Feb 24, 2015

Warfighting Discussion Panel

Alfred M. Gray (AG), Paul K. Van Riper (VR), and John F. Schmitt (JS) discuss how the Marine Corps changed throughout their careers on Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia. The video was taken on February 24th, 2015. The discussion revolved around Warfighting tactics and maneuver warfare.

**Moderator:** Good afternoon, I'm Twayne Hickman from the MAGTF Instructional Group, Marine Corps University. It's my honor and privilege to be here today with General Gray, 29th Commandant of the Marine Corps; Lieutenant General Van Riper, former Commanding General, Marine Corps Combat Development Command; and Mr. John Schmitt, author of the keystone Marine Corps Doctrinal Manuals *Ground Combat Operations* and *Campaigning*, as well as the capstone MCDP 1 Warfighting.

We're here today to explore the topic of Warfighting: the history of the MCDP, the roots of Maneuver Warfare and the doctrine in action. Thank you, gentlemen, very much for making the time to join us today. It's our hope to enable a conversation between you all to explore Warfighting and Maneuver Warfare. Gentlemen, my first question is, “What conditions were present that allowed for the discussion, debate and dialogue surrounding Maneuver Warfare?”

**VR:** When we came out of Vietnam there was a period in which the Corps had to get back on its feet. It had to take care of recruiting the kind of Marines we wanted, get the gear back in shape – basically to get up and be functioning. And it wasn't long after that, into the mid-1970s, we began to focus on operations. At the time I was down at 2nd Marine Division; I was the Operations Officer for a battalion and then later the Operations Officer for 8th Marine Regiment. And it was during that period that some of these ideas that we now know as Maneuver Warfare began to emerge.

I recall the first time I got really excited about it was the 4th Marine Amphibious Brigade, then, was going out to northern Europe to run an exercise and we spent almost a year in preparation. General Gray was the Brigade Commander and he gave us a lot of guidance so we were beginning to think about these sorts of things. And there were a lot of highlights that I would love to relate.

One of them was when I was the Regimental S-3. General Gray put together a task force late one afternoon, assembled a battalion, took an artillery battery, a tank company and pulled me up from the regiment to be this whole Task Force 3. We assembled in something like 8 hours, wrote an op order and were on the road on our way behind the 6th Panzer Grenadier Division in a flanking maneuver that surprised everybody including the umpires of that exercise. That was a highlight. Sir, you were in an AAV and I was in another one, rolling by the German countryside.

**AG:** We came close to rolling into East Germany.
VR: That’s right. That was sort of – there were a lot of exercises like that throughout the Marine Corps. That’s the one that comes to mind for me. I know, John, you were down in Division a little later than that when we started talking about using light armored reconnaissance units.

JS: Right. I joined the fight in the 80s. I got my commission in ’81, saw the 2nd Marine Division in 1982, about the same time you took over command of the Division and I remember as a brand new second lieutenant going to an all division officer’s call at the base theater. Every officer in the division was there and the brand new division commander got up there personally on the stage and said, “Maneuver Warfare is the official doctrine of the 2nd Marine Division; get on board with it.” And I thought I’d better get on board with it so I started reading up and it was immediately appealing to me.

First of all, because it was empowering to junior officers to think that you would have the kind of authority that was being described was just a fantastic opportunity. And secondly, because everything I’d read about the nature of war suggested that this was just the right way to do it. I immediately got very enthusiastic about it.

Every year there was a combined arms operation at Ft. Pickett, Virginia and I was fortunate enough that my battalion went there twice. I participated in it and every year, General Gray would have a surprise. One year you brought in a battalion from the 82nd Airborne, unannounced; just dropped into the middle of the exercise and it just completely threw everybody for a loop. Another year there was an unexpected chemical attack and we all had to deal with that. What was really fascinating about that exercise was every single day at 1630 we called EndEx and all the officers and SNCOs would hop in their jeeps and drive back to the base theater and pack the base theater and the Division Commander personally would lead the after action review of the day’s exercise. Bill Lind would be sitting up there on stage with the men, engaging in the exercises. I remember, as the Anti-Armor Platoon Commander for 3rd Battalion, 6th Marines, being called on by the Division Commander to explain how my heavy machine guns had been used in a reconnaissance pull operation to find the gaps in the chemical fields so that we could exploit the gaps and get into the enemy rear. That was exciting for a second lieutenant to have to do that.

[00:05:16] Moderator: And General Gray, I think you were exposed to the ideas of Maneuver Warfare well before you were the 2nd Marine Division Commander. Is that true?

AG: Yes.

Moderator: Can you tell us a little bit more about that?

AG: Yes, I think it’s important to remember that professionals in our profession do a lot of reading. We’re supposed to read a lot of history. There’s no question that both these gentlemen, my colleagues, are well known for being great readers and
thinkers. And I, as a young person, spent a lot of time overseas and I had an opportunity to read a great deal, and about a lot of things. Most military people were familiar with the so called Prussian way of doing things and Clausewitz. We all studied and read and thought about that. I am a Sun Tzu proponent myself. Having spent 22 years in the Far East, I have a lot of that Asian influence and thinking. One of things that I was a student of really in the earlier days was deception: tactical deception, strategic deception, that kind of thing. And there are a lot of things, a lot of elements that we ultimately embraced in Maneuver Warfare. They really were not necessarily Maneuver Warfare. We gathered them all up, deception and all that kind of thing. For example, in 1964 when I was leading a special operations outfit North of Khe Sanh, we actually landed on another mountain top, pretended to go there and then went to yet another mountain top. Those kinds of things, I think, and then having a little bit of a reconnaissance background, intelligence background, all that kind of thing.

These are the kind of things I used to think about when I’d read about it. And of course, we all read Rommel and General Slim and people like that. We had a pretty good knowledge of really what happened. I’m not a history buff. Never was, never will be. In other words, I don’t quote dates and times and this and that. But you try to look at these things from the reason why. As we’ve said many times in critiques that John alluded to at Ft. Pickett – I’m not really interested in whether you went to the left or whether you went to the right. I’m interested in what you thought about. And that was the key – we were trying to get people to think.

Many of us, in our Vietnam experience, suffered under attrition type warfare and tactics and when you look back and study the Korean War and then the Vietnam War, we made some mistakes which we never should make again. All of this is part of your background, part of your thought process and part of the dialogue that you have with your fellow Marines when you talk about operations. In 1976, when at the end of the Vietnam War as General Van Riper pointed out, it was in some ways similar to today. People had been wrapped up for a long time in a ground kind of environment, a ground war if you will. We had lost some of our amphibious skills and expeditionary skills, particularly at the larger brigade and MEF Forward sized units. We had terrible disciplinary problems from about 1968 until the end.

And as General Van Riper has alluded to, General Wilson, for example, increased the quality. That’s an interesting idea, by the way. The man that I think really should get the credit for that is General Bob Nichols. He’s gone now, but General Nichols was the Commanding General of the Force Service Support Group at Camp Lejeune in 1972-73 timeframe when I had BLT 1/2 and later the 2nd Marines and later the G-3. He invited me over to his command post one time and we sat and were looking at all these charts. Back in these days everybody had charts on everything. Remember that? Green...

**VR:** Right, red and yellow meatballs, yes, Sir.

[00:10:00]
AG: The meatball charts. They measured everything except how good you could fight. I mean everything else was measured. He said, “Look at that; the majority of the people that go UA and the majority of the people that desert are non-high school graduates.” He carried that message forward when he later became Head of Manpower in Washington under General Wilson and, of course, General Wilson is known to have increased the requirement for high school graduates. Initially to 92% and then that grew as everybody knows. That’s where that came from.

But, for example, when we were in Okinawa in 1974, we had eight thousand Marines at Camp Hansen. And 55% did not have a high school diploma. We started a high school. And it was right on the training schedule for the infantrymen and everybody else. We used to have riots and fights and this and that. All of a sudden you had African Americans helping whites with homework and Samoans in there studying and everybody working together. And the leaders saw how that panned out and it was good for everybody. Those are the kind of things that we were faced with.

But getting back to operations and the maneuver type thing, in 1976 General Wilson was very concerned about the Marine Corps’ role in NATO. We had been over there in 1975; we had not done very well and his mission type guidance to me, after I made Brigadier, was go over there and show NATO how good we really can be. “I want you to do that and I also want you to make sure that you conduct all your operations and keep their hands off our air,” and a few other mission type guidance messages. Never once the how and all that; that was left up to commanders, that was left up to us. He formed then the first permanent MAB command group. That was the 4th Marine Amphibious Brigade that General Van Riper alluded to. Our first big operation, as I said, was in 1976 when we went to Norway and then Denmark and then Northern Germany. It was a very successful operation and some of the key tenets began to emerge out of that. We were a very busy brigade. We also had the next year, a big operation in Turkey where we did some of the same things. We went 60 miles the first day in Turkey. We made an all-night helicopter borne operation in the Caribbean in 1977 when it was against Marine Corps policy to fly helicopters at night.

VR: I was thinking as you were talking, General, about deceptions. You had some great deceptions in that. And one of them, was, we had 8 inch howitzers at that time. Eight inch howitzers were known to be well in the rear. General Gray had us put the 8 inch howitzers out on the combat outpost line and then begin to fire. (In terms of what was supposed to be the firing, actually was, you said you would fire and the umpires would then go to the areas where the rounds were supposed to impact and throw some simulators and let them know what was happening.) Well, the Germans saw 8 inch coming in, assumed they were almost on top of the forward edge of our battle area, the FEBA, and so they deployed. But they actually were well short of the combat outpost line. And it slowed them up for 24 hours because they had to regroup and come back in.
And the deceptions – you had us take CH-53s, a couple of them, and we put just a handful of Marines in them with radios. They landed, let the Marines out, and they began to broadcast as if a battalion was on the ground. The 53s returned and then later, just before dusk, a Huey came in and picked up those radio operators and flew away. The Germans were absolutely convinced they had a battalion maneuvering in the area and there wasn’t. Those were fun days.

[BEGIN Warfighting as a Philosophy Video Clip]

AG: Yes. These kinds of things, again – John hit it. There was a lot of empowerment going on. We were letting corporals and sergeants and young officers do things that they never dreamed of being able to do at that early time in their Marine Corps life. The whole idea of letting younger people do more then, kind of pulling all this together into a philosophy is what was done over that 10 year period, I think. It really, the maneuver warfare book, if you will, in my humble opinion is more of a philosophy, than it is doctrine.

[00:15:08]
VR: Yes.

AG: In fact, I made a mistake in the foreword by using the word doctrine. I wish I hadn’t done that. And I remember a couple years later, I wanted to make some adjustments to it. And you said, ”No, no – it is fine the way it is.” And later on, of course, you were told to make some adjustments to it. And so adjustments were made. But anyway, that’s getting ahead of the story here.

[END Warfighting as a Philosophy Video Clip]

JS: Can I make an observation about the reading? Because General Gray had mentioned the reading and there was, I think, a small group that did a lot of professional reading and was very well informed. And they’re the ones that were sort of on the vanguard of that movement. But professional reading was not widespread.

AG: No.

JS: In the Marine Corps at that time. In fact, there was still sort of an anti-intellectual current that ran through the institution and I think that is one of the most significant reforms that happened during the Gray Commandancy was professional reading became expected of everybody. And it became widespread and it became a much more informed and better educated officer and NCO corps as a result. And it has paid huge dividends.

VR: But there was a direct correlation with those who were at the center of this and those who read.

JS: Yes.

VR: Those who were professionally schooled and read were there. I learned early on not to challenge the General about whether he had read a document or not. This was a little bit later, but we were getting interested in command posts and
improving our command posts and downsizing them. And the General came out to Okinawa and was looking at battalion, regimental and division command posts. I mentioned a little book that the Government Printing Offices had put out, written unexpectedly by an Air Force Major. I mentioned it and the General said, “Yeah, I read that.” I’m a little suspect of my Commandant that he actually read it until I started talking to him and he had read it. And there was never a book that I mentioned... How many books did you have in your library, Sir?

**AG:** They just inventoried and they’re going to move them all down to the Research Center now.

**VR:** A couple thousand?

**AG:** Thirty one hundred.

**VR:** Thirty one hundred books.

**JS:** I did find a book that I had read before you. When you came to the commissioning ceremony at U of I in 1991, you were the guest speaker and we didn’t know what to get you and Marin Van Creveld’s *Command in War* had just come out.

**AG:** Yes.

**JS:** Had literally just come out and I got one of the very first copies and I surprised you with it as a gift for coming. That was a great book by the way, too.

**VR:** That was classic, unlike some of his later books.

**AG:** Yes – his earlier books were right on and I think he got a little bit...

**VR:** *Transformation of War* and some of the other ones got off.

**Moderator:** Some folks have called what happened during this period an intellectual transformation of the Marine Corps. And it sounds like a lot about what you’re talking about.

**AG:** Yes, I think that’s a good descriptor. I don’t use it because it sounds kind of self-serving. I think the Marine Corps in general in that era, from the end of the Vietnam conflict until really the 90s at least, was definitely intellectually far more prepared than everybody thought. It seemed to be the kind of thing to do. There was an earnest effort on the part of most leaders to get better. To help their people be better. And all that type of thing. But I think the, you know – I remember when we came out with the reading list, for example. I got a letter from a father in Colorado. And I made a habit of reading all my own mail when I was on my last tour and it paid big dividends. Anyway he said, “What in the heck are you doing to my Marine
Corps?" This guy was a Marine too. And he said, "My son came home from 13 months in Okinawa and the first thing he asked his mother was, ‘Is that library still around the corner?’

[BEGIN Intellectual Renaissance Video Clip]

**VR:** You used the term intellectual transformation. I think intellectual renaissance would have been more accurate because transformation indicates you’re transforming into something you weren’t. The Marine Corps had a long history of intellectual activities in terms of the doctrine that was developed for amphibious operations, for heliborne operations, for small wars. It’s intellectually rich, but we seemed to drift away from that during Vietnam and in the immediate years afterwards. I’m with the General; I’m not sure we want to use the term intellectual, but it would be renaissance not transformation.

**AG:** Yes, you’re right. You’re exactly right. I think it’s important to remember too, that the Marine Corps every once in a while goes through a period where they have to get back to the basics, get back to what they really are. Understand that they are warriors and the Warfighting mentality and get back to the kind of thought process that you have to have constantly in the Marine Corps. That’s the operational thought process. Everything revolves around your ability to execute – whether you’re a lance corporal or a general or anything in between. And during the 70s and so on, we had a lot of things we had to do.

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When I came here, when I was at the Development Center earlier as a lieutenant colonel at the Combat Development Center for example, we made great strides at improving our intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capability. Integrated ISR if you will, was beginning to be really thought of. And I think a decade later that we saw that, and of course you see it in spades even today when Marines are deployed. There were people like General Trainor and people like that who were interested in doctrine, tactics, techniques, and the future. They began to come up with about seven or eight things in the 70s and early 80s that the Marine Corps would have to be better at if they were going to win. And one of them, of course, was intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance; another was better mobility so that you could have better capability for all around maneuver; we made a concerted effort to make our decisions quicker than the other guy which evolved into the John Boyd’s OODA loop thought process that fit right in; more flexible logistics; be better at combined arms; be second to none at NBC warfare. Nuclear, biological or chemical warfare was another one. And so these seven or eight ideas began to infiltrate, if you will, everything that we did here at Quantico and elsewhere.

The problem we had with a lot of the... there was a lot of resistance with these kind of things. There was a lot of resistance within the Marine Corps, a lot of resistance to any kind of new idea. If I could backpedal a little bit and say that it’s when there’s no money available and it is really difficult fiscally, like it is going to be here in the coming years and like it was in 1970s, during the Carter administration we had no money in the Marine Corps. We had little to none after World War II, and we had
little to none after Korea. Yet that is when some of our greatest innovative ideas took place, because it doesn’t cost any money to think.

For example, we all know the history of the development of amphibious warfare and what was done in the late 20s and. After World War II, the Marine Corps played a lead role in the development of the use of the helicopter. In the late 40s and early 50s and so on, later refined to a great degree by the army with their air-mobile capability. During the 70s, when we, for example, we sent Marines like Jerry Turley to the Arab-Israeli War and people, we studied what they did. We studied the German idea; we were studying the Israeli idea. We were certainly going back and looking at all Sun Tzu had to say. I've read every book ever written about him and so on and Sun Pin and the rest of them. We were doing all these kind of things and that was because when we went to maneuvers in 76.

**VR: 76**

**AG:** Is when we borrowed the German recon, armored recon, outfit from the Germans. And that is when we started first playing with light armored vehicles. In the 70s, again, without any money, we studied every light armored vehicle in the world. Most of them were built overseas, except for Cadillac Gage and some other outfit here in West Virginia built one. But anyway, we looked at all of that, wheeled versus tracked, etc. and at the end of the 70s, when we finally got some money with the President Regan buildup, we knew what we needed. We were able to strike like Genghis Khan, as I say. And by the way, Genghis Khan’s another one that I’ve read all his books.

**[END Intellectual Renaissance Video Clip]**

**VR:** Yeah, General, I was thinking as you were talking about the intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance. I remember another one from this exercise up in Germany, the General had EA-6s up. We had umpires in our combat operations center and we were telling them how we were engaging German tank units that were well away from us. And they said, “No – this can’t be fictitious, you have to actually know where they are.” I had to take them into the DASC, the Direct Air Support Center, and have them hear the conversation between the EA-6 operators and the units on the ground before they realized. That really was a forerunner to what became JSTARS in terms of looking deep and striking deep.

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**AG:** That’s right. Yes, there were a lot of things like that. I think the key, again, is to be able to have these ideas and to be able to be able to use them. I mean, that was the kind of environment we were lucky to be in. Even though there was a lot of resistance and so on, if the Commandant is backing you, you don’t have to worry about anything else. And that is the way it was.

For example, when General Wilson was Commandant, we did a lot of good work for him on a lot of areas, not just the NATO, also the deployments and things like that. But in helping him protect our air in Korea, we wrote papers. He had three priorities, really, when he was Commandant. He brought me here to run the
Development Center and he was enthralled with the Mobile Protective Weapons System, which had a high performance cannon on it. He and the head of the army, General Rogers, got together and had a joint program. But the army fought it because the army was against anything that threatened their tank, whether it was tank division, 70, later the Abrams tank and that kind of thing. We had an active program with the army and we did a lot of mobile protective weapons system work. We were also looking at the light armored vehicle. And then, when the Mobile Protective Weapons System went away, though, we were able to capitalize on the LAV opportunity and so on.

When Congress, the Senate Armed Services Committee asked us, on the 15th of March 1980, if we had a little extra money would we be interested in off-the-shelf light armored vehicles. We said, “Yes, provided we could make some adjustments to them.” We knew, for example, that we had to do some work with the wheels and we knew that we wanted to adopt the 25mm gun; that was on the Army’s Bradley because all of the turret integration work had been done. We were able to say “yes”. But we said the money must come from a plus-up to defense. It can’t come out of the hide of the other services. They gave us the money. Four years later, we fielded the light armored vehicle battalion that you were in.

VR: There was a direct relationship between the ideas and the experimentation. I was thinking of things like high speed launch off the amphibious ships with AAVs. The ideas would be generated, in what you were talking about at Camp Pickett where you’d have the ideas and go out and exercise, come back and do the AARs and then try it again.

AG: Well, that’s right. See, the other two things General Wilson wanted was Landing Craft Air Cushioned and the High Speed Amphibian. And these ideas came from the adoption in 1976 when we adopted the new amphibious expeditionary way of doing things which was coming from over the horizon. The reason we want to come from over the horizon was three letters – PGMs. Precision guided munitions. If you got too close, too quick, too early, you were blown out of the water. That’s how that started and that was the birth then of the JVX which led to the V-22 program. That was the birth, of course, of the Landing Craft Air Cushioned Program. And that was the birth of the high speed amphibian which later was called the Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle and then later was lost because it took too long to field it.

We had proved data-wise that if we were a thousand miles off the beach off of South Carolina tonight, we could land tomorrow morning anywhere between Rhode Island and Florida. It was that kind of, “so that’s where the landing where they are and where the sort of maneuver” thought process really became not just operational but strategic again. The Marine Corps and the Navy have led this idea that amphibious operations are no longer valid in a high threat environment. They have got to combat that, because that is not correct. It is the only thing you have. And we’re working on that separately. But the point I want to make is that we sometimes, you know for an outfit that takes great pride in its history, we don’t remember
sometimes the reason why things were done. And this is something that I think we ought to bring back up.

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For example we should teach the Hogaboom Report. The Hogaboom Report was developed in 1955 by the Assistant Commandant. He headed the study and he had a lieutenant colonel on there named Jones who later became Lieutenant General Jones, of WWII fame, and our former commandant Jim Jones’ uncle. They studied the structure of the Marine Corps after the Korean War. And, intera alia, they said the Marine Corps needs division reconnaissance battalions. The Marine Corps needs a Force Reconnaissance Company. The Marine Corps needs more counter intelligence. The Marine Corps needs an all-weather day night attack capability which led to the A-6A and the EA-6A for the electronic warfare requirement. They said the Marine Corps needs a, what they called a, division radio reconnaissance company and a force radio reconnaissance company.

Now, mind you, there was no money in the budget for any of this stuff in the mid-50s. These were all just ideas and concepts but they were approved. Then little by little requirements were generated and little by little the budget began to come your way on the things that were most critically needed. And this is the way it can get done, but there needs to be a vision. There needs to be a central vision that everybody’s on board with. That everything they do, directly or indirectly, impacts on that. And the ideas of corporals or the lieutenants are just as important as the ideas of the generals or the civilians. Everybody is playing towards a common end, sort of a common end state, if you will, in terms of the campaigning thought process. This led to the radio battalions. And everybody knows what the radio battalions are doing today and they’re even involved in the ISR bit, you know. If you look at the historic, like the battles of Fallujah and who did what with snipers and so on. And how did the snipers know the targets were there? It plays right back into deception and radio battalion and that kind of thing. All these kind of things were embryonic then, but they were understood to be part of the master plan.

**Moderator:** Sir, as you’re speaking about the central vision, I think it’s fair to say that the three of you were integral in the central vision of maneuver warfare and the codification of that...

**AG:** Well, and there were many others, too.

**Moderator:** Yes, Sir. Well, now’s a good time to talk about that.

**AG:** Yes.

**Moderator:** There are two pieces I’d like to explore. One is your individual and collective role in bringing MCDP 1 into existence. And then the other part of that, and we can approach it however you all want to tackle it, is other key stakeholders. Other people who were integral in that process and I’ll just let you all explain. Maybe, Mr. Schmitt, start with you and your role.
JS: Sure. First of all, we’ve talked about the transformation, the renaissance. I always like to think of it as the Quantico renaissance because from my perspective, so much of what was happening revolved around Quantico. I arrived in Quantico in 1986 at the doctrine command, which was Doctrine Center. It was this little backwater center that wasn’t doing too awfully much. And I always wondered why General Gray, when he became Commandant, picked this little backwater place to be the cadre for what became the Warfighting Center, the epicenter of all this activity that was going on. But when he became Commandant, he started pulling people from everywhere in the Marine Corps and they all congregated here and it created kind of a center, a critical mass, of all the best and the brightest and the best thinkers in the Marine Corps. And it really built up a lot of energy and it was all sort of feeding on itself and it was... For a young officer to be here at the time, it was a really kind of a heady experience.

There were just sort of impromptu study groups and discussion groups that were taking place at Quantico and up at HQMC and there was just a whole lot of intellectual energy surrounding the place. That was really neat to be a part of. My particular role – I was in the doctrine center and I was supposed to be writing LAV doctrine, but that never happened. I wrote a manual called OH6-1 Ground Combat Operations which was sort of our capstone pre-doctrinal manual. And it was the first manual that we inserted maneuver warfare into. I had been trying to – I was a true believer. I’d come from 2nd Marine Division, so as I was writing this, I kept putting maneuver warfare into it. And my boss kept taking it out because at that time, there were two candidates for commandant. General Gray was one of them, but he was kind of the underdog. My boss, who kept putting his finger in the air and testing the wind, kept saying to take the maneuver warfare out; I kept putting it back in, and he kept taking it back out. I finally got the manual done, and just as it was about ready to go to print, it was announced that Al Gray was going to be the Commandant. My boss comes to me and says put the maneuver warfare in the manual.

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I shoved this very short little chapter on maneuver warfare into the front of the book. It was completely out of place. It was inconsistent with everything else in the book. OH6-1 was not a philosophy book like Warfighting became; it was really an encyclopedic book. It was about “this” thick and it was these are the principles of war, these are the fundamentals of the attack, these are the seven types of offensive operations, these are the phases of the attack, yada, yada, yada. And then it had a huge glossary in the back and it had all the map symbols. It was a reference kind of a manual and it was big and thick. But we had maneuver warfare in it. And so this was kind of our pride and joy. Shortly after General Gray became Commandant, he came down and I was supposed to brief him on OH6-1. I; it never occurred to me, but I think I realized now that I was auditioning for Warfighting but I didn’t know it. Everybody, myself included, assumed that the author or Warfighting was going to be a colonel.
VR: Yes.

JS: Who was going to work with the Commandant? And as a junior captain, it never occurred to me that I would be considered.

VR: A frocked captain, a lieutenant.

JS: A lieutenant frocked as a captain, yes. I was just sort of enjoying this from the peanut gallery. But anyway, General Gray came in and should I tell this story?

VR: Tell the story. We’ll see if General – We’ve been telling this story for years; we want to see if General Gray recalls it the same way.

JS: He came down to be briefed on OH6-1 and it was General Gray and Captain Schmitt and Major General Mike Sullivan, who was the new director of the Warfighting Center, sitting around a table together, just the three of us. And God help me, I don’t know what got into me, my defense is that I was a true believer. I started lecturing the new Commandant of the Marine Corps and saying to him, “General Gray, it’s all well and good to write a new book that says maneuver warfare,” and I held my book up, and I sort of waved it at him like this. But I said, “If you’re not willing to make the institutional changes that are necessary to training and personnel policy and education and everything else, you might as well just throw it in the trash.” And to demonstrate my point, God help me, I did this, I flipped the manual over my shoulder and expected it was going to thud dully on the floor behind me. Not realizing that there was one of those industrial grey metal waste paper baskets directly behind me against the wall, I hear this loud metallic clang sound and the noise of it startled me.

I think it was that that sort of brought me back to reality and made me realize how out of line I was being with the Commandant and I spun back around to see how much trouble I was in because I was sure I was in trouble, and I looked at General Gray and the only thing he did, was almost imperceptibly raised one eyebrow at me. That was his only reaction. And I’m convinced to this day that’s the reason I got the FMFM 1 job, was because I’d blindly flipped the book over my shoulder and put it in the basket. So, do you remember that at all?

AG: I remember.

JS: Yes. So anyway, I got picked.

AG: You got it because I was going to have revenge.

(Laughter)

JS: I got assigned to write Warfighting and I still don’t know why I was considered, because there were all these people that were available and I also don’t understand
why you chose to go into the Doctrine Center and pick somebody there, instead of just bringing somebody in from the outside. But anyway, I was assigned to do it. A lot of the arguments had taken place before I arrived. The concepts had been discussed and the terminology had been sort of agreed on. When I was given the job, my job was really to codify it. I didn't invent anything new. I was just trying to capture what was already there and what had been agreed upon. I was trying to capture General Gray’s vision. And the way General Gray operated was, he worked in parables. Because I'd ask him a question about what he wanted in the book and he’d say, “Let me tell you a story about little Al Gray.” And he, and you’d, tell me a story from Korea or something and I’d ask him a more pointed question. And he’d say, “Let me tell you a story about little Al Gray.”

And I could never get the Commandant to give me direct guidance about what he wanted in the book. He was – and what I realized was - that he was practicing maneuver warfare. He was giving me his intent, but he was not going to tell me how to do it. He was going to expect me to figure out the best way to do it and leave it up to me to accomplish the mission. And he told me, “You have one guy to satisfy and that’s me. This book’s not going to be staffed; you can talk to whomever you want; you can read whatever you want; you can incorporate whatever you want. If anybody tries to unduly influence you; you tell me about it and I will make it stop. You have to satisfy me.” And that’s how it worked. That’s how the book worked. And I’ll give one example. The very... we met twice over the course of the development of the book over about four or five months, only twice.

[00:40:21]

**AG:** Long sessions, though.

**JS:** They were some long sessions and I remember the very first session.

**AG:** 13 hours.

**JS:** I was briefing the General on the outline of my proposed outline. And I said, “Of course, General, we’ll start with a discussion of the Principles of War.” And General Gray said, “What principles?” And I was shocked. I thought, is it possible that the Commandant doesn’t know what the Principles of War are? So I said, “You know, Sir, the Principles of War?” And he said, “Which principles are you talking about?” I was completely flustered and flabbergasted. I didn’t know what to say; I just kind of sputtered and finally I said, “MOOSEMUSS, General, MOOSEMUSS? You’re familiar with MOOSEMUSS?” And he got that sort of grin on his face and he said, “Oh those principles of war.” It was like he had punched me in the gut because what I realized what he was saying is, “Why are you so stuck on this list of things that JFT Fuller invented in 1919; there’s nothing sacred about that. You need to be more creative than that.”

And I was shocked because at that time, the principles of war were sacrosanct. I was thinking to myself, if the Principles of War are on the table, everything was on the table. I realized I had been thinking much too conventionally up to that point and he
was expecting something much bigger and much more radical and much more inventive than that. And it just completely blew my mind. I went back to my cubicle afterwards and General Van Riper came by and he saw me, and I was just shaking my head and I’m thinking, ”I don’t know what I got myself into, because this is going to be big.” General Gray wants something much bigger than I was prepared to give but he didn’t tell me that. The way he told me that was “What principles are you talking about?” That’s how it worked.

**Moderator:** Sir, would you mind explaining...

**VR:** This period John talks about, and he said there was electricity at Quantico, there would be ad hoc group meetings and you would have a brigadier general and run the gamut all the way down to a young lieutenant or captain. It was never the grade; it was never the billet they were fulfilling; it was the merit of the idea. You had to come in there and defend your idea. And there was respect – “Sir, I don’t think you know what you’re talking about.” “Captain, I do know.” “No you don’t, Sir.” And it would go back and forth…

**Moderator:** If I can, Sir, that was a little white building where the Gray Research Center was?

**VR:** There was a little one-story building there and we would normally meet after “quote” working hours. I’d go over there around 1730, 1800, order pizza and it might go until 2100, 2200 at night. We had these arguments and debates about tactics and operations and weapons systems. And it was just an electric period.

**Moderator:** How?

**JS:** A lot of this was spontaneous. People wanted to do it.

**Moderator:** And they were coming from where, from the end of the workday at school?

**JS:** Exactly.

**VR:** Everywhere. The ones who understood, and again, like I say a direct correlation with those who were professionally schooled, those who were interested in the profession who read widely, who studied deeply, who had a lot of combat experience, had seen the anomalies of Vietnam. What we had been told, the so-called received wisdom in Vietnam didn’t seem to work. And we wanted to know why. What was wrong with…

**AG:** Where the thrift shop was.

**VR:** Where the thrift shop was. We were wrestling with the problem of what was it the Marine Corps needed to do tactically and operationally. And when you came in
with an idea, there were no PowerPoint briefs; there were no lists. You had to come in and defend the idea.

**AG:** Yeah, I think you need to go back again a little earlier in time. You need to remember that the, for example, after the Vietnam War, the Commandant then, General Chapman, wanted to reinvigorate Quantico in terms of thinking, doctrine, tactics, techniques and so on. He directed that an operation, doctrine, tactics, techniques division be formed under the development center which was in that old building. He directed that we have a long range and mid-range and a short range study program.

He ordered fifty five officers into Quantico to build that up. That's why, because it had really dwarfed down to nothing. That's how it began to get started. And the intelligence branch at the development center grew to intelligence division and that type of thing; did threat analysis for all the long range studies and that's when the Marine Corps again started to put out a long range plan for 20 years out. And a mid-range plan. That idea actually goes back to 1963 and '64. When General Greene was the commandant, in 1963, he wanted to know. He was always thinking about the future. He was talking about sending Marines to Africa and rockets and all that kind of thing. And so he took arguably the smartest general in the Marine Corps, named Gordon Gale, Navy Cross winner from WWII, and a squad of colonels, and he locked them up in the building across from the research center for a year. But before that, he said, "I want a study done." He came to us in special ops because we had some contract vehicles and the like and he directed us to make arrangements to have a study on what the Marine Corps should look like in 1985.

What the world was going to look like in 1985. We went to Syracuse University because we had been doing SIGINT analysis work with Syracuse University Research Corporation. Initially the regents at the University turned the idea down, doing things for the military. I had to go up and brief them. I was a captain; I went up and briefed them and they said, "Okay, we'll do it." They gave us a study. Five volumes, in a year.

You know you can't predict the future, but you can predict trends. For example, this talked about the water crunch in different parts of the world, the Golan Heights and the like; it talked about the food crunch; it talked about poverty. It also said that by 1985, now this is 1963, by 1985, the world was going to be more susceptible to terrorism and the Marine Corps would be well advised to tidy up their relationship with the state department because of the security guard program. These kind of things were done and so then Green took General Gale and this squad of colonels down in Quantico and said, "Now give me along range plan." And they did. And that was "Marine Corps '85." That was the first long range plan of any service. And he did that.

The Marine Corps again, not much money; it was before Vietnam buildup, etc. We had, under General Shoup, we had studied the ability to shoot. President Kennedy
directed us to look at special operations and that kind of thing. And Shoup said amphibious operation is special enough. We’ll just focus our training on guerilla warfare and that kind of thing. We built the guerilla warfare training center in Okinawa and one at Pendleton and the one at Camp Lejeune. But that’s when the Army, Navy and the Air Force. That’s when the army increased their special warfare units. The air force created an outfit called Jungle Jim; it was T-26 special ops kind of thing. They did a lot of work in South America. Latin America. The Navy took their old underwater demolition teams and created SEALS. And that’s how that all started. The point I want to make is these kind of things are going on. It was a thinking kind of environment. And then Vietnam came along and of course the big buildup, everybody knows about that, so all of that kind of atrophied and went down the drain in this period you start your question on; 1976 kind of time frame. By the time John got here to Quantico, though, all that long range planning, all that kind of work had atrophied again. We were down to 3 or 4 people. Jerry Culacoff? God bless him, was in charge of long range planning at the time and had 2 people working for him.

VR: And no one wanted to come to Quantico, Sir, if I recall.

AG: And particularly the Development Center.

VR: The Development Center and all the schools. I was out in Okinawa and had a fantastic tour as Regimental Commander, the G-3 of the Division; I was the Chief of Staff and I had a 4th year approved to stay out there. I came back for a conference and was called to Manpower. The Director of Manpower said, “Commandant would like you to go to Quantico to take over a school.” He said, “Which one would you like to take?” I said, “Sir I’d like to take The Basic School.” He said “Well, it’s not going to be The Basic School, which of the others would you like?” I said, “Well sir, it would be a toss-up between the Officer Candidate School and the Amphibious Warfare School.” And he said, “What about Command and Staff College?” And I slid down in my seat because at that time, Quantico’s been the crossroads of the Corps, but Command and Staff College was known as the off-ramp. That’s where you went to retire. And I thought, “I can’t believe my Commandant’s going to send me there.”

And again, mission type orders. The Commandant never said, “Do this, do that,” he simply said, “This school has a reputation that the Marine Corps doesn’t want any of its schools to have. I want you to lay the foundation to become the premier Command and Staff College in the world.” And he just turned me loose.

Other than to pay visit and take books from my bookshelf, the Commandant left me alone. And it was interesting because when the Fleet Marine Force Field Manual 1 Warfighting came out, we had what we called an Instructor Management School. And the director of this school got up in arms. “Why are you using this manual in Command and Staff College? We haven’t approved it in systems development training.” I said, “The Commandant says we’re going to use it. Do you want to go see General Gray?” And he decided he didn’t, so we used it.
**Moderator:** Yes, Sir. And then after Command and Staff where did you go?

**VR:** I went from Command and Staff. General Gray had a number of things he wanted. One was he wanted a professional reading program. And that seemed to me like it would be an easy task. It became a very complex task because, a program again we didn't farm out, but I sent it to officers I knew, who read. And not only did I get comments back, I got a lot of criticism of the list I sent out. It took about five or six months before we had one for the General to sign.

[00:51:01]

**JS:** Well part of the reason it took so long is because he would keep adding books to it. When we thought we had the list finalized, General Gray would add *Crook’s Memoirs* and something else.

**VR:** Yes.

**AG:** There had been reading lists in other services for years. But this was the first one that had enlisted people on it too.

**VR:** Right.

**AG:** And that made it a little different.

**VR:** And one quick thing, when we looked at some of these other lists, they had huge lists, maybe a hundred books. And one of things we determined early on is that no one is really likely to start a list of one hundred books. But if you assign them by grade, so we had them for all the way from young corporals up through colonels...

**AG:** Generals

**VR:** and eventually generals.

**AG:** The only people who didn’t have to read were the PFCs. They were supposed to read the guidebook.

**VR:** Then, about the time I thought I was caught up, General Gray said he would like to have a university. And no one was quite sure what it was, but the General’s guidance was we need to have something that pulls together everything that an officer or an NCO does in their career in some sort of institution that brings it together. That meant that you are going to have, then, Amphibious Warfare School, The Basic School, Command and Staff College, in some sort of institution.

**AG:** Staff NCO Academy.

**JS:** Staff NCO Academy.
**VR:** Staff NCO Academy. I had two wonderful lieutenant colonels, Tom Hobbs and Harry Burns, who laid out the vision of what now is the Marine Corps War College, the School for Advanced Warfighting, the curriculum that the Command and Staff College adopted, a number of other things and General Gray came down and we briefed him on it. I thought, “This is never going to fly.” He gave a thumbs up and added the requirement that it would be degree-producing. That there would be a degree, and not a degree that we would get from another university, but the Marine Corps University, and the schools would become accredited in their own right.

**AG:** Including the correspondence program.

**VR:** Including the correspondence. Which, those who are familiar with this, the Southern Association for Colleges is one of the most difficult agencies to get accredited in, and it took about seven years.

**AG:** Yes, and then, of course, typical of General Van Riper’s attention to detail, they made the extension course, the correspondence course, harder than the rest of the courses. I got all the books and read them and said, “Fix that, will you; it’s too hard.”

**Moderator:** And Sir, I think I read somewhere that while you were President of the university, you were sending mobile training teams out to the operating forces?

**VR:** This is interesting because *Warfighting* was in its final draft stages and I got a call from a division G-3; I won’t tell you the division. He felt his division commander’s billet was in jeopardy, that the Commandant might relieve him because he wasn’t proceeding quickly enough with Maneuver Warfare. And I think he was resisting somewhat, so the G-3 wanted to ensure that he protected his boss and got things up. He said, “Could you bring out a team from Quantico to help us to get a grasp of this?” I went back to what they called the “bullpen” and the first thing I got was, “Well, we’re overloaded. Sir we can’t do this.” I said, “When the Fleet Marine Forces, the Operating Forces, call, you gotta go.”

We put together a little 4-person team, John Schmitt, got 300 copies of the draft of what then was FMFM 1, went out and we had to go to the field with them because we didn’t have a budget for any hotels or anything like that. Barely had enough – I think airplane flights are all we could afford. We went out and introduced to this division, starting with the division headquarters, all the regiments and battalions, the ideas of maneuver warfare and they quickly got up on the step and turned around. That was what we called the Battle Staff Training Team. It went over very well and we quickly got requests from some of the Marine Amphibious Brigades and Expeditionary Brigades, the MEBs, and I think we did 7th MEB, we did 5th MEB, 1st MEB and 4th MEB in the time I was here. Then there was a question, “Is a Marine Expeditionary Force, MEF, a Warfighting headquarters?” And believe it or not, there were some officers who said, “No, it’s not a Warfighting headquarters. It simply apportions the resources within the units it owns.” There were those of us who believed it was a Warfighting headquarters so we began to go out with this and it
became this Battle Staff Training Program, then became the MAGTF Staff Training Program.

[00:55:52]

**AG:** It was really, originally, way back when, was a carryover from the amphibious program that used to go around the Marine Corps really and teach amphibious operations.

**Moderator:** And, so Sir (to General Gray), if I can, I’d like to ask you, how did you decide on Mr. Schmitt as the author?

**JS:** I’d love to know.

**AG:** I think before you ask that, you have to go back again. You have to understand a lot of the people involved, we can’t name them all, and you have to understand the politics and the way this came about. Instead of, in the 70s and early 80s, instead of writing a book on Maneuver Warfare or a doctrinal publication, we opted not to do that because it never would have been approved.

I knew enough about writing doctrine, I’d shepherded the SIGINT / EW doctrine through the Marine Corps as a young officer; it never would have been approved. There was a lot of opposition to it. People like Bill Lind and Jeff Record and many of the others who were pushing this, you need to understand now, Bill Lind, I mean despite – and we’re good friends – but a lot of people didn’t like Bill because he was very antagonistic. He was very critical of senior officers in public and all that kind. He wrote a series of articles that were damaging to the Marine Corps, under different commandants and different generals and the like. It was not a popular topic. Also, the idea that it much of it was heavily influenced initially by the German way of doing things, and a lot of the people would say, “Well, hell – they got beat.” There was a lot opposition. A lot of the colonels and a lot of the people didn’t want to learn anything new.

The reason that we drove to this idea all along was very simple. In any kind of conflict during the cold war, particularly with any kind of conflict that we could envision, we were going to be outnumbered. And if you ever made an amphibious operation, you’re outnumbered there in the beginning too. It simply made sense to learn how to fight a different way when you are outnumbered so that you could win.

That’s what maneuver, if you go back and study history; maneuver type thought process is the only vehicle that ever did that kind of thing. That’s what was driving this thought process. And you need to understand that Bill Lind was also a staff advisor to Senator Hart. There was very powerful people in Congress and staff and advising Congress that were pushing for reform and pushing for the maneuver idea and all of that and so it was a somewhat of a testy environment. We were repeatedly told not to do this, not to talk to these people. Our answer simply was, “we’ll talk to anybody that wants to help. They’re paying their own way, they’re doing it and we’re going to be good listeners.” You never learn anything while you’re talking. And
so, in effect, we took the Marine Corps’ way of doing things and ignored it for the most part.

I had a Force Commander say to me, “What are you talking about leading from the front? We always led from the front in my regiment. He was a good...I knew him well; he liked me too; I knew that. I said, “Yeah, who are your battalion commanders?” He said, “Well, it was me, he was three star guy, Bob Barrow, a guy Bryce Dwyer, he was also one of our generals out on the west coast. I mean, who were your battalion commanders?” I mean This is the kind of dialogue you’d have, the key though, is by doing it from the ground up, you are creating disciples, and that is how we did everything as an air ground logistics team; everything was MAGTF, even though I was just the Division Commander; that was the agreement we had. We had a maneuver warfare board, that helped publish these kind of things, helped publish the lessons learned. They had a reading list; people like GI Wilson and Bill Woods and Captain Long, logistician, , Captain Smith, General Smith’s son, who was killed in the Beirut bombing. He was on it. We had a great group of people; it was chaired initially by Sean Leech, remember him?

VR: Sure.

AG: and Leech had a good friend at Ohio State University who was an Army colonel and he pitched in and we had other services working on this too. One of our big proponents was a major over in 82nd Airborne who later ended up commanding JSOC and the 82nd Airborne and ...

[1:01:04]

VR: The other one that contributed so much was John Boyd.

AG: Yes, well, we had John come a little later. John came in...really... well I met Lind in 76 when I went back up to Carlisle, to the Army War College to participate in the annual National Security Seminar. Bill Lind was going to be there. And PX Kelly called me up. He was head of programming and plans and programs and said, “You’ve got to go up and meet this guy; there was the guy with a lot of controversy, and written a lot of bad stuff, you need to talk to him and teach him what you know,” that is how Lind and I met. We spent about five hours up there together just one on one talking about tactics and this and that and strategy; he was talking about the German model and all those kind of things. I was talking about Sun Tzu and it was great dialogue. At any rate, the point I want to make here is that rather than confront these people, or anything like that, we just kept going forward. It was not easy. You had the three star general here at Quantico at the time disliked Lind immensely. And made no bones about it. Wouldn’t allow him on the base.

JS: I remember that.

AG: You had that kind of environment.
AG: What we did is we built it from the ground up. Little by little you had well-known Marine officers become proponents. I’ll give you some examples. You talked about the thing earlier, at Pickett, with the 82nd Airborne….. we were actually teaching the breakout of an encirclement that day. It was the traditional layout where you had the 8th Marine Regiment Headquarters with two battalions inside your encirclement and some tanks, other combat service support capability, and you had a battalion and a tank battalion minus surrounded and you did the classic approach of putting checkpoints out, in 360.

The S-3 of the Regiment at the time had been my training officer in the division, Ray Smith, he was a major then, later was about to make lieutenant colonel. Very well respected, a great hero of Vietnam, a Navy Cross winner, and a really, really, really good tactician. Ray was in this combat operations center, had the radio there; a recon team out by checkpoint 16 came up and said, “We’re over by checkpoint 16; there’s nobody here.” As Smith grabbed the radio right then, and said, “Focus of Main Effort now changed. Everybody through Checkpoint 16”, everybody wheeled around and escaped. That’s the afternoon that Ray Smith became a believer. Ray Smith later commanded the battalion that went to Grenada and took eight of the eleven objectives in Grenada through maneuver warfare. That was the first practical example of maneuver warfare. If you don’t believe me, I’ll let you see a card here that you can read; it’s from Ray Smith, he gave me that when he got back from Lebanon. (Passes a card to S)

JS: It says, “General Gray, all the training done in mission orders made the difference in Grenada.” Ray Smith. (Passes the card to VR)

AG: Those are the kind of things we did. We had another operation down in Lejeune with the 2nd Marines against the 6th Marines. They were commanded by Bill Keyes and Jim Livingston, the Medal of Honor winner. Everything was free maneuver, force on force. We hadn’t brought that out yet, but had to be force on force and both forces were about equal size and you really had to think out there instead of having some scripted scenario. In the middle of this thing, all of a sudden, Bill Keyes comes up and says, “This stuff works.” Here you have another proponent, or another believer.

So little by little, the first thing you know, it was not really a problem, having it adopted on the East Coast because the air ground logistics team had been doing all these things and General Miller, the Force Commander, would let me do it. Letting us do it. That was not the problem. With John Schmitt’s story, to not exactly, there were three candidates to be the commandant in the spring of 1987. Not me. The other Gray: Duane Gray, Ernie Cheatham, and Tom Worth and all three were very good and all three were qualified. I had my letter in to retire. And only General Layton pitched it and didn’t send it forward, or I’d have been long gone. When they finally had a group to pick and so on…Barrow was supporting one, Wilson was supporting another one, and then finally, when they got done with the lottery, they picked up me in the middle of June. And everybody was like…maneuver
Warfare...it’s gone. They couldn’t wait to get rid of this crazy guy and get on with doing things as usual. All that changed. We had deliberately not written. We did a bunch of writing locally but literally did not write anything for Quantico or Headquarters to get into at that time.

**JS:** Until you became Commandant.

**AG:** Yes.

[1:06:53]

**[BEGIN Institutional Reform Video Clip]**

**JS:** And from the point of view of a case study of institutional reform, this whole period was a great case study of institutional reform, what was critical was we had that grass roots foundation that you had talked about. It was bubbling at the time. It was really enthusiastic, but it would have been killed off if the top of the organization, if the top of the institution didn’t support it. What became critical when you became Commandant is we now had top cover, that we were protected to do whatever want. There was now freedom to do this stuff and we were protected from the top and one of the first things you did, is you said, “Alright, now it’s time to write my manual.” And we were off and running.

**AG:** Well, you participated in that discussion too, at first.

**VR:** Yes, Sir.

**AG:** Yes. You know, because I held off a while. You know, I took over in ’87. We didn’t put the manual out until the spring of ’89.

**JS:** Right.

**VR:** In fact, there was a draft manual signed by the Commanding General of Quantico, FMFM 2. It largely was just a description of a Marine Air Ground Task Force, it really wasn’t a manual of how to do anything. General Gray got a copy and said, “Let’s stop the production of that.” Down here at Quantico, it was stopped and all the copies were pulled back. And then of course General Gray questioned, “If it’s the capstone manual why is it number two? Why don’t I have number one?”

**AG:** Well, the whole idea was to do it at the right time. We had a lot going on in ’87 and ’88. There were a lot of changes all driven toward a common purpose. There was a heck of a lot going on. A lot of it was controversial. If you just pick one, you’d say that’s enough.

For example, Marine Corps University. I said I want a Marine Corps University. I said it the second day I was there, the 2nd of July 1987. Six weeks later they came in with one of these POA&M plans to study it. And I said, “No, I want to do it. It’s already been studied.” In 1968, when General Masters was here at Quantico in charge, he had a study done by reserve officers. It was titled “Towards a Marine Corps
University.” I was always one of Masters’ guys and Masters sent for me to look at it. I looked at it and studied it and made a few recommendations to them. General Masters and I went way back to the early days in intelligence. He gave me the study. He said, “Here, they’re not going to do it.” One of the big reasons we did not qualify to be a university was because Breckinridge Library wasn’t big enough. That’s where that came from.

I kept the study in a footlocker. In 1987 I said, “Do it.” They gave me this plan to study it. I said “No, do it. I want you to stand it up on 10 November. Do you know what that date is?” Of course everybody knew it was the Marine Corps birthday and so they stood up the University. I said “We’ll fill in the blanks later.”

That was when I told Turley and the rest of them to study different libraries, because we had to expand the library. I knew what kind of library I wanted; I wanted the one down at Maxwell. I’d been down there about 30 times giving guest lectures and stuff like that. They really had a great program, but I let them figure that out. They finally did. And then we didn’t call it a library, we called it a Research Center because a library has an administrative connotation and Congress wouldn’t buy that. We got the 10 or 15 million dollars to get started and the rest is history. We also used got the Command and Staff College Foundation to buy all the inside of the Research Center.

VR: As I recall the story that was, Arnie Punaro, Senator Nunn’s senior staffer on the Senate Armed Services Committee, who was able to identify funds. It required three other committees’ approval. Two very quickly approved the funds because in the scale of things, it wasn’t much in DC. But another committee wanted to know why would the Marine Corps need a library. The implication being that it wasn’t the intellectual outfit we knew it to be. We quickly overcame that, and we had the money. It was done inside the POM, which is almost unheard of.

[1:11:26] [END Institutional Reform Video Clip]

Moderator: Well to keep us on time, I really appreciate all the conversation. We’ve got about 20 minutes left. What I’d like to do is offer an opportunity for each of you to offer some closing comments. But I’d like to change it up a little bit. Because one of the questions I asked is, “Is it time for another round?” The conditions and the environment that you described in 1976, 77, 78, they sound an awful lot like what may be going on now. One of the questions is, “What should we be doing now?”

Sir (to General Van Riper), you described a little, white building where people were getting together and regardless of rank, it is the ability to have a conversation based on the merit of the ideas. And Sir (to General Gray), you described the 2nd Marine Division Maneuver Warfare Board where people were excited about ideas and sharing and challenging. What should we be doing now in the wake of our time in Iraq and Afghanistan and are the necessary conditions present? And so, if we could, we’ll just start with Mr. Schmitt. You can take a few minutes to think about it. It sounds like it was a very exciting time and I wonder if we’re doing that now.
JS: Actually, I think we are in some ways. After I left active duty in 1993, I continued to be invited back to the Marine Corps University to talk about Warfighting for a few years after that. Then the institution kind of lost interest and I stopped coming to Quantico until just a few years ago. A couple of years ago, I started getting invited back again and there was a lot of renewed interest in MCDP 1. It was renewed interest from a sort of historical perspective. And what I realized is that a lot of the officers themselves were seeing a parallel between the Marine Corps of the late 70s and 80s, trying to find its future, and the Marine Corps now coming out of Iraq and Afghanistan in roughly the same position.

They were interested because they were wondering if there was anything they could learn from our experience. I think certainly a lot of the Marines today see parallels and think it’s time to revisit where we are and what our doctrine needs to be. From my personal point of view, I don’t know that I feel close enough to it to say that we need new doctrine or not. On the one hand, we tried to be as timeless as we could with Warfighting and I think we succeed largely, so to that extent it ought to still endure and hold up. On the other hand, I’d like to think after 25 years, we’ve learned something and we ought to be able to incorporate that experience and make the doctrine even stronger. I have kind of mixed emotions about it. I’d love to take another crack at it, though; it would be an interesting exercise to do.

Moderator: Yes, Sir. General Van Riper?

VR: I’d start with a book, the most quoted work in the English language but very few people have read or are even aware of the book. It’s by Thomas Kuehn, it’s called the Structure of Scientific Revolutions. He introduced the idea of paradigms and paradigm shifts into our lexicon. What he said was in any profession, you have what is called received wisdom. In our case, it would be the received wisdom from The Basic School, from the Amphibious Warfare, now Expeditionary Warfare School, Command and Staff College, the war colleges. And then you practice the profession using that received wisdom. You can go through a whole career simply within that paradigm that you have received in your formal education, unless there are anomalies. And if there are anomalies, that paradigm begins to be questioned. Enough of them, you have a crisis and the paradigm collapses and you need a new one. That’s what happened to the generation I think General Gray and I represented.

We went to Vietnam and the received wisdom didn’t work. We came back, disillusioned, in some cases embittered. Those who decided to stay and find out what was wrong and fix it, in a sense, created a new paradigm. General Gray, at the forefront with maneuver warfare and all the books he has talked about in support of it, that did it. And this paradigm takes hold and now has been in existence for 25 years. The real question we need to ask of today’s generation: “Have there been anomalies? Were there anomalies in Desert Shield/Desert Storm? Were there anomalies when we went into Afghanistan, first went into Iraq and of course then later?”
I think one way you could find this out is to do what all great militaries have done in the past and that is do a historical analysis of your recent combat experience. Probably the best example would have been the Germans. They had 57 separate studies that they looked at after the First World War, from that historical analysis, you see what the anomalies are and begin to then decide how we’re going to make changes.

AG: Yes, I think we have to... I feel very strongly that FMFM 1 or the MCDP 1, I think that it’s a philosophy, not a doctrine. And that philosophy has held until now and I think that the philosophy is exactly right on for the future. That’s why I think, in part, the Commandant’s stressed reading it again and there are quite a few units... I just got an email the other day. “Everybody in my outfit reread Warfighting” and the reason I say that is because the philosophy, Maneuver Warfare, is the wrong term really. We didn’t know what to call it. We argued about that for a long time, talked about it. It’s fine now, but maneuver warfare is a thought process. It’s a thought process. That’s all it really, really is – it’s an expanded thought process and it empowers people and it helps people get involved in creative thinking. It tries to teach people that uncertainty and chaos can be your friend and you need to be operative in that kind of an environment if you’re going to be successful. And even all that’s been written about 4th Generation Warfare and that type of thing, it really blends right into the maneuver warfare thought process.

It’s really just an extension of it, as Paul went out in terms of some of the things that your wisdom, as you look to the future. There’s nothing in there that can’t be used today and tomorrow. There may be some things, not in there, that could be used. And that is one of the things, the reason you want to do what General Van Riper is saying, go back and do your historical analysis of where you’ve been and what you did. I think that more importantly what we should do now. We’ve got to remember that we’re naval in character. We’ve got to understand that we’re amphibious and expeditionary. We’ve got to get the Navy back up on the step in terms of coming from the sea and doing what you can in what we call a striking fleet kind of an environment. We need to go back and have multiple war games, not just small wars, but big time war games. The generals need to be involved, the colonels; everybody needs to be involved including the SNCOs and we need to go through a, as you said, sort of an intellectual renaissance here, about our profession and what we can do to be better.

We need to do it in a way, as I told the Sergeants Major here earlier today. We need to do it in such a way that the young people who have fought so well in Iraq and Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa and around the globe, that they don’t feel that that’s all lost. I mean, they’re good. They’re very good at what they do. We just need to teach them and show them more of the things they haven’t been doing and talk about some of the things they ought to be thinking about. I think that’s where we really need to – you know, I think the senior officers need to be energized a little bit in this whole arena. Everybody is kind of sitting around waiting for the shoe to drop
or looking for what is going to happen next. They are feeling kind of comfortable in what they are doing. It is not a comfort profession. It is a profession where you are out there trying to get better at all times, because it is not how ready you can be. Anybody can be ready to get on a ship or get on an airplane. It’s are you prepared to win or be successful? That takes study and thought and “what if” games. That’s how you get better. In addition to reading about things, I think that’s the route they ought to go.

[1:20:47]

**VR:** General Gray mentioned earlier, and I wanted to pick up on it, was force on force. That is one of the things I think I’ve observed that has slipped away. If you don’t do force on force, you are kidding yourself. If you do one-sided exercises against a script or teaching point, it is a waste of time. That is not only in the field with exercises, that is in the schoolhouse. When you are in the schoolhouse, if you are doing an exercise, there ought to be a living, breathing opponent on the other side going back.

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And one other quick thing on opening up a document such as *Warfighting* for revision; the only reason it was opened up previously is because it was a very unique document: Small, short, easy to read, very powerful. And then, when I returned here after having been the President of the University, I came back as the Commanding General of the Combat Development Command, and I had responsibility for doctrine. I looked and there were over 300 doctrinal publications. As I began to look through the titles, clearly titles had nothing to do with doctrine.

I had a very smart colonel by the name of Bob Dobson who came back to me with the recommendation we would have 10 high order doctrinal pubs called Marine Corps Doctrinal, then the tactics, techniques and procedures would be Warfighting Pubs and then we would have an unlimited number of Reference Pubs. That meant that FMFM 1 was going to have to fall into this new category of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, following the staff functions and would be certainly reprinted. One of the errors that was made in reopening it was center of gravity was reintroduced which was a loaded term. Where what John Schmitt had done was take critical vulnerabilities, and made it a much better term. Any time you open a document for revision, you can get problems. Never confuse intellectual activity with staffing. *Warfighting* was never staffed, in the sense that we know staffing. It was General Gray who shared it with individuals he had great respect for, and enlisted their advice. It didn’t go around the entire Marine Corps where everybody had a chop on it. It retained its power and coherence.

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**AG:** Particularly the iron majors.

**VR:** They’ll mess it up every time.

**Moderator:** Thank you, gentlemen, so much.

[1:23:22]