Timothy Taylor oral history interview

Lieutenant Colonel, United States Marine Corps
Persian Gulf War

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Abstract: Retired Lieutenant Colonel Timothy Taylor (1971-1992) discusses his experience as a supplies officer in the United States Marine Corps during the Persian Gulf War following the invasion of Kuwait by Iraqi forces. He recalls his journey to becoming a ranking officer in the Marines. Having close brushes with death on two occasions and sharing his perspective of the Mayaguez Incident in 1975. He remembers the stress that came with the towering responsibilities that he experienced during his time in service and how that eventually affected him once he returned home to his family. Stress that he states he slowly overcame with time, allowing him to thoroughly enjoy his time in retirement, traveling the world with his wife.

Transcript Notes:

Transcriber:	TEMI
Abstract by:	Gerald Sayles III, VWM Intern
Additional Notes:	

TT: Timothy Taylor
SM: Sylvia Marshall

Interview Transcript:

SM (00:01):

Great. We are now recording. Okay. Today is June 8th, 2023. This is Sylvia Marshall, the archivist at the Virginia War Memorial interviewing Timothy Taylor for the Oral History Project. Well, one, thank you for being here. And I just want to start with, can I get you to state your full name, what branch in the military you served in and the years you served?

TT (00:27):

Oh, yeah. Timothy Taylor. I'm a retired Lieutenant Colonel in the United States Marine Corps. I served from1971 through 1992. The only combat action I had, which wasn't direct combat action, but the only combat area that I served in was in the Gulf War in Saudi Arabia, where I was from August 15th, '91 until, or 1990, until sometime late April, beginning of May, I don't remember exactly, to 1991. It was quite honestly, when I came home from there, I don't remember much from the first couple of months I was back. It was just a total recovery period. Anyway.

SM (01:21):

And actually, let's start in the beginning. Can you tell me about when and where you were born and what your life was like before joining the Military?

TT (01:28):

Oh, sure. Well, I was born in Southern California. Actually Riverside County. And when I was five, my family moved from California to Providence, Rhode Island. My father was a Pentecostal minister and former Marine. He was a Marine World War II, although he never saw combat, never went overseas. But we moved to Rhode Island to minister. We had a lot of moving, moved Rhode Island to Connecticut. From Connecticut to Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania, we stayed quite a while. I went to high school, graduated high school in Pennsylvania, Harrisburg. Went to college in Shippensburg, Pennsylvania, Shippensburg State College, and went Marine Corps following college through the PLC program, Platoon Leaders Class Program. Commissioned Second Lieutenant in 1971 at graduation. And I went to basic school at Quantico and into supply school at Camp Lejeune.

TT (02:41):

When I finished that, I was assigned to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, 2nd battalion 8th Marines, as a supply officer down there. I was there for about 10 months. Almost did not make it home for my wedding because the wedding was set before I ever left. I left in September, the following June we were getting married. And we did get married on the 23rd of June. Which means my 50th anniversary is next week. Well, week after next, week after next. But I managed to get home about six days before my wedding. And in those days, you had to have a blood test in Pennsylvania. Oh, yeah, you still had to have a blood test.

TT (03:42):

And it took three days to get the results, and they wouldn't allow you to get a license until they got the results back. And say, "Yeah, you're okay." Don't ask me what they were looking for, I have no idea. I don't remember. But, but the bottom line was my wife was---my fiancé at that point was getting very nervous that I wasn't gonna make it. It was a long, I did, thankfully. And I was then posted to, uh, Camp Lejeune, still to 8th Marines at Camp Lejeune. And we were there about a year and a half, I think about a year and a half. And I was supposed to get out after three years. After I'd been married about six months, my wife came to me and said, "Hmm, when are you gonna get out?"

TT (04:37):

I said, "Well, I should be getting out about six months from now." And she said, "Well, you think you can stay a little longer?" She loved it! (Laughs).

SM (04:46):

Really?

TT (04:46):

She did. Well, I give a lot of the credit to the wife of my Regiment Commander who was very good about taking the wives, especially the young wives, or the young lieutenants under her care, and making sure that they understood what's going on and taking care of themselves and that kind of thing. Funny story: my wife knew nothing about the military. Her father had been in the Army in World War II and then in the Air Force during Korea. So she was just a baby. She was never exposed to it when she was growing up. So she knew nothing about the military. One time she went into the Marine Corps Exchange at Camp Lejeune, and we'd only been married a couple of months at that point, and she went to the counter with all the medals and ribbons in it.

TT (05:39):

And she was looking at him and thought, "Well, I don't know what's wrong with Tim. He doesn't have very many of these things." At the time, I only had a National Defense Medal. That's all we had. She thought, "I'm going to get him some of these." She started picking out---and she knew my favorite color's blue, so she started picking out all of the blue ones. When she got to the Medal of Honor Ribbon, the clerk got suspicious. (Laughs) And said, "Does your husband rate all of these?" My wife says, "Rate? What do you mean rate?" "He has to earn these." She ran out the PX, totally embarrassed. (Laughs) And she's gonna hate that I just told that story.

SM (06:17):

(Laughs)

TT (06:17):

But any rate I applied for regular commission. I did not get that at that point in time, but they gave me a what do you call it? Indefinite extension as a reserve officer. Meaning I could stay as long as I wanted to until there was some kind of draw in. But it came with orders to Okinawa, unaccompanied, by myself. So I moved my wife, and new baby daughter at that point, back up to her parents in Pennsylvania. And I left for Okinawa with 13 months. I was with the 3rd Motor Transport Battalion at Camp Schwab over there in 1975. I did not leave the island, but I was very

involved in a lot of the support and preparation for both the evacuation from Saigon. Good friend of mine was a helicopter pilot and was the last guy off the roof in Saigon.

SM (07:28):
Wow.

TT (07:28):
A little bit later, I was the duty officer one night for the battalion, and they got a phone call from Division Headquarters, said, "Get every truck you've got on the road." Unfortunately, it was a Friday night, or Saturday night rather. And Saturday night meaning all the troops were in town getting drunk. So I had to [inaudible] out everybody I could find, every officer in the battalion---except [for] me because I was the duty officer, I had to stay---got behind the wheel of a truck. So we'd go out to the field, pick up the 9th Marine unit that was out there because they were getting on a plane the next morning to go down to, I think they were picking them up in Subic. Down in Subic, they were getting on a ship in Subic and then headed for Mayaguez.

TT (08:23):
Mayaguez was the container ship that was hijacked by the Cambodians. And bottom line was they ended up getting the ship. Had no problem with that. There was nobody left on it at the time. They were just drifting. [Inaudible] we didn't know where the crew was. We thought they were on Koh Tang Island. And we didn't realize Koh Tang Island was heavily defendant, it was. They went into Koh Tang Island, we lost 51 Marines, Navy corpsmen, and Air Force pilots. Because they were Air Force aircraft that took them in there. 50 others were wounded. And it was not a good scene. Bottom line was we got the ship and the crew back. Unbeknownst to the headquarters at the time, the ship or the crew had already been released, but we didn't know that.

TT (09:21):
So I was involved in that from Okinawa to a great extent, but not directly. The same friend who was in Saigon was also in a helicopter that landed there. (Laughs)He was more involved in it. And I went from Okinawa back to Camp Lejeune. I served at Camp Lejeune at that time for about three years in Headquarters battalion division, tank battalion; 2nd Tank battalion. And then through battalion to division headquarters, where I worked in the division supply office. And then I got orders to recruiting duty. So I went back to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania for recruiting duty! I recruited at Penn State a lot of the colleges in the South central Pennsylvania area. Which as much as I hated the recruiting part of it, because I'm not a salesman, I thoroughly enjoyed working with the college students, candidates, and then commissioning when they came back and graduated. It was, it was probably one of the best tours in my life. Even though I really did not like doing the recruiting part, making the phone calls and all that things you had to do. But, moved on from there back to Camp Lejeune, and with a base this time, not the division where I was the base property officer. And oversaw the beginnings of the major renovation and rebuild of the base facilities. Primarily the barracks buildings on the base and handle all of the furniture supply and furniture purchase and acquisition issue to all the different buildings that did that. I was there doing that for the whole two years. Oh, we got a problem?

SM (11:40):

Oh, no I'm just making sure it's recording. I'm always paranoid.

TT (11:40):
The lights on.

SM (11:40):
Okay, great.

TT (11:41):
Okay, great. Okay. Hope you're going to edit this later.

SM (11:44):
Oh, yeah. Yeah.

TT (11:45):
At that point I had three daughters. We had our third daughter while I was right at the end of recruiting duty. She was two years old and the two older ones were seven and five, I think. And I got orders to Okinawa again. But this time accompanied for three years. I took my family. And again, that was another great tour. We did a lot of traveling, $10 per person on Air Force, space available anywhere they flew (laughs). We went to Tokyo. We went twice actually, took the kids to Disneyland and Tokyo twice. They got a big kick out of that. We went to Hong Kong---well that wasn't a military aircraft, we had to fly there in commercial.

TT (12:43):
We went to the Philippines several times. We went to Korea, that was an interesting trip (laughs). We flew over an Air Force KC 130 refuel aircraft. My two oldest daughters got to go down and sit, lay on the couches next to where the guy was flying the drone, or not the drone, the boom that refueled the aircraft. That was fun. Afterwards, my wife said, "Why do we get on that flying gas station?" (laughs) First thing they did when we got on was handed us a bottle of oxygen with a mask. You know, there's no place for masks to fall down. There were no seats, there were just slings. So anyway, it was an interesting tour. But we did three years in Okinawa.

TT (13:38):
Came back from Okinawa. We hosted to the Army transportation Corps headquarters in Fort Eustis, Virginia. We lived in Newport News at the time. And I was the Naval Liaison officer for Navy Marine Corps and Coast Guard personnel coming through the army Transportation School for different classes that they got there. Loading ships, loading aircraft, that kind of thing. Funny story: the general who was in charge of that, the two Star General, decided that, that he liked me and I was his favorite marine. And my office was about four steps down the hall from the school commanding officer, who was a Colonel, I was a Major at the time. And the General would call me directly and say, "Come over and see me." So I go over and the Colonel spies would find out that I was there. And as soon as I walk back into the building, he'd be in my office wanting to go, "What the General say?"

TT (14:42):

I learned that the Army is more political than anything I'd ever seen before (laughs). Anyway, I was only in that job for a year. And I got promoted Lieutenant Colonel, they transferred me downtown to the Marine Corps Reserve Center as the inspector instructor for Full Supply Battalion, where I was responsible for, I think it was seven different sites around the country. And we had them, obviously Newport News, Raleigh, North Carolina, Greensboro, North Carolina, Albany, Georgia, Rome, Georgia, Topeka, Kansas, and San Diego, California. I did a lot of travel. I had to visit each one of them twice a year. So I did a lot of traveling. But I was in that for three years. Worked with some great reserve officers. Some are friends to this day. I mean, I've got the guy who's the commanding officer of the battalion for last year and a half.

TT (15:43):

I was there, still calls me every Marine Corps birthday to wish me a happy birthday. He lives in North Carolina. Another one was who was the executive officer at the time, part of the time I was there, happened to have been my roommate when we were lieutenants at Camp Lejeune. Close friends. And he lived in Williamsburg at the time. He's now in South Carolina near Buford. But we stay pretty close both on email and phone. So I've got some really strong friends all over the place from different places with reserve and regular officers. When I left the INI, that's when I was transferred to 1st division, or not 1st division, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force Headquarters at Camp Pendleton, California. And I got there the end of June, 1990. We went to a field exercise---Command Post exercise, it was just headquarters people, in Florida at an Air Force Base in Florida [inaudible]. And the premise of the exercise was that somebody had invaded their neighbor country, who we were allied with and were threatening other countries in the area, also our allies. And, that we had to go in there and do the appropriate things. Wouldn't you know it, three weeks after that exercise was over, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. Obviously whoever set that exercise up had an idea that it was gonna happen, and they were preparing it for it. But I mean, I had been in my job there for all of six weeks at that point, and we got the deployment orders and I was on an airplane two and a half weeks later, heading for Saudi Arabia.

TT (18:04):

We landed in Dhahran at 3:30 in the morning. Temperature was somewhere in the neighborhood of 120. It was brutal. August 15th, 1990. And at the time, the only other troops who were there was the 101st Airborne. I think they had maybe two battalions, I don't remember, on the ground. Not much. And very little equipment other than what they could carry in with them and no food. They were buying hamburgers from a local McDonald's to eat because they had been there at that point, almost a week and a half, two weeks. And they only brought three weeks of, or three days worth of food with them. So the Army hadn't gotten the supply ramped up to get food too yet. So it was an interesting situation. We went in and set up our operations in Al Jubail, which is the port area right on the Gulf right there.

TT (19:14):

And we set up headquarters. I was the Expeditionary Force supply officer, meaning I was responsible for coordination of supply between the commands and other services in the theater, as well as responsible for managing all of the contracting activities. I didn't do them, I just was

managing and making sure that coordination was properly done with all the commands and all with everybody. Any requests for unusual things that we had to contract for came through me first. And I would staff if needed to be staffed in the headquarters. Or if it was something that was obvious I had the authority to approve it on the spot, depending on what it was and how much it was gonna cost. Fortunately I had a contracting officer working in the contracting section that was extremely smart and good, so I didn't have to worry too much.

TT (20:24):

He was covering me anyway because I couldn't have done it on my own. I also did a lot of special projects. During the time we were over there we had more stuff donated to us from all over the world, but especially to the United States. Arnold Schwarzenegger sent over, oh God, 10 or 15 complete gym equipment sets for us to set up in our different unit areas for the troops. So I got those and had to distribute those. Somebody else, I think it was Samsung, maybe I don't remember, sent over a whole container. We're talking with the big tractor trailer sized containers of boom boxes, so that the troops could have music. I distributed all of those. The Saudis gave us---I meant to bring a picture I was gonna show you, but I forgot.

TT (21:26):

They gave us early on a lot of rental cars for us to use for administrative cars, because the distances involved in Saudi Arabia were huge. You know, to go from Al Jubail where we were to Riyadh where the, uh, headquarters or General Force coffee was, took almost four hours on a road. And the, we couldn't justify flying helicopters in the conditions over there when a car would get there just as easily. Now the Generals flew, but I wasn't a General. At any rate, they gave us some cars initially when we first got there. At one point, after we'd been there for two, three months, I think I had somewhere in neighborhood of 60 or 70 rental cars that, you know, I had one because I did a lot of moving around between command.

TT (22:31):

But I was responsible for signing those to the different areas and people that needed them for their job. Uh, and it wasn't enough. A little bit later, I forget exactly what has happened. There was... Back up a little bit, before the attack on Kuwait happened. There were, there was a ship or two ships, I forget how many of Jeeps that were on route from the United States to Saudi Arabia, exported Saudi Arabia. They were the very first Jeeps that had ever been in Saudi Arabia, because Jeep used to belong to American Motors. American Motors was, in the Saudi's eyes, a Jewish owned company, and they would not allow them in the country.

TT (23:23):

The year before that Jeep had been sold to General Motors, the brand. So General Motors were now making Jeeps, and they were, okay. So Saudi had bought all these Jeeps, or allowed all these Jeeps to be imported, but they got there like in October, September/October timeframe. And we needed vehicles a whole lot more than the Saudis needed them. So, so they gave those vehicles to the Marine Corps, the Army, and the Air Force, all the units that were there, we got about 250. I mean, there was thousands, literally thousands the services got. We got only 250. The Army got like eight or nine hundred. Air Force got three or four hundred. It was just a lot of

Jeep vehicles. And they were perfect for the desert, you know. So I got those. And then Toyota gave us Land Cruisers, like a Land Rover, but a Toyota version.

TT (24:24):

And those were very popular because they're extremely comfortable and nice. A whole lot more luxurious than the Jeeps were. And I had Colonels fighting over those. And bottom line is that at one point, I think I had somewhere in the neighborhood of four or five hundred vehicles that I was responsible for. Both issuing out, maintaining, ensuring that they were being used properly. It was a big job. I had a staff at that point of about, I had two officers, a Major and a Lieutenant, or, no, Major and a Captain who worked for me. And then about, eight or nine or ten, I forget how many enlisted people, Master Gunnery Sergeant---big guns---and you know, a whole bunch of other people. And people will walk into my office, "Why do you need so many people?" And I'd say, "Wait, you see all the cars running around?

TT (25:20):

[inaudible]. You see all this other stuff that we hand out? Yeah, I do all that. You see all those MPS ships, airtime prepositioning ships. Yeah. I'm responsible for getting those unloaded and issued to the right people." I didn't do it myself, but I had to make sure it happened. And it was daunting to say the least. When it came time to start working up the plans for the actual Desert Storm [operation]. I really didn't have time to work on it, but they had other people who were much better at me anyway, writing these operations orders. So I didn't do a lot of that, but I had to review it once it was done and make sure that all bases were covered, relationships were proper, and all that kind of thing. And I sat there one night, and this was before even the Air War started, probably in December of '90. And I'm going over this recently completed draft and reading, particularly with the supply support section, [inaudible], what I'm responsible for. After reading the intelligence section, they've talked about all the gas and biological stuff that we thought that he had, which most of he did, and what it would require to defend ourselves against that as if we were in attack. I realized that we needed at least four sets of mop gear, military protective gear for gas and biological warfare, for every marine who was in the attack.

TT (27:10):

And I knew we had two at that point in time, because I had just asked him before we had enough for two for every marine. So that meant after two days, we had no protection, and we expected we'd need it for at least four days in the initial attack as protection expected by that point in time, to have been able to overcome the initial biological warfare stuff, because we didn't think that he had that much forward deployed. But, we really didn't know. And four was the absolute minimum. Um, I called the supply Center of Georgia and said, do you have more way? No. Do you have anymore available? No. Where can I get them? And they, they looked around the whole DOD system and said, well, the Army has X number of thousands, and that should be enough for about six for every one of those soldiers.

TT (28:11):

I said, "Hmm, okay." Got on the phone and called the Army, my equal, if you will, at the Army Headquarters in Riyadh. And got Army Lieutenant Colonel said, "Can we get two of those for each one of our marine?" I had numbers all worked out. Total was, and it was a woman Army

officer. And she said, "Well, no." I said, "What do you mean 'no'?" "Those are ours. We need those." I said, "Wait a minute. The Marine Corps is tasked to go"---and we were on a secure phone, all LAN stuff, that stuff---and I said, "Marine Corps is tasked to go into the teeth of the defenses in Kuwait. The Army is all going up around the edge." And all this had been set in by that point. And I think maybe the Air War had started by that point. The Army is going up around in tanks.

TT (29:14):

"I understand they're gonna need it, but you've got six per, we have two per, we need at least four." "Well, I can't give it to you." So, okay. Quick story. All the way back to the beginning. In August when we first got there, actually September when the most of the troops started coming in the route, we didn't have barracks or building for in the port area. And headquarters pretty much took that up. So the troops all had to go out in the desert, and they had no tents. And that was not good in the desert. So I went to the Army had set up a logistics base in Dhahran at that point, because that's where everything was coming into. And there was a two star General, I don't remember his name, uh, but he was short like me. And I went, hat handed him, said, told him who I was and what we needed, and he said, "Hmm, I had about a hundred tents out there we just got, they were slated for this unit that's not here yet, but you can have them." I said, "Okay, Jesus." But he said, "Look, you need them more than we do right now, and I'll get more." So I took, I got the tents, took them out, issued them to our people out, and it really took care of us. I mean, I couldn't thank this guy enough. And believe me, when I talked to my boss, General Boomer, who's a three star Marine General in charge of Expedition. The next couple of days in a conference, I made sure he knew where we got them and how we got them. And he got on the phone, called the guy, thanked him. But because there were a couple other instances where I interacted with him on stuff.

TT (31:10):

So I told this young lady on the phone, "Well, I guess I'll just called this General, I can't remember his name." And she said, "Oh, no, you don't have to call him." She knew him. He was in charge of all our logistics at that point, in theater. And she didn't want to even hear that I was going to call him because she figured I knew what I was talking about if I knew his name. And she ended up giving them to me. And we got them, picked them up, got them issued out. And fortunately we didn't need them, but we didn't know that at the time. About maybe a week to a week and a half before the attack happened, another good friend of mine was a battalion commander of the engineer battalion and 1st Division Engineer Battalion who was tasked for the initial breach of the firm line and the mines, and all that stuff.

TT (32:20):

And they had told him to expect 80% casualties in the first hour. And he was devastated. I mean, this guy, the last time I had seen him before we got deployed he was a normal looking marine, good shape. He walked into my office a week and a half before the attack. He looked like a ghost. He had lost probably 25 pounds, at least, over the, that intervening eight or nine months. And, and he was so depressed and so worried and concerned about his troops. He didn't know what to do. It wasn't much I could tell him. Supported him the best I could. But he went back, they made the attack. He lost one marine.

TT (33:15):

It was a gift from God. That's only way I could put it. And the one that he lost was to a mine. And because the guy didn't listen, and walked through an area he wasn't supposed to, stepped on a mine. But at any rate, the bottom line is they made the assault and the whole thing at one point on the evening of the first day the forward line, the forward troops of the attack were 20 hours ahead of where we expected it to be at that point in time. Now, I was still in Jubail at the rear headquarters coordinating all of the supply support. They were out there in the field. I didn't get out there, so I was watching what was going on from afar. And that's difficult because there's a whole lot of contradicting information and radio calls that you don't know what they're trying to say and who they're from sometimes.

TT (34:21):

It was extremely tense. One thing I forgot, prior to the actual assault again, after the Air War had started, the Japanese owned a port, an export, an oil export in Khafji, which is right up on the border of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, right at the right on the Gulf. So right in the corner there. And they had all evacuated and they called up our headquarters and said, "We got this port up there with all this equipment that you could probably use some of." Big cranes, and fuel moving equipment, and all of stuff like that. And, so General Boomer called me in his office and said, "I want you to go to Khafji, take a survey of what's there. I know you don't understand all the stuff, you're not an engineer. I can't spare engineers right now, but you can come back and tell me what's there, and we can decide what we can go up and maybe use." So I went up to Khafji, drove up in my Honda Accord, Saudi owned, and it's about a four hour drive each way. And I drove up there and there was a Saudi National Guard Company who were garrisoning the town because it also had been evacuated. The Iraqis were shelling with artillery on a daily and nightly basis. But I went out, got up there, went and did my survey of the port, lot of nice stuff that we used eventually, and then went back in town. I had intended to stay overnight because it's a long drive.

TT (36:21):

We really didn't want to drive late. Because you don't know, especially up there, there was a lot of cross border stuff going on already at that point. There had already been some incidents where our LADs had been probing and got in trouble with some of our own A10s that bombed them, strafed them because they thought they were Iraqi vehicles anyway. So I didn't want to drive back at night for good reason. So I went to the Saudi captain, who was the Commanding Officer of the company, was there. I said, where's the best place I can go to to stay? And he said, "Well, I'd really rather you didn't do that." I said, "Why not?" He said, "You see all the artillery damage around town? They, they shell us every night." There was a oil storage tank burning out on the next to the Gulf.

TT (37:22):

I knew that I had seen it. I was at port, so it was, and he said, "I don't know what they're gonna do with, they've been shelling us for last five, six months straight. And I just don't feel safe with you. I don't feel that I could safely protect you here, so I'm not gonna be responsible for you. So if you stay, you're on your own." And as I was leaving, I saw several Army trucks coming into town. I found out later that they were going into the empty hotel. There was a big hotel in the

town. They were going to that hotel because the phones were still hooked up and calling home. And one of the people that they were, that were subsequently captured that night by the Iraqis was a young woman driver in the Army that they paraded all of the TV a couple weeks later. I didn't see her. I didn't know who she was, but I saw their trucks coming in as I was leaving. And I found out about it later.

TT (38:23):

At any rate, so I'm driving all the way back from Khafji. I didn't have a radio with me. And it was a four hour drive. Got back about one, two o'clock the morning. And all my troops were in the office, which I was surprised at. I walked in the door, and "Colonel Taylor, where you been?" "Driving back from Khafji." "Well, we thought you were staying overnight." "I was going to." And they said, "Well, we got search parties getting ready to go up and search for you." I said, "Why?" And they said, Khafji's been attacked that overrun by the Iraqis." "What do you mean overrun?" "They overran the hotel, whole town and took it, and there's a big battle going on up there right now."

TT (39:08):

And there was, it was. It was Iraqi tanks and armored vehicles. And they had overrun a couple of our marine recon positions and killed a bunch of our marines and taken over the town at the Air Force, and the Marine Corps air assets, both the A10s, helicopter gunships, and all kinds of stuff. We were attacking them constantly overnight. The next day, we sent in one of our own tank battalions with M1 tanks just killed them all. And they managed a lot of them got back across the border, and we didn't go across the border after them, but by the time we were done we had dead tanks all over the place and our vehicles and all kinds of stuff. But they came over that night.

TT (40:01):

It was a good thing I didn't stay. I mean that close to getting captured or killed. And when I told my wife about it after I came home, I can tell her then, she was quite upset that I was up there at all. Anyway, another time, I was coming out of the headquarters, and this is all minor stuff, but coming out of the headquarters we had in Al Jubail we had set up the barriers. So you had to weave in and out. And we had a guard shack post right out at the edge. And I was coming out to head back in the quarters for the night. It was late, about 1130. The guard at the shack was up there waving at me to stop, stop. So what's going on?

TT (40:57):

So I stopped the car behind a barrier, fortunately open door and stood up. "What's the matter? What's going on?" About that time, bam, right next to me on the, on the other side of the barrier, it's a bullet. And then I heard the gunshot from about 500 yards away (laughs). We had a sniper that was shooting at us two, three shots each night for about five nights in a row. Never hit anybody or anything. It was about 500 yards away. We did finally catch him the fifth---we didn't catch him, but we got his rifle the fifth night, because we sent a team out there to wait in the area that they had been shooting from. And first shot went off and they descended on him. He took off, got away, but we got rifle. (laughs). A lot of people didn't hear about that at all because he never hit anybody. But he came about two feet from hitting me, and I jumped down behind the barrier and didn't get up until I was sure he wasn't shooting anymore (laughs). So that was my

close encounter. But I did go up, at one point to the Kuwait area. I went up to Kuwait after the war, after the, how the war was over. And looked at all [the] oil wells burning and all that kind of stuff, because I had to go up and see the supply people in the 1st Division up there and make sure that they [had] anything they needed, all that stuff. It was just, it was devastating [inaudible]. But oil wells, the sky was just black was so you couldn't, you had to have a mask on. It was that bad. Kind of like what's going on up in Baltimore and Philadelphia right now.

SM (42:49):

Yeah.

TT (42:50):

From all the fires up in Canada. Again, I didn't see any direct combat. I was only shot at once by a sniper who couldn't hit the broad side of the barn, evidently. But that was my experience in the Saudi Arabia. The thing of it was for 10 months, for roughly 18 to 20 hours a day, it was constant go, go, go. I think I had one day in maybe November or December. That my boss, I actually worked for a G four who was a Colonel, told me to take the day off. I guess he could tell that I was getting worked out. And, and I sat around my room and did my laundry and read books and not much else that day, but it helped one day out of 10 months.

TT (43:56):

But that's why---oh and what was worse when right after the war was over, maybe two, three days after I got kidney stones. Drove myself to the field hospital, they admitted me right away. Started pumping me full of morphine, put me in a ward. And there weren't, since there weren't very many wounded from the war, we had a few, but not a lot. They put me right in the ward with all the marines who had been wounded, Marines and Navy. And General Bloomberg came through that afternoon and he was surprised to see me there because he didn't know, he didn't realize I had gone in there. It was too early. He hadn't seen him report yet. He walked through and saw me and said, "Taylor, what are you doing here? I don't have a purple heart for you." I said, "No, sir. General, I'm not here because I was [inaudible], I have kidney stones." "Oh, wow, okay." He was passing out purple hearts to all the troops that had been wounded. So I was in there for a couple of days and they got me out stinted at whatever. I was supposed to be evacuated on the USNS Mercy, the hospital ship. The day before I was supposed to go get on it and leave it, decided to sail, I missed it.' They had given me a hat, says 'USNS Mercy,' I still have it, but I didn't get on it. So I ended up being stuck there. And they took me over to Bahrain to a civilian Bahraini hospital, because they have a lithotripter machine that they can zap those things; ultrasound.

TT (45:50):

They ultimately could not. Because once they woke me up, got me all situated, took me with the x-ray, ultrasound, whatever it was, they decided that the kidney stone was too close my spine, and they couldn't take a chance. So I had this kidney stone, and fortunately with the stent, the medication they given me, I was okay, I could function. Came back to the states, went straight to the hospital, Camp Pendleton, and they had me scheduled for surgery like the second day after I got there. The morning of surgery they decided, "Well, we're gonna go do one more IVP," which

is the contrast thing of the x-ray. And they did one more and they couldn't find a stone. It was gone, it disappeared overnight.

TT (46:47):

It was definitely there the day before. It was, because I saw the pictures and the doctor was baffled. So they discharge man, went away, and haven't had any sense. The only other time I ever had kidney stones was in Cuba when I was a lieutenant. And what's interesting is, in Cuba, I drank recycled water, reverse osmosis water. In Saudi Arabia, same thing, because of the water in Saudi, you drank all this reclaimed water from the ocean. I got to believe there's a connection there, but that'll never show. But bottom line, when I came back or flew back from Saudi Arabia, got home, I do not remember---I know they did---but I do not remember my wife and kids meeting me.

SM (47:40):

Mm-Hmm.

TT (47:40):

I'm sure they did. We've got pictures, I just don't remember. I don't remember hardly anything that happened the first, almost three months after I came home, I was working. I was going to work every day. I was doing my job. I was interacting to some extent with my family. About the only thing I do remember is the dog that they got while I was gone as a puppy. When I walked in, he barked at me for a week. That I remember. But that's really the only thing I can remember about the first three months. And then I started coming out of it after about two months. And slowly I was pretty much back home. It was just the total letdown or the total recovery period. I never experienced anything like that before or since. And I can imagine if the guys that were in Vietnam who had even, and more trauma going on when they came home, if they felt anything like that, I could imagine what they went through.

TT (48:53):

And I won't say it was PTSD, I don't think that's what it was. I think it was just the stress level that I was at such a long period of time, once that stress was removed, my body just said, "Okay, we recover." So, and that's something that most people don't know about. And a lot of the other people that I know who were there and experienced the amount of stress, went through the same timeline. It just, a lot of people don't realize that that happens. I experienced it and it was not fun. So I spent another year there with [inaudible] headquarters at Camp Pendleton. And I was in zone for Colonel that following May or that following fall for the first time. And I was not selected because Congress decided to take the peace dividend and cut the size of the military particular Marine Corps by many hundreds of, or many tens of thousands.

TT (50:00):

And the Marine Corps order to do that does not hand out pink slips like the Army or Air Force do. They do it through attrition, with promotion points. And if you're not selected for promotion, then you get out. Now, being a Lieutenant Colonel, I was guaranteed at least 25 years if I wanted to stay that long. I had 21 with them. So when I was not selected first time, I knew the odds of being selected second time were the same because they were gonna have the same restrictions

the following year. It went from a normal selection rate of 35% Lieutenant Colonel to less than 15% Those two years. And I probably would've made the 35%, I think. But 15% there was no way. I wasn't a water walker. I was good. I did a great job. I had good fit reports, but I wasn't the superstar. And I might, I probably would've made Colonel and I would've stayed 30 at that point.

TT (51:04):

But because they had to cut back, I decided, "Okay, I'll leave now." Because I already had the Colonel who had been the commanding officer of that reserve unit in North Carolina, had a business in Chapel Hill in North Carolina. And he had offered to hire me whenever I retire. So I called him up and he said, "Come on down." I went to Chapel Hill and he brought me on. It didn't last more than a year and a half. But that's not a unusual for first jobs after retirement [from] the military. And here I am. So, like I said, it's, it's not a lot of combat and guns and shooting and all that kind of stuff, but I think it shows the level of stress that even the people in support. So...

SM (52:05):

I do have one little question. I know we're getting towards time. But why did you decide to settle in Virginia specifically?

TT (52:11):

That's a long story too. (Laughs)

SM (52:14):

(Laughs)

TT (52:14):

I did not, initially. I didn't. When we went to Chapel Hill, I stayed in that job with the guy who had been the CEO of the [inaudible] for about a year and a half. He was a business consultant. And about a year into it, they decided to change the type of consulting they were doing. And it was an area that I was neither qualified or interested in. So I left the company, went to work for a, believe it or not, a timeshare sales company, who was headquartered in Chapel Hill. All of the resorts were in the Caribbean. And I traveled back and forth to the Caribbean frequently. I spent about half my time there for about seven years. But it was interesting and I enjoyed the job.

TT (53:08):

At first, I went to work as an internal auditor because I had graduated from Penn State, a recruiting duty, with a master's in business and finance. So I had the training and the education to be an internal auditor. And I had done some of that in the Marine Corps as well. So I went to work for them. Unfortunately, the company was relatively small and never made money. It was privately owned by a consortium of about three or four people. And they weren't really that concerned about it making money. And they kept changing the chief executive officer, who I reported directly to, on a regular basis, 18 months to two year timeframe. And it and each one got worse and worse in my estimation. So I said, "I got to get out of here."

TT (54:11):

So I started looking. I ended up going over for Marriott in Florida, in Palm Beach, Florida. They had a resort down there, they needed a director of finance, and I was qualified for that and looked like something that I would enjoy. I went to work down there. I worked in the same resort down there for almost 13 years in Palm Beach. Then I was getting ready to retire. I figured, yeah, at that point I was 63, 64. I said, "I want to retire when I'm 67." So I told them that. They said, "We'll worry about it when it happens." And I think I was about 65, 66 when they called me up and said, "Would you be willing to move to Orlando and become the director of finance for training of all finance personnel throughout the world?"

TT (55:08):

"What's that gonna involve?" "Well, you would be doing a lot of traveling." And that doesn't bother me. I travel all the time. [Inaudible] but I had traveled all over the world. I loved it. And I said, "Well, let me check with my wife," because she was a school teacher. She loved where she was teaching. And I told her, I said, "You know, I got this job at significant increase in pay and doing something I knew I would love. But I couldn't retire soon. I would have to guarantee them at least three years." I told her, I said, "Well, the only way I'm going to do it if you retire from teaching and you travel with me."

TT (55:57):

So she said, "Done!" Didn't even have to think about it. So she retired, we moved to Orlando, bought a house in Orlando. Had that house for five years, I think we spent maybe six months altogether, total in that house. We were gone all the time. Singapore, California, New York, South Carolina, North Carolina, Florida, everywhere. Everywhere there's a Marriott Vacation Club. In Hawaii. I mean, we went to Hawaii like six times in four or five years. I ended up staying with them for about five years. And I was working from home at that point, the last year and a half because it was just as efficient for them. Didn't do anything in the office, anyway. I did everything distance because even when I was in the office, I was dealing with people all over the world.

TT (56:59):

Where did I go with this? Oh, COVID came up. I was working from home, covering the South Carolina kilt head property. COVID came up. All the resorts shut down, all the sales offices---I was involved with sales, accounting, basically financing. All the sales offices shut down. All the accounting people were kept on for additional two weeks to close the books. At the end of that two weeks, they were all put on furlough, except me. They said, "You go ahead and retire." By that point, I was already 70---71. So I said, "Well, I've been trying to do this for a while now, so what the heck?" So I retired at that point, and that's where I am now. Fully retired, enjoying it, doing a lot at LLI here. A lot of the history classes, thoroughly enjoy the history classes, especially the ones that Shep Smith does. And that's what I'm doing; playing a lot of pickleball.

SM (58:20):

Well, I cannot thank you enough for being here today and allowing me to record your story. I enjoyed talking with you and just thank you for coming out to the event. Okay.

TT (58:32):

Alrighty. Cool. I'm late for my...