay there more than a year-and-a-half. But my feelings towards Vietnam at that time I didn't, although I was a patriotic person, I didn't feel that I was compelled to go back in at that time.

Jim: What was your reaction later when the anti-war movement was heating up?

Fuller: I was extremely upset over the whole situation. I probably came close to getting myself hurt by interfering with some of that stuff, but I was very upset over the whole thing, as I am today with some of the things that are going on and being said.

Jim: How did 9-11 affect you?

- Fuller: Well, my wife and I were dumbfounded that the enemy could come on our soil. And I talked to my wife the night after, on the 12<sup>th</sup>, all the night long. We sat up and talked and I said I'm obligated to go and do what I can do to protect our country. She agreed, and I tried to re-up, as I think I mentioned to you downstairs, and to no avail because of my age.
- Jim: But did they offer you anything?
- Fuller: Not as an enlisted person. They offered me the opportunity to work for them if that unit was called up to Iraq. They would need people to man the phones, deal with the relatives, et cetera.
- Jim: Do you belong to any veterans' groups?
- Fuller: I just belong to the Marine Corps Association, and I receive the *Leatherneck* magazine on a monthly basis ever since I was discharged.
- Jim: Do they have meetings that you go to or reunions?
- Fuller: No, Jim, I haven't followed up on all that. One makes excuses for his whole life, and I was a salesman my whole life and traveled on a weekly basis five days a week with two growing daughters, so I just never got involved with organizations that I couldn't give 100% to. And it wouldn't have been fair to my family or my children.
- Jim: I've got to just turn—[End of Tape 1, Side A]— You said you're kind of upset about some things that are going on right now. Could you share those with us?
- Fuller: Well, without getting political, I am a conservative Republican, Bush-lover, and I believe that what we did in Iraq and what it's going to do for the future of the world is a necessary element of what's happening today in our country. And if you read, as I have, some of the letters that have been forwarded to me via e-mail from soldiers and Marines in Iraq, and hearing what they say are really happening over there, you get extremely emotional about what our damn—I don't know where you lean, Jim, but I don't mind saying this—the newspapers, the CNN, the CBS, ABC people are constantly reminding us how bad everything is, taking no account whatsoever of what we've accomplished as soldiers and Marines in Iraq for our country. Certainly I don't like the fact that there wasn't any WMD, as every other American, but I don't believe that we went there with any lies being told us. And what we are accomplishing there, if we're successful, will bring some turnaround of democracy in that part of the world.



- Jim: Do you know anybody who is in active military right now? I mean any of your friends' children or anything like that?
- Fuller: No. My neighbor's son was a Marine, but he's been discharged.
- Jim: Now, you mentioned that you're retired. Have you been tempted to join any other veterans' organizations or anything like that?
- Fuller: Well, I thought about two organizations which I haven't pursued up until the time I'm talking to you. One was the Marine Corps League, but quite frankly I've checked into the Marine Corps League, and although they do a lot for the Marine Corps birthday, it's strictly kind of a party thing, and I'm not interested in that. I look at the American Legion, and although they need a lot of help, I see it dwindling with the old World War II-Korean people either too sick or too old or are dead. I thought maybe I could do some good there. So I have not pursued it, but it's been a thought that I've had the last couple months.
- Jim: Do you do any reading about military affairs and stuff like that, other than *Leatherneck* magazine?
- Fuller: Yes, I read Griffin, who writes a lot of the military books. I do have a volume. I've read the whole history of the Marine Corps. I do read some Army paperbacks that have been put out, *Sniper*, a story about the top sniper in both the Marine Corps and in the Army. Is that what you mean?
- Jim: Yeah. Right. So that's kind of a continuing interest.
- Fuller: Yes. Yes. I like to read about the heroics and the patriotism.
- Jim: Could you relate the story about the hat that you are donating to the museum today?
- Fuller: Yes. In Okinawa we were given ponchos and they were camouflaged ponchos with a hood on them. And after you use those, many times in the jungle they get ripped up, scratched, et cetera, so many of us took our ponchos and had the local Okinawan women make us caps and shirts from the scraps of the big ponchos. And this hat was made by a woman on Okinawa for me. She made me a hat and a shirt, and the shirt is long gone but I've kept this hat, and it's in top shape. And I wore it through all my training on Okinawa, I wore it in Mindanao, and I've worn it many years hunting pheasant and duck here in the States.
- Jim: The other thing that I heard you describe when we were talking to the archives people is that you've got quite an extensive collection of pictures about the Marine Corps. Could you just kind of describe how that's fit in

your home and all of that, in particular the one about the raising of the flag that got moved.

Fuller: Yes. I have through the years collected certain posters and sketches and other things about the Marine Corps. I have in particular the raising of the flag, a 25 x 38 colored poster of the raising of the flag at Iwo Jima. And I've had that in my home ever since I've been married, and Jim and I are chuckling over it because I've been married 38 years and for the first 25 years it hung in our bedroom against my wife's reading light. And at the 25<sup>th</sup> she said it was time for me to take the Marine Corps out of the bedroom, so I have that in our rec room. But alongside of it I have placed a small 8 x 10 Marine Corps hymnal, which has the raising of the flag on the cover of the hymnal. And it has about 12 pages of notes on it for piano player, and it's quite old, it's from the Second World War. So I have those two side-by-side in the rec room. In my bathroom, I have a 25 x 38 picture depicting a combat soldier, a combat Marine in the Second World War, and he has his hand raised and the caption reads, "Let's go." He has a fixed bayonet and his rifle at the ready. That's one of my favorites because it's orange background and the Marine sticks out. Alongside of that I have a black-and-white sketch that was done. It's an original of a Second World War Marine depicting the same type of mode, combat ready, tired and weary. I also have a framed picture, it's about 25 x 25 or 38 x 38, it's quite large, of the original emblem of the Marine Corps, which is quite different from the globe and anchor, and that is another print I bought from the Marine Corps Association.

Jim: Is there anything else that you'd like to relate to us, Bob, about your military experiences?

Fuller: Yes. I'm 62 years old and I went into the Marine Corps when I was 19, 18 going on 19, and I firmly believe that what the military, and particularly the Marine Corps, taught me on discipline and adjusting, compensating and overcoming all obstacles has given me a way in life that I live by. I believe that any semblance of success that I've had in my sales and sales manager career I owe to the Marine Corps because I never gave up, which the Marine Corps teaches you. I've learned to adjust to other people's attitudes and to compensate for their needs, my needs, by going a neutral way. It doesn't always work because of my stubbornness, but I think through and through 75% of what I've done is strictly due to what the Marine Corps taught me.

Jim: So it's accurate to say you're proud that you are a Marine.

Fuller: I'm proud to be a Marine. I'm going to be buried in dress blues, I have a military burial set up, I have my plot. I have my headstone up already, and it will say United States Marine.

Jim: Okay. Thank you very much.

Fuller: You're welcome.

**[End of Interview]**