

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Marine Corps Reserve Project

Personal Experiences

O. H. 277

BEVERLEY LAW

Interviewed

by

David Arms

on

February 22, 1976

## BEVERLEY LAW

Beverley Law was born in Millboro, Virginia, on June 18, 1934, the son of Stanley and Myrtle Law. He attended Rochester Senior High in Rochester, Pennsylvania, and entered the military service in 1954. His association with the Marine Reserves began in 1957 and he has been a platoon sergeant, company gunnery sergeant and chief clerk. In 1969 Mr. Law was promoted to warrant officer and executive officer of Motor Transport and Maintenance Company.

Mr. Law currently resides in Rochester, Pennsylvania. He is employed as an assistant chief clerk in the Tubular Products Division of Babcock and Wilcox after working for Rheem Manufacturing Company from 1942 until 1967. A member of Rochester's Second Baptist Church, Mr. Law is also affiliated with the King Solomon Lodge #78, F.&A.M. and the Civic Improvement League.

Jeane Ontko

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEWEE: BEVERLEY LAW  
INTERVIEWER: David Arms  
SUBJECT: Marine Background, social and racial prejudice  
DATE: February 22, 1976

A: This is an interview with Chief Warrant Officer Third, Beverley Law, for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program by David Arms at the Marine Corps Reserve Center, New Castle, Pennsylvania on February 22, 1976 at approximately 3:30 in the afternoon.

Mr. Law, could you just give me some brief background information on yourself and in your career in the Marine Corps? Where are you from? Let's start with that.

L: I'm from Rochester, Pennsylvania. I'm currently employed in the Tubular Products Division of Babcock and Wilcox Company in Copper, Pennsylvania where I am the assistant chief clerk.

I entered the service in January of 1957, went to boot camp at Paris Island, South Carolina and upon graduation I was transferred from there to Cherry Point, North Carolina, 2nd Rate Air Craft Wing. I spent the majority of my time at Cherry Point, North Carolina, serving in various capacities in the operations and training section. I was discharged from the regular service in April of 1957. I didn't become affiliated with the reserve unit until approximately April of 1959, at which time this was a 75-millimeter sky sweep anti-aircraft artillery battery. At that time I was a sergeant and my primary responsibility was as a platoon sergeant for the flying platoon. I held this position for approximately a year, at which time I took over the duties as company gunnery sergeant.

In 1960 we went to Twenty-nine Palms, California, for our

annual training period. Upon completion of our annual training duty in 1960, I took over the duties as chief clerk for the company. I stayed chief clerk till approximately 1966 when at that time I assumed the duties as company first sergeant.

In 1969 I was promoted to, or was elected for and was promoted to warrant officer and assumed the duties as executive officer of Motor Transport and Maintenance Company, which was a redesignation from the sky sweep in 1967. From 1969 up to the current time, I still hold the position of executive officer. Of course the company is now a service company which consists of a headquarters section, a motor transport platoon, dispersing platoon, repro section, and a photo section.

A: About how many people are there in the service company?

L: I would say about 145.

A: Now are these, the majority of them, mandatory people that had joined the reserves just recently to maybe escape the Vietnam conflict? Or are the majority of them older people?

L: Well, I think the majority of them that enlisted probably to escape the Vietnam conflict are gone now. Yes, we do have mandatory participants who maybe because of schooling had decided to go into the reserves. And then I would say approximately a third of our company are prior servicemen.

A: Now you say they joined the Marine Reserve for schooling and everything. Is this a program the Marine Corps Reserves is pursuing actively do you think?

L: They are pursuing it actively within limits. I think right now it is one of the best programs I have seen for awhile. They had to curtail because of funds, but it was similar to the 120 day delayed programs whereby a senior could enlist in the reserves and attend meetings while he is still in school. Then upon completion of school, of course, he would be going to his initial active duty for training. I think in the last three or four years we have started to get a better quality of people because we are reaching those who have high school educations, which, of course, is preferable to our high school dropouts. But this way I think that they have made a giant step forward as far as getting the caliber of people that want to do a job and will do a good job for you.

A: Now you're a warrant officer and you came up through the ranks. What kind of an education do you have?

L: Well basically, I have a high school education. I have completed probably twenty semester hours of college work.

A: Now how did you become a warrant? Did you take a test?

L: No. The Marine Corps and the Marine Corps Reserve has a Warrant Officer Commissioning Program. In the Marine Corps Reserve you are selected based upon an application for consideration. Then a board screens your individual records. That's the way I was selected.

A: You had to apply for it though?

L: I had to apply.

A: What made you apply? What motivated you to apply for a commission?

L: Basically I would say, it runs back to my basic philosophy of life, "Anything worth doing is worth doing well." As an enlisted man I felt that I could better myself by being an officer. I am not an individual who just likes to sit back and let opportunities go by, so I try to better myself.

A: Now, do you think that your Marine Corps training or your Marine Corps responsibilities have helped you at all in your civilian job, or your full-time job?

L: I think the association and close contact with members of various walks of life has helped tremendously. Basically, I've got an insight into other individuals' viewpoints by counseling sessions. And I've been able to better develop my individual abilities, which in turn I know is positively reflected in my civilian occupation.

A: Have you ever had any conflict with your civilian occupation and your military responsibilities?

L: No, I never had any conflict.

A: Do you find that the firm that you work for has been most cooperative?

L: Well, ever since I have been working for them they have been extremely cooperative. I have yet to ask for any time off to do training time or annual training duty that it wasn't gladly given.

A: They encourage you to participate in these activities?

L: Yes, definitely.

- A: Now in your conversion from an enlisted man to the officer ranks, have you found that there was an adjustment problem of any kind? Or was there an adjustment?
- L: Yes, there is definitely an adjustment. After having been an enlisted man for approximately eleven years and then going into the officer rank, there has to be a little adjustment. I do not think that the adjustment was hard to make. But it's an adjustment in the way the individual carries himself, and the adjustment is made as easy or as hard as the individual permits it. It is not a difficult adjustment at all.
- A: Now as a reservist, when you go and participate in your summer training camp or anything that you have visited, active Marine Corps facilities, do you think that the Marine Corps reservist is discriminated against by the active duty forces or anything?
- L: No, for awhile maybe I did think that. Even when I was on active duty, I used to see reservists come in and I would think, "Oh, there go the two-week warriors." But the more I became involved in the reserve unit, that along with my association with officers and staff and those enlisted on the regular side of the establishment, there might be a little animosity or prejudice or what have you, but whole scale I would say no.
- A: Now, do you think that there has been any racial prejudice in the Marine Corps? Let's get to the reserve part, in the Marine Corps Reserve?
- L: I can only speak for this company. I have been a member of this company, like I said, since 1969. When I first joined there were approximately four blacks here. At one time, I was the only black here. At that time I was also the executive officer. And as I have stated before, I have served as the first sergeant of the unit. I personally have not experienced any difficulties whatsoever. Maybe there have been some, but as far as my personal experience, I can't actually say there has been. I have always been well received. I would get invited out to various individuals' houses or we have always had parties and gotten along well. No racial slurs. Like I said, it could be a covert thing, but then again I can only go with what has affected me directly.
- A: In regards to the social aspects of the Marine Corps Reserve, do the Marine Corps Reserve officers have a social life? Do they get together once in awhile?
- L: Yes, we get together. We usually have a Christmas party, our Marine Corps birthday ball. But after drill weekends

we usually get together for an hour or two and sit around and maybe talk about the day's activities or what has transpired over the past month and drink a cool beer. We have a roast dinner and this applies to our officers.

A: Is there a big separation between the officers and the enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserve?

L: That's a question that is really hard to answer. Basically, I do not think so. I think there is the necessary separation. But as far as there being a big separation, I really can't feel that way because I have known on various occasions that enlisted people have needed help that would even have a tendency to call me at my house, or any time that I'm away from here to seek my advice or my help. So like I said, it would be really difficult to answer that because you would have to base it more or less on the individuals themselves.

A: Now you have been with this unit quite awhile here even though it has changed functions, et cetera. Has the unit been accepted by the community here in the New Castle area?

L: Yes, I believe it is, I believe it has. I know over the years that I've been associated with the unit, we've had no friction with the local populace.

A: Does the unit here participate in any civic or community affairs or events?

L: Well, we do on a limited scale. Of course, our main objective is training. We have to qualify our people for their various MOS [Months of Service], which we have quite a few. So anything we do as far as civic action has to be a limited scale. But where possible, like parades, et cetera, we will get involved, provide color details, or maybe help out with a funeral, et cetera.

A: You mentioned that your main responsibility is training. What kind of training? Is it mostly classroom or on the job or what kind of training do you conduct at a reserve center?

L: We conduct a combination of both classroom instruction and on the job training. Classroom instruction is probably minimal and it is only to the extent where you needed extra technical advice on a piece of equipment. Right now the majority of our training is on the job training.

A: What type of things do you think make the average reservist come to drill? Is it for the money, patriotism? Why does a Marine Corps Reservist come to drill?

- L: That's a good question. Once again, I don't think that you can categorize and put them into two categories. Once again, I don't think that you can categorize the individuals. We have some here, especially our staff NCO's [noncommissioned officers], who come because they are motivated, and they're motivated by probably the desire to affiliate. We have some that come here because of the money. We have some who come here basically because they signed a contract and that's the way they are going to put in their obligation. I don't think even if you used two categories on it, it would be hard to do. But probably three or four categories would break up why they would really be here.
- A: Speaking of this particular unit, would you say that the morale is good? What I am leading to is a couple more questions and I just want to get some basics.
- L: Yes, I would say that the morale is good.
- A: Do you think morale at drill is affected by public opinion on the outside? In other words, how they look at the military?
- L: I think that public opinion has a lot to do with the morale.
- A: How about the latest thing in the 1977 budget? Recently in the newspaper, they were talking about cutting the reserves rather badly. Do you think this affects your performance and the performance of the reservists?
- L: It would affect our performance, and I am speaking of the Reserves as a whole, if the budget is cut to a certain extent where we cannot get those needed equipment and supplies that we need to train with. It is plain and simple that if you have nothing . . . or like the old song says, "Nothing from nothing leaves nothing." If you have nothing to work with, then there's no training or meaningful training to be received.
- A: That brings another question to mind. Do you think that your operating budget at the present time is satisfactory to conduct the training?
- L: Yes, I'm only speaking once again for right here, with this location. Yes, our budget is satisfactory to conduct training.
- A: Are you getting what you're asking for when you go in for it?
- L: That is right.



A: Do you really think that the training that is conducted here keeps them ready to go, keeps the reservist ready to go?

L: Past experience has proven, and I am talking about when I was taking this unit or any of the reserve units that I have been affiliated with, going back in time when this was a 75 millimeter sky sweep outfit. When the reserves go on active duty, they perform as good if not better than their counterparts. We have been told many times by various people that the status of our training is excellent.

A: You mentioned about going on your two-week training period or your summer camp type thing. Could you just give me an idea, what do you do when you go to summer camp? What type of training takes place?

L: Basically, when you go to summer camp, we integrate right in with the regular Marine Corps. We are performing those duties that on the regular side of the house would be performed. For instance, motor transport, if there is a motor transport section who is our host unit, our motor transport section will mesh right in with their motor transport and perform those duties the same as if they were regular counterparts. The same with the various sections of the company. So actually what you have here probably is a regular company plus.

A: Now when you go, do you take your own vehicles when you go?

L: No, we do not take our own vehicles. Once again, I think going and transporting them as far as we have to go, which would be North Carolina, is a little bit out of the question.

A: How do you get there?

L: Well, usually by chartered aircraft.

A: Do they land right here and pick you up, is that it?

L: Well, we can either fly to Youngstown or we can fly out of the Greater Pittsburgh Airport.

A: When you arrive down there, do they billet the unit separately or with the other?

L: No, the unit is billeted separately. By all means we try to maintain unit integrity.

A: How many officers are there in this unit?

L: Right now we have ten officers.

A: Now the commanding officer would be a what?

L: Captain.

A: A captain. Now you're a CW03, I am sure there must be officers in between. How do you end as being the executive?

L: That's a good question. I would say basically because of my experience with the reserve establishment and my knowledge of training requirements and administration. I had a chance to, by coming up through the ranks, be involved in these various areas whereby most of our officers who are just joining have never had this chance to develop this expertise in these various areas.

A: Now what kinds of jobs do they perform?

L: Actually they are probably staff jobs. For instance, the dispersing officer, reproduction officer, photograph officer, they are all basically staff jobs.

A: Is that their specialty, or are they just assigned those jobs?

L: The majority of them, it's their speciality. We do have some who are not at this time actually qualified to fill some of the lesser jobs, but who are entering in-training assignments.

A: Now you could be qualified in one job and then go to another job and get an in-training assignment, is that it?

L: (No response)

A: I see. Now again getting back to when you go on your training duty, where are the officers billeted?

L: In the officers' quarters.

A: Do you eat with the regular enlisted, or do you have a separate mess?

L: We have an officers' mess.

A: Now do you take any field exercises when you are down there?

L: We usually try to spend several evenings during the course of a two-week period out in the field and in the evenings doing some of the things we can't do because of

our limited area here in New Castle. We accomplish quite a few of our central subjects training, we accomplish that on other fields.

A: Central subjects, could you give me an idea of what that would be?

L: NDC Warfare Company, gas mask drills basically, guiding and patrolling, night compass watches, and stuff in this area.

A: Now even though a man might be a specialist in photography or something like that, does he have to requalify as a regular Marine carrying a rifle type thing every once in awhile?

L: Yes, we are required to requalify with the rifle at least once every three years. We here in Company B go out for the requalification every year.

A: How about the officers, do they have to qualify with any special weapon or anything?

L: Well yes, their TO weapon, whatever it may be, would be a .45, which the majority of them are the .45, but once again we go out there right along with the troops and we fire the rifle for qualification. Whatever they do we do too.

A: I know that this is a tough question, but maybe I can ask you now and you can give me an answer a little bit later after thinking about it. Is there any particular memorable training period that you can remember that anything specific happened, either good or bad? Can you give me an example of what kind of duties that you do while you are on training duty?

L: Probably the most memorable occasion I had was back in 1960 when I was company gunnery sergeant. We were out at Twenty-nine Palms. Of course, being new with the unit and new as a company gunnery, I was all hot to trot. But the unit was highly praised for never missing a movement. And when I talk about never missing a movement, when they were designated to be on a range at a specific time, we were always there. Maybe one or two minutes early, we were never late. Basically, I thought this was exceptional for a reserve unit. My commanding officer at the time was Major Scott. He had nothing but praise for my ability to begin over there. He thought we would never be able to make our training commitments on time. But I've always enjoyed that summer camp. And all of them really leave something in your mind, good or bad, but all of them leave something for you to remember them by.

A: Now Marines are supposedly amphibious, et cetera. Have you had any experience at sea, on board ships or anything like that?

L: Me personally?

A: Yes.

L: I have been to Amphibious School in Middle Creek, but besides that I've never been out on board a ship.

A: When you come to drill, do you stay here at the center for a weekend or do you go home at night on drill weekend?

L: It all depends on how tired I am when I get in. I say the majority of the time I will stay.

A: You stay here?

L: Right.

A: What do you do when you do stay, in your off hours, when there aren't any drills going? I mean, do the people get together or do they sit by themselves? Is there a comaraderie in the Marine Corps Reserve?

L: Yes, I think so. Usually after a reserve meeting there are several local pubs here we can visit. Quite a few of the troops, and of course, our officers and staff NCO's stop by to shoot the breeze for awhile.

A: Being an active duty type myself, it always interested me the fact that they all seemed to stick together. In other words, you might have all kinds of hassles down at the office, but boy when you are out on the street and someone says, "Hey, Marine," everybody kind of gathers together and sticks by one another. Do you think there is that much type in the reserve as much as there is on active duty?

L: I definitely think so. As a matter of fact, I've seen it in action more than once. I have had occasions where I have met people who have been members of this reserve unit. Even though they took their discharge and got out, we have been in bars or something and someone will make a crack on who I am. But we always had a tendency to stick together.

A: How does your family accept your Marine life? I mean do they encourage you?

L: I can't say that they actually encourage me, but then again, on the other hand, they don't discourage me. This is something that I want to do and I'm going to do it.

- A: Okay, why the Marine Corps? Why the military service to start with and then why the Marine Corps?
- L: Oh, that's a good question. As a matter of fact, I never really thought about it. When I joined the military service I joined basically because a good friend of mine who I have been raised with all my life was going. At the time, we thought it was a good idea. Why the Marine Corps? Probably just because the Marine Corps recruiter was standing there when we decided to make up our minds to go. I really can't say, but he was the first person that we saw and we went in there and decided that we wanted to go.
- A: I suspect that you've seen a large change in the Marine Corps Reserve in the last ten or fifteen years. Do you think that it is getting better, worse, or what do you see in the future too in that area?
- L: Yes, there has been a big change. I think in a lot of instances it has been for the better because of, like I said, the caliber of people that we are now attracting. I just hope that we continue to improve as we go along. I see no pitfalls unless we ourselves cause them. Like I said, right now we are getting people in, and it seems to me these people are here because they want to be here, which makes a big difference. The majority of them, mostly speaking about the younger set, when they are given a job to do, it seems to me like they are doing it with a lot of enthusiasm and this is what you need. So if we continue to attract this caliber of people, I don't see why we shouldn't get better as the years go along.
- A: Now we've covered quite a bit and we've been talking about forty minutes. I was just wondering, is there anything that's buring in your mind that you maybe wanted to tell me that I haven't asked you concerning any aspects of the reserves?
- L: I can't think of anything.
- A: There is one last question that I always almost forget to ask. In your relations in the reserves and everything, have you ever had any relationships with any other reserve branches or anything like that?
- L: As far as the unit is concerned?
- A: Well, in other words, have you ever met with the Navy or the Air Force or anything like that? Have you ever had any interservice working or anything?
- L: Personally I haven't.

A: What has always been your idea of the other services, an honest one?

L: Well, if you want an honest one, I will tell you this: Once again, I think that there is nothing wrong with any service. And it is what the individuals put into it what they are going to get out. A person tells me he is in the Army, the Navy, or what have you, and just like I told some of my own people here this morning, I don't care what you are, just do the best at whatever it is. I can't say that I hate anybody. It probably seems right coming from an individual like me, but I don't know, it has just been my basic philosophy of life. I just can't go around because you have a different uniform on, I don't like you, or call you sloppy. A man is a man, wherever he may be.

A: Okay, thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW