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Biographical Note
David M. Shoup (1904 - 1983) served as the Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps from 1960 to 1963. This interview focuses on John F. Kennedy (JFK)'s handling of Cold War crises, U.S. military involvement in Southeast Asia, and the debate regarding U.S. resumption of nuclear testing, among other issues.

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David M. Shoup—JFK #1
Table of Contents

Oral History Interview

with

DAVID M. SHOUP

Arlington, Virginia
April 7, 1967

By Joseph E. O'Connor

For the John F. Kennedy Library

O'CONNOR: General Shoup, perhaps you could begin this by telling us, really, what your first contact, or first impressions, at any rate, of John Kennedy were.

SHOUP: Well, I think the first impression, as a matter of fact, the first time that I remember viewing his face was during the campaign for the presidency. It took place, I believe, in San Francisco where he and President [Lyndon B.] Johnson were vying for the top vote, and there was a debate that was scheduled between Senator Johnson and President, hopeful President Kennedy.

O'CONNOR: This was at the Convention?

SHOUP: At the Cow Palace, I believe, or previous to it, at the Convention, in which they were each to give their views. As a matter of fact, they were competitors, and they gave their views--or they were to give them. I guess it's fair to speak and say Johnson and Kennedy in this conference. Johnson spoke first, and both my wife and I were listening and observing on the television. They each had a certain amount of time, as I believe, one minute or two minutes. Johnson spoke first and then Kennedy spoke, and my remark to my wife was, "Well, Kennedy has drowned this fellow in thirty seconds. I would say that

Johnson hasn't the slightest chance of outdoing this gentleman because of what I just saw." It all happened in maybe a minute's time. And my wife completely agreed with me. That was the first time I ever. . . . And I held my conviction until his election; there was really no competition between Kennedy and Johnson if the public ever saw that film.

O'CONNOR: Well, how about Kennedy and [Richard M.] Nixon; did you have any feelings one way or another toward hoping that one man or the other would be elected?

SHOUP: Well, he so impressed me by this one speech that I was very much in favor of President--of Kennedy being elected. I'm not a politician; I've voted for no President in my lifetime simply because I felt that I couldn't be a Democrat or a Republican and serve objectively for the other party if it was a President because he was just my commander in chief, and he wasn't a Democrat or Republican.

O'CONNOR: Well, I should have mentioned before we started this that we're interested also, not only in John Kennedy and John Kennedy's Administration, but the men who worked with John Kennedy. For example, Secretary [Robert S.] McNamara. And I wanted to know what your feeling was when President Kennedy and Secretary McNamara took over, one as President and one as his Defense Secretary.

SHOUP: When they immediately took over, of course, I had no acquaintance whatsoever with Mr. McNamara. But I did have acquaintance with the machinations of the Defense Department and the Congress inasmuch as I had previously been the comptroller, or fiscal officer, of the Marine Corps for five years. And I was aware of some of the, what I thought to be, terrific faults in the processes

being used, and I was hopeful that we were getting a man that would help us out of such dilemma that always seemed to come to pass. Well, I can sum my feelings up about Defense Secretary McNamara, particularly with respect to having served with him for four years, and I suppose in discussions with him on an average of, at least, probably more than once a week, and I think that I can safely say--and I don't think anybody can find evidence to the contrary--thatthere isn't any question that in the area of administration, procurement, and business he is the greatest thing that ever happened to the Defense Department. I believe I ought to know. I don't think there's any question of it. Now do you really want little items about his first days?

O'CONNOR: Sure, if you can think of anything, that's what we'd like to have.

SHOUP: Well, one of the interesting things to me was that in the early days we were, I believe, involved in Laos by that time, and there was a question about organization and what have you. And with his very inclusive mind, while we gave him no credit whatsoever for being a military man, and I don't believe he was, he would question the organization of a mortar platoon, when, of course, you know we had such people as General [Lyman L.] Lemnitzer, the Army Chief of Staff, and yours truly that had been working for a hell of a lot of years and perfected these organizations in combat and what have you. So we, not only inwardly, I guess, in his presence, but outwardly outside of his presence, questioned his audacity, in effect, in questioning the organization of these outfits, questioning the number of rounds of ammunition they ought to carry, or something like that. We really gave him a low mark in that respect. But I judged right away that what he was trying to do was educate himself and damn quickly; he wanted to know something about it. I mean, how do you do this, how do you arrive at this kind of an organization in a military organization? And how can you prove that this is the best outfit to compete with the enemy? That's what he wanted to know, and he had a right to know it.

Now, the interesting thing about it was that he told us frankly, he said, "I know I'm doing some things probably you don't like, that you don't want." He says, "Come up and tell me about it." And he says, "Well, better than that, I'll come down here, and we'll schedule a time. You set a time, I'll come down here, and you tell me." Nobody wanted to tell him that we didn't like this business, and that he wasn't getting along well with his Joint Chiefs in this respect. Well, every time he would come down, the next time, that's when we were going to do it. We were really going to tell him. It seemed to me that General Lemnitzer always got around this commitment some way and we never got to tell him. I was ready to tell him. We never got to tell him, there was always something else. I suppose this shouldn't be in there, but you can take it out.

O'CONNOR: Well, you can take it out.

SHOUP: Because it reflects on me, see.
Well, I didn't accept this. So after one of the Monday morning meetings in the Secretary of Defense's office, I went by the end of the table, and I said, "Mr. Secretary, may I see you for one minute?" He said, "Well, you can see me for all the minutes you want to." So everybody else left, and I stayed in there and I really told him off. I told him just exactly what the hell we didn't like about him.

O'CONNOR: Well, what did you tell him. Can you tell us specifically about it?

SHOUP: Yes, I can tell you. We resented his attitude of trying to determine what the organization of a squad ought to be and a mortar platoon and a few of the things that were reserved, we thought, strictly for military men who had had military experience in combat where these things were being used to win the war. I mean, that was essentially the area of conflict.

O'CONNOR: Well, what was his reaction to that?

SHOUP: He thanked me very much. He said, "Well, if you find anything else, you please come up and tell me." He says, "That's what I want to know." I think that's my discussion with the Secretary that was most interesting. And soon, as he began to get into this picture, that kind of questioning on the matter of what a squad leader's job was seemed to end, don't you see.

O'CONNOR: That seems incredible that a Secretary of Defense could be questioning on that level.

SHOUP: But he wanted to know everything, and he had a mind that could encompass it. Particularly, I suppose, it's interesting to note that the Army squad was organized differently than the Marine squad, and that concerned him, you know. When both fought the enemy on the ground, essentially, why should one be different than the other?

O'CONNOR: Well, did you get much in the way of strong feelings from the other men? Why didn't they talk up if they felt so strongly about it?

SHOUP: Why didn't they what?

O'CONNOR: Why didn't they talk to him if they felt so strongly about it?

SHOUP: Well, maybe . . .

O'CONNOR: Did he intimidate the Joint Chiefs of Staff, do you think?

SHOUP: Oh no, no, no. He was anxious to see us. Well, I think maybe it's something like asking a girl to marry you. It sometimes takes a lot of guts to do it. But I felt he ought to know. He wanted to know, he asked to know, and I felt he should know. And so, damn it, I just took it upon my self to clear my conscience, anyway, that I had told him what I thought, and I felt essentially, at least in this particular area the others felt the same way, and that was a rough splinter in our associations today. And he accepted it wonderfully.

O'CONNOR: Well, there was also some hard feeling on the part of several members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff about the influx of brilliant civilians . . .

SHOUP: Well . . .

O'CONNOR: I mean fellow civilians. Did that bother you or did you . . .

SHOUP: It did not and, as a matter of fact, I welcomed such a dusting off of the age-old inefficiency that existed in that place. I'm talking particularly in the business of business administration. Well, I mean, one example, we weren't getting rifles. We were supposed to be getting ten thousand a month and, I don't know, we were getting five hundred or less. Mr. McNamara went right to bat on this thing, and the first thing we knew we were getting more than we were supposed to get--but because he knew business, and he knew how to twist their tails and get

what he wanted and what we needed. Our people had never been able to do it, the military people who were making the contracts for the Defense Department. Seemingly, everybody's hands were tied. The manufacturer gave you some willy-nilly excuse, and we accepted it, whereas they might have been turning them out and selling them to some foreign country just for the--what for, we don't know. But anyway, we weren't getting them. The contract was being violated, but nothing happened, no penalty. And all those kinds of things Mr. McNamara was on top of. I would say he really shook this place down, and some day somebody ought to write some history of the improvement in the business. And, of course, a lot of these so-called quiz-kids and brain-trusters that they had, they were working for Mr. McNamara to produce statistics and analyses that he could feed into his machine and come out with what he was looking for.

I would like to go back here to this business with the Joint Chiefs. I think the reason that we never--I've thought about it many times. I've talked not to General Lemnitzer but to the other members over there as to why the hell didn't the Chairman open up this. He was supposed to, that's what we all agreed. "Today we're going to tell him, see, and we'll have it." I really think perhaps General Lemnitzer's determination wasn't because he feared to talk to him, but I think, perhaps, he felt that as Chairman maybe he didn't want to open up a big imbroglio over there that would maybe, in some way, cement a permanent feeling of aggression against the new Secretary. And maybe he was right. You see, we could have gotten into one real big affair because when you get down there, you don't necessarily have to keep your temperature below 98.6. I've often wondered if maybe General Lemnitzer wasn't really smarter than we thought, but he didn't do it. He never said anything when we quit. Nobody had enough nerve to ask him, "Well, why the hell didn't you bring this up? I thought you were going to bring this up." I was ready to tell him. But we wouldn't do that. So I just got tired of the whole thing, and I said, "Nuts, I'm an individual, and I'm going to tell him. I want McNamara told."

O'CONNOR: Okay, let's get back to John Kennedy.

SHOUP: Yes.

O'CONNOR: When, really, were your first meetings with him? I presume--well, I know the Joint Chiefs of Staff had meetings that concerned Laos, and I thought perhaps that was your first business contact with him.

SHOUP: Well, business. My first contact was on Inauguration Day, as I remember, in the White House.

O'CONNOR: Okay, tell us about that.

SHOUP: I realized, standing in a ring around, waiting for what I presumed to be a reception line to say hello to him, there wasn't any question in my mind, he recognized me, which seemed unusual to me because I had never seen him except on television. But I tried to put two and two together, and remembering that he was a good friend of Robert Sherrod who wrote the book Tarawa, I suspected. . . . Then when we went through the receiving line, he actually said, "General, I have read about you." So I presumed that that's the only place it could have been. That was my first meeting with the President. Then I think, probably, the next meeting was a Cabinet meeting with the Joint Chiefs at which I was, in effect, an observer. I believe those were the first social, if you want to call it that, and the second, the first business observation I ever had with President Kennedy.

O'CONNOR: Well, there's been particular comment on a meeting early in the Kennedy Administration between the President and the Joint Chiefs of Staff--and I'm sure that the Secretary of Defense and various other people were there, also; Lyndon Johnson was there--concerning Laos. And the comment that has been made about this meeting was that there were recommendations coming from the various members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff about what the United States should do in Laos--the President had asked for recommendations--and that all the recommendations went in different directions. Some people felt there should be troops put in, some people felt there shouldn't be troops put in, some people felt there should be air strikes only, some people felt there shouldn't be air strikes, some people felt that nuclear weapons should be considered, some people felt that nuclear weapons shouldn't be considered. I wondered if you remembered this particular meeting or meetings on Laos that were rather confused.

SHOUP: This would have to be checked because I don't specifically pinpoint it--I know to what you refer, but I don't specifically pinpoint it. But it could well have been a time when each of us had our own written--we were each asked to bring our own written idea of it, which I did. And I hope you take this out of this record.

O'CONNOR: Sure, you can take out whatever you want to or close whatever you want to.

SHOUP: Much later I was told by Mr. [Walt W.] Rostow and some other people there that I had the best thought-out idea that came in. I think that's perhaps why some of those people over there began to say, "Well, who the hell is this Marine?" Nevertheless, that's what happened. I believe that is the case; I believe that's the time because we were told to come back with our own individual opinion. Of course, you know. I believe along with all the others that we were all as military men quite concerned about the impropriety and impracticability of logistic support for an operation which was cut off from the sea, and that if anything got going there at all, it might flair into such a sized operation that we just couldn't logistically support it. No one, I don't believe, was very much in favor of doing anything except finding some way to stop it and get out. Particularly, we had Marines up in the north at the airfield. They played the role that they were expected to play, and I guess it was kind of a bluff that we'd put more troops in if we needed them. And to show you how to do it, here's the way we can do it, and we've got more. But no one here was very happy about the prospect of having to provide logistical support forces, even though they got busy right away building additional roads and, I guess, airfields and warehouses and railroads. I understand that the locomotives are still sitting there where they were.

O'CONNOR: But the comment that was made about this meeting, or the meetings on Laos was that they were very confused, that the Joint Chiefs of Staff didn't seem to be--well, there certainly wasn't any unanimity among the Joint Chiefs of Staff about a program. But you say that you were asked individually to bring up your recommendations.

SHOUP: I believe that's exactly right. At least in one of these things, and it surely wasn't Vietnam because we hadn't come to that yet. I believe that's correct, that we were asked individually, because we each individually prepared a paper and we had to turn it in, as I remember, we had to turn it in. Somebody picked them up. Now they might have all been submitted from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs with each Chief's position attached, don't you see, and that's probably how it worked. I don't think that the President ever expected us to have unanimity. As a matter of fact, if everybody agrees with you, they're no help to you because you don't get any ideas other than your own.

O'CONNOR: You didn't feel, though, that the President or the Secretary of Defense were kind of floundering in this particular situation.

SHOUP: I didn't feel that. . . . Well, they were floundering for information and opinions, and history didn't very well provide any basis to make a big decision about. I think the military men were not floundering inasmuch as they were willing and ready with the forces available to them to do anything the President decided. But after all, the military men could not make the decision, they could only point out their understanding of the problem, try to relate it to all the political factors that they're aware of, and make a recommendation. In a matter of that kind, you're quite apt to hope that everybody agrees. Then the Chairman has an easy job if he agrees with everybody else because he can just say to the Secretary, "This is it; this is what we think." But when they don't agree, then there is a provision that you can speak your own piece. I think that's what was done in this particular area.

O'CONNOR: Also, one more question that has to deal with this particular problem. I've heard said that some, or just one member, of the Joint Chiefs of Staff felt that there was at least a possibility that nuclear weapons should be used in Laos, and at the same time there was a fear on the part of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the new Administration really wouldn't use nuclear weapons almost under any circumstances.

SHOUP: Well, I'll tell you my strong belief. Whoever said that, or whoever even thought that nuclear weapons should be used in Laos was very misinformed about what a proper target for a nuclear weapon consisted of or should be, because in all the analysis that I remember, there was never any target presented--or were thought to in the future present themselves that would warrant the use of the nuclear weapons.

O'CONNOR: Well, was there any feeling on your part or any suspicion on your part that the new Administration wouldn't be willing to use this weapon in the arsenal? Not just for Laos, but I mean in general.

SHOUP: No, absolutely not, absolutely not. I felt that if the situation, like the view comes out on the picture if everything is just right, that it really wouldn't be too much of a problem because you'd have to do it. Of course, after nuclear attack you'd have to do it. But I mean, if you could try to get it off first on the basis of a set of circumstances which indicated that we might be attacked. I felt that that was obviously an extremely important situation that faced the President. Because never in my mind did I ever feel that President Kennedy, if the need came that he would do it. My contention was, I think, repeatedly supported later in the Cuban Crisis. There's no question about it.

O'CONNOR: Okay. Let's move on then to, I suppose, the second problem that presented itself very quickly to the Administration. That was the Bay of Pigs business. There has been a lot of controversy over the responsibility of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in connection with planning and approving the Bay of Pigs invasion. Do you have any comments on that?

SHOUP: I would simply like to have history record when I speak today, I speak from the, perhaps, limited knowledge of the Commandant of the Marines, and not knowing what knowledge others had that I didn't. But it could well be that others had much more knowledge than I. So I speak in that framework. Number one, I was asked at a certain point in time to provide a colonel, this is to the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency]. . . . This kind of stuff won't go in the press now.

O'CONNOR: No, this absolutely will not.

SHOUP: . . . .by the CIA to furnish a colonel with certain qualifications. I provided this officer, and to my knowledge he did one of the finest jobs ever done by anybody under such circumstances. And as far as I know, even the Marine Corps officers had no idea what this fellow was doing or where he was or anything else.

O'CONNOR: Could you give us the name of this officer or would you prefer not to?

SHOUP: I don't think I'll give it.

O'CONNOR: I'd be very interested in it for the simple reason that within the next month I'm going to interview two people--one who was very, very deeply connected with the planning and the second who was very deeply connected with the investigation.

SHOUP: Were they Marine officers?

O'CONNOR: No, these two were not Marine officers at all. They . . .

SHOUP: Well, let's leave it out here. We can put it in. I'll make a memo. I don't know of any real reason, but I'd rather not talk about it.

O'CONNOR: All right.

SHOUP: Well, he was involved in the training of these people who would go down to Ecuador or one of those places.

O'CONNOR: Guatemala?

SHOUP: Guatemala, what have you. This, at this time, had nothing to do with the Joint Chiefs or, as far as I know, the Defense Department. This was an individual request by a CIA official to me personally. I had nothing to do with it. Whether anybody in the Defense Department knew this, I don't know. But at any rate, the officer I sent did a good job in the area of his responsibility. Well, that's the first inkling that I had of anything like this. The next thing I knew we were talking in the Joint Chiefs about this thing had gotten a little off. . . . I'd better put it another way. It had really gotten out of the capacity and capability of the CIA to bring it to fruition. Assuming that the President had approved the CIA business, to my knowledge military people didn't know anything about this--to my knowledge. I didn't know anything about it. But after--and I don't know whether it was between the time of furnishing an officer and the time that first it was officially brought to the attention of the Joint Chiefs in a meeting as a body, I was on an inspection trip to one

of my supply areas, and Jesus, I went in where they were shooting their rifles, cleaning rifles, and boxing them, and I said, "What the hell is this?" He said, "We're shipping ten thousand rifles." "Oh," I said, "you are?" "Yeah." I said, "Well, how come you're doing that?" "Well, the Quartermaster General ordered us to ship ten thousand rifles to some goddam place in Texas. I don't know where." "Well," I said, "that's very interesting. I'm the Commandant, you know." I said, "How are you getting along?" "Oh, we're going to make it working like this." I didn't know anything about it. So I went back upstairs, and I found out that the Quartermaster General didn't know anything about it. A new low ranking major or something down in the ordnance department of the Quartermaster General's department had issued the order, which was his right to do in the name of ordnance. But he had been contacted--we'll use the word improperly--but anyway, he had been contacted by the CIA fellow to do this, and of course he went ahead and did it, just as I did with the eight inch guns on Okinawa. The reason was this was my first experience in knowing that the CIA could come to you with a document which would cause you to have to--or else disobey the President's orders--furnish any damn thing you have in your division--they took my radios away from me, and I'd just got them, and all that kind of stuff. So here they were again after ten thousand rifles. Well, this was another part of this. I don't know whether those ten thousand rifles went to this outfit or some other place they were trying to work on, but nevertheless that's the way they operated. They had a carte blanche on any thing you had. They could take your tanks, your artillery, or your any other thing, and you might put 'em on the dock in accordance with the documents they had in their hands. Well, then came the day when they said the CIA boys were in a little bit above their fetlocks and they were looking for help. That's the way that I understood it. Then's when the Defense Department assigned them military people to work on the logistics aspects of this doggone thing. I believe that's the first time I ever heard the name of the CIA man who was dreaming this up. I think it was. . . .

O'CONNOR: [Richard M.] Bissell.

SHOUP: Bissell, Bissell, yes. That's the first time I ever heard his name. Well then, from then on things went on to the air part. But I was called on the telephone about, it must have been 1:30 in the morning, the night of the fiasco. And this colonel I referred to was crying and said, "General, you've got to get ahold of the President because they have influenced him to call off the air strike." And he said, "We're going to fail. You've got to help." He was crying, but of course I said, "Well, has he already made his decision?" He said, "Yes, they told us we're not going to do it." I said, "Well, Christ knows that I can't do anything. Maybe if I'd had a chance beforehand. . . ." Well, he was very evasive and made some comments about the U.N. chief and the Secretary of State. It was all so mixed up that I never got it straightened out from him, and I don't know whether I have it straightened out. All I know is that the President of the United States said, "Okay, don't use the air power." And I have closed the chapter on the Bay of Pigs--and I think quite properly so, except maybe for a few things. When the President of the United States publicly to America said, "I'm at fault," I think that ought to end it.

O'CONNOR: Questions still will have to be investigated simply because the President took public responsibility, you know, very graciously and very generously so. Nonetheless, all the key decisions were not made by him in effect. The planning and so forth was not made by him.

SHOUP: Well, I can't remember what kind of an apparatus they had, but when this thing came to the military minds, essentially for help in my opinion, there was a good deal of reaction, I thought pretty rational, on the basis that the decision had already been made to do it. Nobody in the Joint Chiefs, as far as I know, had anything to do. I didn't have anything to do with making the basic decision to try to erupt down there. The decision was made; we were just trying to help him do what we understood had been approved by giving people, material, training help, and God knows what else. I don't know. There are a lot of things that I don't know about it, I'm sure. But it wasn't a matter of us deciding whether it was good or bad. I think that there was complete unanimity among the military people in the "tank" that without the help of this air, and even more air, they had one very poor chance of success. In other words, particularly as a Marine, this matter of landing on a foreign shore against what might be some pretty heavy opposition, that if they could do it that way and be successful, we were going to a lot of trouble we didn't need to go to. That was sort of my reaction to it. It was these people who say something like you just said there that it has to be investigated. You see, there's no way to tell whether they would have succeeded if they'd had the air. So it's like whether you take your medicine or you don't. You don't take it, you can't say it didn't help you. It's not under control unless you take it. So nobody knows whether or not, with that help, the Cubans in that area would have joined these forces as was expected and as was used as one of the big reasons for the good chance of success--and how they determined that, I don't know. I suppose they must have had some people in there, of course, but that was completely out of my field. But these people were. . . . And without that help they couldn't have succeeded. So there was no certainty from several viewpoints. And whoever determined what the good would be if it was successful as against what the bad would be if it wasn't successful and determined it was the thing to do, to try, was before my time. It was back in the [Dwight D.] Eisenhower Administration, I guess.

O'CONNOR: Well, one of the criticisms that had been made was that the operation was planned by people who knew very little about amphibious operations, about invading an island or something like that.

SHOUP: Up to the point where this Marine officer was put in there, as far as I know they didn't have anybody who knew anything about it. As I tried to relate, if that's the way you could do it and be successful, then the Marine Corps has been wasting a lot of time and effort.

O'CONNOR: But this man, this colonel, for example, that you were called for, must have had some experience in this sort of thing. Presumably this is one of the reasons they wanted him.

SHOUP: Yes. Because it was becoming quite an affair; there was quite a training problem. They were shoving these people around there and, hell, nobody with a military background, as far as I know, that could be looked upon to be the point of contact between the CIA as to what was going on and who could perhaps execute some of their orders. Well, I would just say that if the Marine Corps were given the job for something like that, we would have done it a lot differently.

O'CONNOR: Did you at any time, or people under you at any time, have the opportunity to approve of or disapprove the specifics of the operation, the logistics, supplies, or the air support, or anything of this sort?

SHOUP: Well, they'd come in and show what was going on, and this officer that they got and, I guess, the logistics officer, and I believe Bissell was down there once, at least, I believe before the. . . . Well, I'll just be honest about it. As far as I'm concerned, this was my first experience of knowing what kind of machinations that the CIA could get into. I'll be absolutely honest about it, I didn't know they went in for this kind of thing. So I was astounded, first, that they would be in this kind of business to that extent. Maybe they'd be trying to influence somebody in some capital within the leadership. But to develop an invasion force without the know-how and all the experience and backing of a military force just astounded me. I just didn't think any such thing would happen. I didn't know they were that kind of an outfit. And so, as far as the success of it was concerned, for the whole time I really held my apron strings in a loose bow because I just didn't believe it could be successful. I knew it couldn't be successful if they kept on dallying about the air. Then when they said, "Okay, you may have some air," they had enough airplanes to, being forced into it. . . . It was pretty secret, really, I guess. I've never heard the other side of it. I don't think they really knew what was coming in there because it was so audacious. In fact, it was so audacious that it might have had a chance to get the people ashore by first knocking out their airplanes, which took airplanes to do, and then if the local community rallied to the. . . . But they'd still have a long row to hoe even after that. But that was something out of my hand, and, as I say, it just astounded me.

O'CONNOR: Well, the Joint Chiefs of Staff has come under considerable criticism, though, in connection with the Bay of Pigs and . . .

SHOUP: I know, I know. I think unfortunately and unfairly.

O'CONNOR: Well, that's what I wanted to get from you, whether or not you thought . . .

SHOUP: You've got it. I personally feel, based on the knowledge that I had, and that may have been just very meager, but based on the knowledge that I had, I think unjustly and unfairly because, in the first place, it was shoved in their laps way too far advanced. They'd taken a far too advanced position by the time, as far as I know, we ever knew about it. Maybe the Chairman did, maybe some of them did, but I didn't know about it, except through this contact. It wasn't military; it was just something that was going on, approved by the government, and what the hell, I'm helping on it. And that's all I knew about it until they yelled for help. They got in over their heads, and so, as far as I'm concerned, they yelled for help from the Joint Chiefs and the Defense Department.

O'CONNOR: But you don't feel at that time, when they yelled for help, that the Joint Chiefs of Staff could have said, "Look it, we don't approve of this plan because it won't succeed given the small number . . ."

SHOUP: Wait a minute, you have to look at the background of this. We weren't given this on the basis of what do you recommend.

O'CONNOR: Yes, that's what I wanted . . .

SHOUP: We were given this on the basis of, "You help us do it. You help get this thing on the road and get it done." We weren't asked. . . . Well, I think every one of us probably expressed the opinion that the thing was pretty flimsy. I mean, the logistic support, particularly, that's what the trouble was. And then they got into the business of getting an air armada, for example, they wanted to know how many planes. . . . Well, it took a tremendous organization, with coordination of air and ground, the support and bombing. Nobody believed, I don't think, that they could ever get that done. Well, that's what the Marine officers were, to get this air and the ground, and the coordination between the targets so you didn't shoot up

your own troops, and the timing and the schedules, and the landing diagram and the approach schedules and the bombing aircraft and naval gunfire support planned and everything so that they worked. It was a strange thing to me that they'd gotten that far along, and whether there was, in the first place, the idea of sending a canoe full of people in there and then it just kept growing like Topsy, I don't know because that to me is a blank. I never questioned this young officer after this thing. I think he took his stripings for it along with everybody else, although I don't suppose today one person in a hundred will be able to tell you. I think he's been passed over for promotion, I don't know, I don't. Not that I refer to that as a punishment or anything for this action, I don't know. You'll find that he probably got. . . . As a matter of fact, the CIA persons that he worked directly for could never have been higher in praise of any human being.

O'CONNOR: That is very difficult to understand, really, where responsibility lay, or how much lay with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, how much lay with the CIA . . .

SHOUP: Well, I don't think any of the Joint Chiefs could have rightfully taken a position to argue with a Presidential decision. They weren't asked to tell us why we ought to stop this now. I don't ever remember being approached on that basis. But, as I say, it's understandable that I might have been left out of some of the meetings because in theory I was only supposed to be at meetings in which the Marine Corps was involved. Of course, we were involved, we had Marines in it. But I don't think I ever missed a meeting on it. Nobody ever questioned my participation. In fact, I was given the most wonderful treatment in the world. Nobody ever questioned me. Someone did once say, "Well, I don't think the Commandant of the Marine Corps should be interested in this." He wondered why, and I said, "Well, I'm a citizen of the United States." But anyway, I say there could have been many meetings in which, there being no Marines or no expected Marine Corps participation, that it couldn't affect

the Marine Corps in any way at any time, even though we might have been, if it had erupted, called to go in and rescue or fight for somebody--there could have been many meetings that I know nothing about, but I don't think so.

O'CONNOR: Well, it's amazing to me that the Marine Corps wasn't more directly involved in this, simply because the Marine Corps is more experienced in exactly this kind of operation than any other . . .

SHOUP: But this was a secret matter, top secret matter. You can't take Marines out of Camp Lejeune and send them . . .

O'CONNOR: And make it secret.

SHOUP: You can't have it secret. I believe this thing was pretty well handled as far as the secrecy was concerned. I've never heard otherwise.

O'CONNOR: Well, it has often been said, apart from the responsibility of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that the failure of the Bay of Pigs helped to destroy some of the confidence between John Kennedy and the Joint Chiefs. Did you ever feel that, did you ever get that idea?

SHOUP: I never felt that way, and I never heard it expressed. I think we were all rather concerned that once this thing was all set up and approved--I think what you were trying to get at a minute ago about the Joint Chiefs and to my recollection of it--we all had our qualms as to whether this thing would go or not, but we knew damn well it wouldn't go if they didn't have the air support. So, granted this, which is air support over which we had no control, there was no reason for us to get up and yell that it would be unsuccessful. But one of the things was the air that there was no way for a human being to conceive of any degree of success or to conceive of anything but abject failure without the air. Then, after it got under way and everything, the powers that be cancelled the air. Well, of course, that's like puncturing the tube with

all the Joint Chiefs. There wasn't any question that it was a fiasco assoon as we were. . . . Of course, I don't know whether any others found it out, except I got the telephone call in the middle of the night. And I don't think I slept because I was worried about it all night. Now I knew, and then I was trying to think, "How the hell are we going to get out of this one because they're going to fail; they're bound to fail." I think those people who try to say the Joint Chiefs approved all of this, I think they've got the wrong perspective. They weren't asked to approve or disapprove. We were to help, and then we were finally granted, as I said, this, this, this, this, and this. This seems to be, if all these things are true--and we've got no way to prove they are or they aren't; they're coming from the CIA--but if they're true, and this is the basis on which they're making their determinations and decisions and their plan of operations, if these things are true, there could be a fair degree of success, as I see it, if the government lets the boys pile in on their side when we got in. But who the hell were we to know whether they were going to do it or not? That's what the CIA said was going to happen. If it did, and we got the air and it was worth it to our government, which it must have been when the decision was made to do it, we didn't question that in my opinion. We were never asked to. As I say, I'm talking from my own memory, and that's my feeling.

O'CONNOR: Well, General Maxwell Taylor was appointed shortly after the Bay of Pigs failure as, in effect, a presidential military advisor, and there were stories at the time that the reason he was appointed, or one of the reasons that he was appointed, was because the President had lost confidence in the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Was there ever that feeling . . .

SHOUP: I don't believe it.

O'CONNOR: Well, I didn't know whether it was true or not. This was simply rumored.

SHOUP: I don't know whether it is true or not either.

O'CONNOR: And I wondered if there was any of this feeling on your part.

SHOUP: I would say I don't know whether it was true or not, but I don't believe it. My recollection as to why the President got somebody over there was that he wanted somebody right there in those early days; in other words, that he could push a button, and he could come in. He had thousands of questions that he wanted to ask. He didn't want to go through the business of having General Lemnitzer come clear over to the White House every time he wanted to talk to him, or make an official communication. He wanted somebody right there. The fact that the military business was a considerable coin in the pot in this country in those days. . . . In my opinion what he wanted was somebody right there because if something came into his mind, he wants to ask about it. And then General Taylor, if he hadn't got all of it, he could run over and get this. It's not like having some lieutenant or corporal over there. You've got somebody there who can, expectedly anyway, answer ninty-five out of a hundred of his questions. And the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs is plenty busy without running over here every five minutes to educate a President, to educate a new President. Now that was always my feeling about it. That was my feeling about it.

Now, I do know that there was some feeling that the President, by law, had the top military advisor, who was the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, that is, the Joint Chief who was the Chairman. And I don't believe that President Kennedy ever considered General Taylor as the top military advisor under the law. He was his, if you can distinguish between them, he was kind of a personal military aide who, over long years of experience, had accumulated a tremendous fund of knowledge about things military that would permit him to answer the hundreds of questions that the President was apt to want to ask, which he, the President, didn't even feel like bothering the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs about.

O'CONNOR: Okay. That's what I wanted to get. I wanted to get how you felt about that.

Another thing, and maybe this would have come up in your experience of dealing with other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff or in your dealings with President Kennedy, another criticism was made that the President didn't feel the Joint Chiefs of Staff accepted enough of the blame. In other words, the President himself had gotten up and said, publicly, "This was my responsibility; I was at fault."

SHOUP: I don't think the President, in my opinion anyway, ever thought under any circumstances that the Joint Chiefs, severally or any individual one of them, had any reason whatsoever to accept or proclaim to the public that they were to blame. Because, in fact, they weren't, and President Kennedy knew it. I think President Kennedy was enough of a man that he knew what happened, and he knew that they didn't ask the Joint Chiefs whether to drop the air, and he knew damn well that it wasn't General Lemnitzer and the Joint Chiefs who said, "Let's stop that air."

O'CONNOR: Okay. Another effect of the Bay of Pigs, to a certain extent, was the greater emphasis on counterinsurgency in the military. And I wondered if that had much effect on the Marine Corps, on you particularly.

SHOUP: Well, I have a letter of commendation from President Kennedy relating to the education of Marines in guerrilla warfare. In fact, we put out an entire exposition, all on guerrilla warfare. Of course, General Lemnitzer and I, I think, both told the President that a Marine or Army squad, properly trained for what they're supposed to be able to do and perhaps under certain circumstances augmented by a linguist or a radio man, could do any anti-guerrilla job that there was to do. Of course, there was a great emphasis put on it: Let's everybody get into this business now; we're not going to have twenty-nine divisions lined up line to line with the old familiar cannon behind each one of them and saying how we would jump out of the holes and go. That's not the way it's apt to be. We saw it in Laos; that's not the way they do it. It's going on in Cuba now; it's going on in South America; and the odds are where we go next it will be related to combating that kind of insurgency to which the stereotype name of guerrilla warfare has been applied. And of course, there are a lot of young troops up here that are ready.

O'CONNOR: All right. I'm about to move on now to the very end of 1961. I don't know whether you have any other recollections of meetings with John Kennedy or any other impressions as you progress through '61 to the present.

SHOUP: The only impressions that I got, and they were constantly increased in intensity, was when I had the privilege of going over to the White House to the Cabinet meetings or with just the Joint Chiefs. He had a plan; I think he wanted to meet at least every week or two with just the Joint Chiefs. But in all those meetings the intensity of his thought and his desire and obvious ability to comprehend the many many factors that he had to pursue before he could logically make an intelligence decision. . . . There was no question about it that he understood that. And that's why he had us over there. Sometimes he had us there so that no civilian was present except the President, and he wasn't the President at that point, he was commander in chief. He wanted to hear what the hell the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and the Marine Corps, what did we say when the Secretary of the Navy and the Army and the Secretary of State weren't there. He gave us a chance to do it, and I think the record will show that we did.

O'CONNOR: Was there much difference in the way that he handled these meetings and the way General Eisenhower handled them? You had been there for a year before John Kennedy became President.

SHOUP: No, no. Now wait a minute, I guess I was. I forget my dates.

O'CONNOR: You started in 1960, January of 1960 I believe.

SHOUP: '60, and Ike was the President.

O'CONNOR: Right. I wondered if you recalled any differences in the way John Kennedy handled this as compared to the way Eisenhower did.

SHOUP: Of course, I always say it's pretty hard to judge yourself because the Lord says He can't even judge you until you're dead, but even so. . . . I was a newcomer. After all, you don't get any practice to be the Commandant, you see. So I was new. But reflecting upon your question, the only difference that I could discern, and perhaps ineffectively describe, is that the Eisenhower thing seemed to me like the ending of something, like a man will be ending something, compared to somebody who is starting something. And particularly with the great ideas that the President expressed in his Inaugural Address, he was a man in a hurry to get educated, to grasp all the dangling strings and put them in his mouth and make a thread out of them. Whereas, my feeling on it--as I say, my experience wasn't great either, but the difference was. . . . Ike had us up to the White House, up to his little apartment on the top side there and had a steak dinner, and being an old farmer boy, I was able to talk to him about his Angus cattle and all that. We had a very delightful time. Of course, he was a military man and all that.

O'CONNOR: Well, that's what I wondered. The fact that he had been a military man, or was a military man.

SHOUP: Well, I think that, of course, and perhaps there were within his mind the answers to thousands of military things or things related to the military that he didn't have to go to anybody about. To relate back to a further statement, that's the very thing that caused President Kennedy to have General Taylor right there. He was his military mind, not his Joint Chiefs of Staff, not his total, most effective and most depended upon military advisory body in any sense of the word. He was the military part of President Kennedy's mind, which President Kennedy felt was lacking. And, of course, Ike, with forty-five years of service behind him didn't have to call somebody and say, "What's in a division? How do you know about a division? What the hell's in a division? What do you do with a division? How big is it? What can you expect one division to do? You people talk to divisions.

What is it, what's in a division?" And maybe even on down to a mortar squad. I don't know how much President Kennedy knew. But you wouldn't have to tell Ike, and he wouldn't need to be worried about it. If the Joint Chiefs send something over to the President, or a paper goes over there and he starts reading it, and it says something about a recommendation about some division or a foreign division, well, he'd know what it is. He wouldn't want to go back over to the Joint Chiefs and say, "Come over here and tell me what this is all about." I really think that was a great part of it.

O'CONNOR: Yes, I'm sure that was a part of it.

SHOUP: No intention to substitute General Taylor for the legal, lawful principal military advisors to the President.

O'CONNOR: Okay. You, in October of 1961, made a trip to the Far East, a large trip to the Far East. You went to Japan and to the Philippines and to Okinawa and Guam and to a number of other places. I wondered if there was any--aside from the military mission that it was, in effect, aside from the primary mission--if there were any political or other overtones to that mission. Did President Kennedy talk to you beforehand or talk to you about it afterwards?

SHOUP: No.

O'CONNOR: I didn't know whether he had or not. I noticed that you went, and I thought, you know, possibly you might have had something in mind for him when you went.

SHOUP: I believe that what I said when I came back from that later was referred to by President Kennedy to me because, if my memory is correct, that's when I, during this trip, first became aware of this something that was coming over our people, hate. And I believe when I came back, I mentioned this to the press, and they took off on it. And then, of course, later I was involved with Strom Thurmond.

BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I

SHOUP: As far as being muzzled in speaking engagements, in saying what I felt was right, I never felt that I was muzzled. Further, I stated unequivocally that I was not going to have my speeches reviewed and stamped and cleared and all that because I was willing to take the responsibility. If I was thought to have the sense of responsibility necessary to be the chief of a service, then concurrent with that, surely, was the sense of responsibility to do nothing that I shouldn't do in a public speech. And I never felt it was necessary, nor did I ever feel that it should be necessary to review any speech that a service chief gave. I always felt that if a service chief gave a speech which was determined to be a little off-color or improper, all the President needed to do was to get another chief of the service. And that's the basis on which I operated.

O'CONNOR: Well, did you have any trouble along this line? Did you ever have people who felt differently and therefore wanted to make sure your speeches were cleared?

SHOUP: My own people would think I was taking a horrible risk not to do it because we were supposed to.

O'CONNOR: But you didn't think there was any?

SHOUP: No. Because I had an understanding. I told the Secretary of Defense, I said, "Well, I'll take the responsibility. I feel if I don't know what I should say and what I shouldn't say, then relieve me now. Get somebody else. But as long as I'm supposed to have the sense of responsibility which you attributed to me when President Eisenhower assigned me to this job, I'm going to continue to presume that I have it. If I should slip and do something wrong, then get a new Commandant. But up to that point, I don't feel we should have to send every word we're going to say in public over to somebody to look over and determine whether we say it or not."

O'CONNOR: Well, the speeches by some military chiefs--for example, Arleigh Burke that I mentioned--were cleared, and they did turn their's in. Maybe they weren't as stubborn as you were, but they did turn their's in.

SHOUP: Well, I think maybe. . . . Well, I don't object to your saying they were not being as stubborn as I was, but I really wasn't stubborn. What they were doing was wanting to say something, perhaps, that they felt might be a little contrary to what the Administration would like for them to say. Therefore, in order that they be sure to get to say it, they'd like to get it cleared. Whereas I never had anything that I wanted to criticize so I didn't have any problem.

O'CONNOR: You never had any problems with the White House on this.

SHOUP: On the speeches? No.

O'CONNOR: I'm surprised.

SHOUP: Never.

O'CONNOR: I had been going to ask you about some of the difficulties you might have run into with Strom Thurmond about anti-communism, but I don't know whether you want to talk about that or not. You were talking about that off the tape just a few minutes ago.

SHOUP: I don't know whether that should be a part of the Kennedy--it's his Administration's time I guess. I believe that the Congressional Record contains all the exchange of communications and what have you, and I always took the position that Strom Thurmond was elected to represent his people, he was a Senator, and I believe he's conscientious, that he thought he was doing something that ought to be done by somebody. The only mistake he made, I think, was that he wanted to get a real bastard for a chief counsel, you know, but he got a worse one than he bargained for.

O'CONNOR: I suppose most of that is in the Congressional Record, and there . . .

SHOUP: Oh, the total exchange of communications between us and all these letters and all that kind of stuff. Of course, he still doesn't know how we got the letters.

O'CONNOR: Yes, I know. I was curious about that myself.

SHOUP: Senator [John] Stennis was supposed to find out. He was asked to investigate and find out. Well, Strom still doesn't know.

O'CONNOR: I don't know whether you want to let the historians of the future to know how you got that letter or not. I didn't want to include in this tape things that were in the Congressional Record, but I thought maybe there would be some things that, you know, some thoughts that you might have, some feelings that you might have that wouldn't be there.

SHOUP: No, I don't think so. I took it as an opportunity to. . . . I could see it as sort of a trend toward another McCarthyism [Joseph R. McCarthy] business in which there's a Communist under every leaf and in the crotch of every limb. I didn't feel that we needed to have Strom Thurmond and his henchmen determine for me what I taught the Marines about communism or what the general position of the individual private was, and the fact that he couldn't define dialectical materialism or something like that shouldn't really determine whether he was a good Marine or whether he wasn't, or whether he could fight for his country or whether he couldn't, and to worry people with things of that kind was really immaterial. I thought it was rather ridiculous. So I went to the Secretary of the Navy, and from that point on everything is in the record.

O'CONNOR: You mentioned that incident about the disappearance of the letter. I don't know whether you want to talk about that or not, but I personally am quite interested in how you ever did get the letter. I promise not to tell Strom Thurmond if you tell me or tell the tape recorder.

SHOUP: Well, I think we'll leave that out right now.

O'CONNOR: Okay, all right.

SHOUP: Some of these days I may be asked by somebody else to tell how. You see, the thing is, the snow is melted, the fire's gone out. Because, as far as I know, there's still a record of a request by Senator Thurmond to this subcommittee to find out how this happened. And the Senate didn't have the rights that I know. Well, the Senator talked to me for fifteen or twenty minutes on the telephone trying to find out.

O'CONNOR: That is really funny. Okay, one of the major problems that occurred in 1962--late 1961 and '62--was the question of the resumption of nuclear testing. I was under the impression that the Joint Chiefs of Staff were very, very much in favor of a quick resumption of nuclear testing. I wanted to ask you what your opinion was of it at that time.

SHOUP: You mean the Test Ban Treaty?

O'CONNOR: No, this is not the Test Ban Treaty. This was when the Soviet Union began to test, and the United States was faced with the decision of whether or not to begin testing again . . .

SHOUP: Yes, I had a great interest in that. [Tape recorder turned off--resumes].

O'CONNOR: You were going to say something about . . .

SHOUP: With this testing. . . . I would like to relate this as a facet of President Kennedy's character in seeing that justice was done. It was very interesting to me. In the first place, I was tremendously in favor of getting a test because at that time we--and I say about because of the relationship to the elimination of the B-47's which I fought desperately, and I think General [Curtis E.] LeMay's book refers to my action in that respect. My basis for all of this was the fact that we were about to put dependence for the security of this great nation on missiles. But the simple fact of life was that we had never had a missile warhead go up into the upper atmosphere and come back and go off. I argued this point considerably. The scientists said, "Oh, we know it will go off." But we were about to put all our dependence on a weapon that's never, not once, ever gone off. What will happen in the shock of hitting the atmosphere again, how do we know the damn thing will go off? I think one of my most impassioned speeches contained a reference to the fact that a very healthy

looking young man and woman were going to all the doctors, psychologists, and preachers, and they'd say, "Why, certainly you are healthy people; you'll be able to have a baby." But somehow they don't have the baby. And I would not want to place the security of this country on something we didn't even know would go off. Can you give a group of men a rifle and ammunition that they've never fired and say, "Now you go into this battle. Don't you worry about that gun going off." Where it's a machine, it can't be done. I am quite sure that I said these things at the White House at a meeting with the Joint Chiefs, and we talked about a missile test every time we got a chance with the Secretary. Because it did appear if there was a chance to test now, we surely had one area in which we should test. Then when the powers that be, the Atomic Energy Commission, in spite of all this, when they came up with a list of tests that were to be done, and finally that they would recommend and approve, not one of them contained a shot by a missile through the atmosphere and back, and then's when I could do without missiles. You might blow your top, flip your lid, or what have you--anyway, I was more vociferous than ever about this, and I don't know what effect it had on others, but I'll just say that we did test it from a silo. I felt a lot better, and I'm sure a few of the others felt a lot better.

O'CONNOR: Okay. Can you think of anything else, particularly, about 1962? I see that you went to Vietnam and I wondered again if. . . .

SHOUP: Well, as so many of these people who go out there for three or four days, I came back an expert. There was no doubt about it that the position taken by, I believe, every responsible military man and two Presidents that I admire was that we should not, under any circumstances, get involved in a land warfare in Southeast Asia.

O'CONNOR: And this is what you felt at that time?

SHOUP: Yes, it is. With no qualms whatever. That's the position that's been taken for years by the students of military operations, by Presidents, and by every responsible military man to my knowledge. And I suspect today they still feel the same way.

O'CONNOR: Okay. In connection again with nuclear testing you, although you felt very strongly that the United States should resume testing in 1962, or at least test one missile . . .

SHOUP: That's all I was interested in.

O'CONNOR: You did approve the test ban in 1963 that took place and I wondered if you were satisfied by that time . . .

SHOUP: Yes, and particularly--now this is where I'm able to refer this nuclear testing and non-testing to the character of the President. This business of whether we should have the Test Ban Treaty or not was a pretty powerful subject. It had many advocates and many who could see disadvantages, not only present but for posterity perhaps. And when one is in a position that his thoughts and his recommendations are related to matters that could eliminate the human race, you take it pretty seriously. I can't remember exactly, but I'm pretty sure that there were several members of the Joint Chiefs who were against the Test Ban Treaty.

O'CONNOR: That's why I wanted to ask you about it.

SHOUP: I was particularly and vociferously for it because I felt that it was the first chance to see whether the Russians were really headed toward where they were heading, as we can prove by the last five years--that they finally began to realize that if we had an exchange of nuclear weapons, that was it. So I was very much for the ban, and so we got into such a heated argument--oh, I say discussion, I don't know whether argument's a bit strong, but I guess you argue your position. So the President asked that each member of the Joint Chiefs--now listen carefully--each member of the Joint Chiefs come to his office. Now whether this was--technically, it was interpreted correctly by the Chairman, I presume--but whether it was an oversight, I don't know. But appointments were given to each of the people in the "tank" except me. I didn't say anything, never said a single word about it, because if they wanted the Joint Chiefs, technically, that let me out, except there might have been a few Marines killed with an atom bomb. But anyway, I accepted this. I didn't feel that it was discrimination; I just thought, "Well, that's the way the President wants it. That's the way it's going to be. Anyway, maybe I don't have anything to contribute. I don't know." Well, they would come back and tell about this, that they'd been over and who's going tomorrow to see the President. Well, after this was all over. . . . I'm evading, but I suppose there's some record of the Commandant going over because I went personally. But this thing was. . . . As I understood it, the President was rather expecting, or waiting, to see the other member of the Joint Chiefs, and he didn't show up. So, as I'm told, he specifically asked, "Where is General Shoup? I haven't seen General Shoup." Whereupon I was called at my headquarters. It didn't come through the Defense Department. And I went over without the knowledge of the other service chiefs or the Chairman. To this day, I don't know, but I don't believe that they know that I was ever over to the White House on the Test Ban Treaty. But the President was the one that I am told initiated it. In fact, he told me, "I've been looking for you." We had a discussion. I supported it very definitely and felt that the President of the United States, with his responsibility to posterity, had to do everything he could to get a test ban treaty.

O'CONNOR: In that particular meeting was he explaining more of his views for why there should be a test ban treaty, or was he specifically asking you, first, to speak?

SHOUP: He asked me to tell him what I thought about it. He wanted to know what I thought about it. This really was my neighborhood, but we didn't have time enough, maybe a half hour. But I think he was, at one point, concerned with why I hadn't come over before. I said, "Well, I think somebody misinterpreted. You know, Mr. President, I'm only a member, or get to participate in the manner of a member, on matters pertaining to the Marine Corps." He just smiled. But we had a discussion.

I believe--the dates, I suppose, are pretty hard to check, but I believe that this was the time mostly we got a little bit off the subject of the Test Ban Treaty. My recollection is there were some bubbles going on on the civil rights. And I don't know what opening there was for me to say what I said to him. Maybe I made the opening, but anyway--maybe I wanted him to get off of the subject--but nevertheless, I told him about an experience that I'd just had in this great nation of ours in Alexandria, where. . . .

O'CONNOR: In connection with fair housing?

SHOUP: A city that's supposed to be integrated. And I proceeded to tell him that they have a little place where you ride ponies and go on a merry-go-round for little children, and that often on Sundays I would take my grandchildren down and let them ride the ponies and go on the merry-go-round. This particular Saturday evening. . . . My grandchildren had this, they have a kind of routine: they'd ride the ponies, and then they'd ride the

merry-go-round, depending on how full the ponies were. I had just gotten my children by the hand and walking toward the merry-go-round, at the ticket counter was a very well-dressed Negro lady with two good looking little Negro children, all dressed up and what have you, all smiles, all happy because they were going to get to ride on the merry-go-round. The lady was a very intelligent looking lady. She went to buy tickets, and they wouldn't sell them to her, and they wouldn't let those little Negro children ride the horses or the merry-go-round. And I asked the President, I said, "Is that the way we're going to treat Americans that we want to fight on behalf of their country?" Well, apparently this impressed him because I think that if the right person had indicated that they could corroborate this, that he made a telephone call and talked, I was told, for fifteen minutes about this conversation with General Shoup. He was terrifically impressed. He said that . . .

O'CONNOR: Who did he talk with, who did he call?

SHOUP: What?

O'CONNOR: Who did he call?

SHOUP: As far as I know, Mr. Rostow. He was very bothered about this. He talked with Mr. Rostow a great deal about this situation, including what I've related to you.

O'CONNOR: Well, you had another private meeting with President Kennedy. That meeting, according to my records, was July 22. But you had another private meeting with President Kennedy September 18. I wonder if you recall what that was about.

SHOUP: I believe this was about being reappointed as Commandant.

O'CONNOR: Well, why don't you tell us something about that? That's not identified here.

SHOUP: Well, of course, about that time of year each year--the incumbent Commandant's tour is about up at the end of four years. So in order that the rumors and the political ramifications, in cases where there are any, can be laid to rest, we usually announce the appointment of the new Commandant. Well, before this meeting with the President, long before, I had determined that I should not serve again as Commandant of the Marines. I determined it on the basis that I had been fortunate to be selected, I would have had four years of duty as Commandant. And at that time I didn't even know whether I would be asked to serve again, but I had made my decision that I wouldn't. I had no idea that this would go as far as the President. But when the Secretary of the Navy asked me to serve again, of course, I was quite honored. But I told him I couldn't. Well, the next step was I had to go to the Secretary of Defense, and I had to tell him the same thing. And I told him the same reasons that I had for this, but even then. . . . Well, they somehow must have told the President that they were going to have to recommend somebody else. I left one of the meetings at the White House, and the President stepped over to me and said, "General, I want to see you about this new Commandant." And I said, "Well, at your pleasure, Mr. President."

About two days later I was called to the White House. I went into his office alone. To my knowledge there was nobody there except the President and the old Commandant. We had a discussion about minor things, and finally he stated that it was his desire that I serve again as Commandant of the Marine Corps. He gave me a paragraph of reasons.

I was caught in a very difficult situation. As a military man, my whole lifetime had been in the business of doing what the Commander in Chief desired; his desire was our orders. That's your training, and that was the problem I had. But I was now in a state of conflict with my conscience and my training and my determination of what I felt was right. I don't know how quickly I answered his question because it was very difficult for me. But I finally said, "Mr. President, I must refuse this great honor that you're asking me again to accept a second term." And then I waited because, just as I said it, I was fearful of his reaction to have some upstart of a four-star general tell the Commander in Chief that he wouldn't do what he wanted him to do. I had had many, many sleepless hours over this thing, and this was the climax.

Well, he looked at me rather sternly, I thought, for a few seconds or a minute or so, and then he made some remarks about some other thing. But then he got right back on the subject, and he said, "Well, you understand that I want you to serve. I've told you many of the reasons why." I said, "Yes, Mr. President, I understand." He said, "Do you still tell me that you cannot serve?" I said, "Yes, Mr. President." Then I thought that the heavens would really fall upon me. But then he said, "Why?" So I told him that I could not serve because if I did so, I would prevent ten or eleven other general officers with varying years of service from twenty-five to thirty from ever being considered for the job. While I well knew they couldn't all make it, they had served long and they had served me very, very loyally, not only the four years I was Commandant, but many of them had served with me and for me before--and very loyally. I said, "I can't be that selfish. This is not the image those officers and the whole Marine Corps have of me, and I don't want to change the image."

He listened very intently without interrupting, and then he asked who some of these people were. I gave him some names of a few. He said, "Yes, but I don't think they would be recommended for Commandant perhaps." I said, "Mr. President, I know there could only be one of them, but I feel that their image of me that they have put together over all these years would fall completely apart. Even though they themselves don't think they have a chance, to have me prevent them from having any chance whatsoever would cause them to feel in a different way about me than they do now."

Well, then he talked about something else, about the Marines. We also talked about--he referred to his remark that he had made in San Diego when he visited the Marine station. He told me there, as we walked aside from his visit, that he thought every boy in America should have this training, and that he was going to do something about it. He referred then, at this meeting, to this talk we'd had, and he said, "It's too bad that more of our young men can't get this basic training that you give the boys." He said, "I think we should do more about it." And he said words which led me to believe that he intended to do something about it after he got reelected. But somehow he didn't feel that he could start this thing until after an election.

Then he said, "And I intend for you to play a big part in it." Well, I got to thinking, "That's quite all right with me, but I don't know what part an ex-Commandant, unless you're going to have a Marine's name over the door in some kind of a universal training." Then he got back on the subject and said, "Well, I had hoped for you to be the Commandant for another four years." I never made any remark. In a few moments he moved a foot as if to indicate that maybe you'd better get the hell out of here. I accepted the hint and got up to leave, came to attention, and said, "Good afternoon, Mr. President." He didn't say good afternoon; he walked to where I was, then, facing the door, put his arm around me; and as we got to the door, he said, "General, you were right. I admire you for it." And that let me out into the world again without depressed thoughts. I believe that that is a good description of what happened. After that my memory is of the sorrow at the loss of the President. That's my story of my association.

I feel that I have overlooked an interesting part of my association with President Kennedy. I was provided with a paper which indicated that the Commandant of the Marine Corps--or rather, the Secretary of the Navy and the President, on horses, had gone to Southeast Washington years ago to look for a site for the Marines to live, Marine barracks, and that as they passed the spot where the Barracks is today, the President had told the Secretary, "You build the Marine barracks here." I had some research done to see whether or not the President, as a good military man and Commander in Chief should do, saw whether or not his orders were carried out by a little inspection. And such had never been the case.

So I wrote a letter after consulting with one of his aides to see whether or not this would be too consuming of his time to read such a thing. I told him that I was going to write to the President. I wrote to the President and told him. And as I remember it, right or wrong, I conjured up the idea that Jefferson, I believe it was, was a Democrat, and in the sense that this was a Democratic administration, maybe it was about time for the Democratic administration, the President, really, to fulfill his responsibilities and inspect to see whether or not this Secretary had carried out his orders--because there was no record of a President ever having gone to the Marine Barracks. So the President accepted this challenge, and the first thing I knew--while I had understood before that he was anxious to see one of the Friday night parades of the Marines, and I had, through the proper channels, passed back the word that whatever night he wanted to see the parade that would be the night we would have the parade for him. But this seemed to be a real challenge to him, and I received a letter and an invitation then went out to him to attend this parade. And, of course, it was so he could inspect the place and see whether his predecessor's orders had been carried out. There'd been many years in between. Now these letters are a matter of record. And of course it wasn't long till the usual security business went on; they looked the House over and all the bushes.

Finally the day came for the President to come--the President, the Vice President, and many many Senators and Congressmen came--and it was the highlight of the parade system for that year. He came and associated with the many guests that were in the patio for refreshments. Then, as is the usual military custom, all the underlings would get out of the way and get seated so that the Number One boy could come in unmolested and untrampled upon, and this was the procedure this night. While I was with President Kennedy awaiting this procedure to take place, the others getting seated, I told the President, I said, "Mr. President, right here is the best people-to-people program we have in America today." I said, "This year there will have been people from seventy-five nations and from every state and possession of the United States." Again, he showed his real presidential mettle, stature, or what we hope has been the stature of our Presidents. He said, "General, I'll make up my mind about this after I see it." Well, he was--overcome is perhaps not the right word--but he was overwhelmed, and he made a little speech there and told how now he found out that he didn't command anything but the band, which of course, by law, cannot leave Washington without the President's permission. He made a very interesting remark, and it was readily appreciated by the several thousand in the audience. But before that he did say that he believed this was one of the greatest people-to-people programs that was in America today.

O'CONNOR: There are two things that I haven't asked you about that I should very quickly before we end this. What was your recollection of the Cuban Missile Crisis? There were Joint Chiefs of Staff meetings involved in that, I presume, and I know you met at the height of the crisis on September 29 with Admiral [George] Anderson. I wondered if you recall much about that. Or did you have something else you wanted to . . .

SHOUP: No, these are notes that I have that we've covered with the exception of Cuba.

O'CONNOR: Do you recall when you first learned about this?

SHOUP: Yes, I do. They produced the pictures in the "tank" to show us. The CIA--I guess they came from the CIA, the pictures. And of course I was also aware of the fact that the President went on to Chicago and that he was going to catch a cold.

O'CONNOR: You knew about that ahead of time?

SHOUP: Yes, that he was going to catch a cold because if this went the way it looked like it was going, his presence was needed here because that would mean that we had to start fast negotiations with the Kremlin--or whatever you call that place over there. Something had to be done, and it couldn't wait very long because once they had their missiles in position and got the warheads on them, they could threaten us. But as long as they were not operational, we had the advantage. Everyone was aware of this. I don't believe that I've ever seen a human being confronted with a decision, or confronted with the requirement to proceed on a half-way thwarted decision of such great importance as President Kennedy was confronted with at that time. There was no question in my mind at any time that he fully realized this. Of course, there were things going on in the political area which I don't think any of the Joint Chiefs really know about. Our problem was to be prepared to provide the military requirements that were needed by the President in this political field. If we had to take the missile sites out of there before they put the warheads on, well, of course, that was one of the things that our aviation units had to be, clearly, ready to do. I was not privy to many meetings that he must have had, surely, with many, many other persons during this time of decision as to the right road to take. Thank God he took the right one. I'm sure that there were those who thought an immediate blowing off of the map of these sites was the really immediate and effective thing to do. But, of course, there were others

of us who held that blowing off the map is not as easy as blowing off the mouth about blowing off the map. I particularly remember forty-seven consecutive days of bombing everything they had on Iwo Jima, and I don't believe we killed a person. I think that's about all the Cuban thing that I have.

O'CONNOR: Okay. Do you remember the meeting that I referred to, though, the meeting that you had with Admiral Anderson and the President? The reason I brought this up was because it was at the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis that Admiral Anderson got in some difficulty with the Secretary of Defense and, indirectly, with the President. It related to the thing you initially referred to. You spoke about the Secretary of Defense being very curious about the operations of squad units or various small military groups. And Admiral Anderson and the Secretary of Defense apparently had a meeting in the Pentagon concerning specifically the operations of the blockade, the carrying out of the blockade and so forth. They had a conflict and, as I understand it, one of the eventual outcomes of this conflict was that Admiral Anderson's term wasn't renewed again as Chief of Naval Operations the following year. I wondered if you had any recollection of that, or if that was apparent at all.

SHOUP: Well, I think to anyone who had the privilege of sitting in some of these meetings relating to the blockade, as to how it was to function and what have you, would sense that there was some difference of opinion, perhaps in an operational way, as to how it should be done. But my recollection is that this meeting, at which--of course, not being there, I can't say--but at which there must have been some permanent disagreement between the Secretary and Admiral Anderson, I believe you'll find took place in the Secretary's office and not in the Joint Chiefs' "tank."

O'CONNOR: Well, it took place in the--what is it?--Flag Plot Room in the Pentagon.

SHOUP: That's for Naval Operations.

O'CONNOR: Yes, but I wondered if this was evident at the time that you met with the President and Admiral Anderson. It was at the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis, and I wondered if this. . . .

SHOUP: I don't believe so, no, I don't believe so. If so, it was not conveyed to me by word or act. He didn't mention it.

O'CONNOR: Okay. Unless you have any other comments to make about the President or anything connected with his Administration, we can shut this off.