

The following is an interview conducted on 4 and 13 January, 2008 at Gainesville, Florida. The subject is PFC Clifton P. Fox USMC. The interviewer is RADM Oakley E. Osborn USN (Ret.), hereafter identified as OEO.

### **Biographical Summary of PFC Clifton P. Fox USMC**

Clifton P. Fox was born December 18, 1914 in Pennsauken Township near Camden, New Jersey. His childhood during the depression years was marked by tough times. The hardscrabble life of helping his widowed mother with living expenses molded him into a resourceful and entrepreneurial young man who could handle most any job. A desire for travel and a new life drove him to enlist in the U. S. Marine Corps on January 15, 1934. His mechanical talents and confident personality served him well in boot camp where he was retained to rebuild and operate heavy machinery for a year. Through a chance personal contact with the Parris Island Commanding Officer, he was able to gain orders to duty in Shanghai, China where the Marines were protecting U. S. interests. He served out his enlistment as a "China Marine" and was discharged on February 2, 1938. The morning after Pearl Harbor, December 8, 1941, he presented his discharge papers to the local Marine recruiter requesting to reenlist, only to find that they were not allowed to take married men. A short time later he was recruited by the Navy to go to Argentina, Newfoundland where he welded patches on the holds of cargo ships that had been torpedoed by the Germans in the North Atlantic. After two years he turned over his duties to the Seabees and returned to Pennsylvania. He then commenced a long career with a major oil company which culminated in management of a large pipeline complex. He and Kay, have two children. Their retirement years have featured sailing and overland touring along with many creative mechanical projects.

### **Oral history of Clifton P. Fox**

OEO: Cliff, let's start out with a little bit about your parents. What was their nationality, their background, and where they came from?

Clif Fox: My father's grandfather came from England. He built railroad trestles all over the world, single wooden railroad trestles. My mother's name was Weiss. Her grandparents came from Austria originally. They were married in Philadelphia. My father was in WWI. I never knew him. The family never wanted to get into any information of what happened, why he never came back or what happened to him. I could never find out. My mother had an older brother, a younger sister and a younger brother. We lived in Pennsauken Township which is right outside of Camden in New Jersey. I was born there on December 18, 1914.

My grandmother was a wonderful cook. We had a big garden, I worked in it and that made me real good with my grandmother. When she baked pies, or anything special, I always got extra because of my working the garden. These were the real hard times of the 20's and 30's. I worked on a farm in South Jersey, Palletine, a little crossroad near Bridgeton. I was about 9-10 years old milking 10 cows morning and night, hauling the milk to the station in a spring wagon. I walked almost 3 miles to school. You could ride

the school bus, a model T Ford; if you lived over 3 miles and we were a couple of tenths short. The bus went right past our door but I couldn't ride it. I got 25 cents a week for going to school early and starting the wood fire. That meant I had to get up around 3:30 in the morning, feed the horses and cows, milk the cows, take the milk to the station, then breakfast and then to school. After two years of that I came back home. Then I went to school in New Jersey, a grammar school, named Delaware Gardens, a little community outside of Camden. I walked about a mile and a half to school and back. I'd pick berries or whatever there was to take home. My grandmother would make the biggest dumplings you've ever seen in your life with fruit or anything from the garden. She bought flour in a 100 pound bag and lard in 50 pound tub. She wouldn't use anything but Sears Soda Flour and Davis Baking Powder. She sent me with express wagon to the store about a mile away to get a bag of flour. They didn't have Sears Soda so he gave me Gold Medal. I got switched almost all the way back with the Gold Medal and never brought home anything that I wasn't sent for after that. When I reached 14 years old I changed my birth certificate two years and got a drivers license and then I went to work for Acme merchant store company. It was a big grocery store about a mile from home. It had 5 grocery clerks and three butchers. I had my own counter on the grocery side. You added up the total on the brown paper bag and the lady at the little cashier window on the way out just took whatever you added up as the total she charged. I won a lot of contests there. They would have a contest for clerks for pushing Asco brands. Once a week they would have a different thing. I would just add one Asco product on the big list and throw it in the bag and never say a word about it. The next week the lady would come back and say she got a can of string beans last week that she didn't order. I'd say I probably didn't charge you for them and she would say, oh yes you did.

I worked there for 12 dollars a week and that was from 7 in the morning till 5:30 or 6 at night, 6 days a week. I took that 12 dollars home. I got 50 cents out of it for myself but I got car fare, 15 cents for 3 nights to go to school. You walked to the 5 cent ferry limit. This was before the Delaware River Bridge opened in 1926. So I got 15 cents to ride the bus over the bridge to North Broad Street and then I would walk the few blocks to school. Usually one night a week I would walk home, which would be 8 or 9 miles, to save 15 cents. It was a fast walk, almost a trot, and I could make it in one hour and 45 minutes. I'd get at least 15 cents a week by doing that. Some of that stuff is hard to believe but that is the way it was.

After two years I left there and had so many little jobs I can't hardly remember them all. One of those jobs was a pretty good deal. A man by the name of John Trainor had a gas station and garage. He was a WWI veteran and had a good friend in Trenton who handled cars that had been confiscated from rum runners and bootleggers. Once a year they had a sealed bid auction and his buddy would send down the list of cars and what you could buy them for. John would buy some of those cars for almost nothing. Some just had a ding in them and none of them needed too much work. John was also a plasterer by trade. I would keep the gas station garage open for him when he had a plaster job. I never got paid for it but I got all the candy I could eat and soda I could drink, as well as gasoline and a car to drive. I could pick anything in the lot that would run so I always had a car and that worked out pretty good. I had all kinds, a Dodge

before the company became Chrysler, a Nash, and a Haines, which was a big touring car with no top in it. I had so many I couldn't remember them all. Then, after a couple of years he gave me a Packard Roadster. It was 3 or 4 years old and this would have been in about 1931 so it would have been a late 20's model. It was a country club special with spares on the fenders. There was a little hole between the rumble seat and the cab for a bag of golf clubs. It was really something. I played sandlot football then. We would put the top down and the whole football team would ride to the game in the Packard. That was a great time!

Then I worked for a Swede who lived in Merchantville. He was Captain of a dredge/mud digger down on the bay. He didn't have a car or drive so he gave me a job on the dredge and I would drive him.

OEO: You gave almost all that 12 dollars to your mother?

Clif Fox: Oh, yes. My mother worked in an insurance office. She came home every night, washed clothes on a scrub board, starched and ironed them. I would go to school looking like little Lord Fauntleroy. I had the curliest hair, looked like Harpo Marx, BIG coils. I'd wet that and plaster it down. I think I fought every guy in the school, some of them two or three times. All they had to do was mention that hair and we'd have a fight. They had a big ash pit in the back of the school sort of like an arena, the trucks could back in and they would wheel the ashes out and dump them right in the truck on a higher level. There was a pipe railing around the pit which was about two trucks wide. That was the arena. That's where we would fight. Word would go out that there was going to be a fight and all the kids would line up on the rail. I'd go home and my mother would say "Buddy, I don't know what I am going to do with you". I'd go home with cinders all over my clothes and dirty and every night she would wash clothes on a scrub board and iron them. My grandmother did all the cooking.

OEO: How did you do in those fights?

Clif Fox: Oh I did good, oh yeah, I very seldom lost (laughs). I wasn't too big for my age but I was kind of tough.

OEO: How many people did you have in your house at that time?

Clif Fox: There was 12 to 14 all together. There were five in our family, there were two aunts and my grandmother. One of my aunts had a husband and three children. I guess there were 12 most of the time.

OEO: Did everybody contribute to the money?

Clif Fox: Well, my brother didn't work. My aunts and my mother worked and kept the house going. My grandmother did all the cooking. That is what she did for all her life. She lived to be about 85 years old and died with an abscess in her ear. Yes, we had a pretty good family. It was a big three-story house with one coal furnace and one big

register and that was the heat. In the ceiling at each floor was a register to let hot air go up. I had a room clear up on the third floor which was the attic. There were 4 bedrooms up there. It was a big house.

This house, at Trenton Post Road, was formerly a place where they watered the stagecoach horses in the days when the stage coaches ran from Camden to Trenton. It was the first watering stop for the horses on the stage coach line and before there were any streets or curves. When they wound up putting streets in, it was on the end of the street and there was a highway behind it.

A little side story. The old Central Airport was no longer an airport but the hangers were still there. After they put the circle in, they had dance marathons and when we were in school we'd go down there at night. Red Skelton won the first dance marathon and he was master of ceremonies for about 3 of them after that. They would run for 20 to 30 some days. Starting out, they would give participants maybe one minute per hour break which would increase as time went on and on. He won the first one and that is where he started in the entertainment business. I was 14 years old then and I'd say he was 2 or 3 years older than I. He wore big suspenders and when he got close to that rail we would pull them out and snap them. He was funny, I mean he was good, and that's the first I knew of Red Skelton. After the dances, I never heard of Red Skelton for 3 or 4 years and then the theaters had little shorts of news and sports. Then they had the main theatre picture and he started coming in these shorts, appearing in them. After that when TV came out he was on TV, of course. Every time I'd see him I'd remember back to those dance marathons.

OEO: When you mention the name Red Skelton I have to chuckle because he had a sense of humor. You obviously had some bad times during those years, what was the toughest thing you faced in that time of your life?

Clif Fox: I don't know, it never really bothered me.

OEO: How old were you when you joined the Marines?

Clif Fox: 20 years old. I started in the Marines on the 15th of January 34 and separated on 2 February 38.

OEO: What made you even think about joining the Marine Corps?

Clif Fox: I loved history and geography and mathematics. History was like a story book. I'd read the whole history book in the first couple of weeks I went to school and for some reason, I don't know why, I always wanted to go to China. I thought the only way I would get there would be to go in the service and that the best service would be the Marine Corps. We went to Philadelphia to enlist. There were 17 enlistees and 3 days examinations and tests. When all was said and done, 5 of us were accepted. It was hard times, as hard as any times our country ever had. I loved my time in the Marine Corps and came out of every place smelling like a rose.

OEO: Ok, we won't get into that right now, let's go back to high school. What went on, can you remember some things about High School?

Clif Fox: Yes, I played sand lot football, later I played football one year for the Philadelphia Eagles farm team, the Frankfurt Yellow Jackets. We were paid 35 dollars a game. You played Sunday and had a practice one night a week. There was no offensive, defensive or kicking team – just one team. You played 60 minutes unless they carried you off. Later, in the Marine Corps we played a lot of times, teams made up of your buddies. We tried to teach the English how to play football in China. After one game they quit. They were going to teach us how to play Rugby. One game and they quit again. So that was about the end of my athletic career.

OEO: Did you do well in high school?

Clif Fox: Grade wise, I did well. English and spelling were my worst subjects from day one until I finished school.

OEO: Did you have good teachers?

Clif Fox: I had fairly good teachers; in fact I always liked the teachers. When my children complained about a teacher I just told them to remember that you have one teacher with 20-25 pupils, some of which they don't like too well either

OEO: What molded your personality and your ability to get things done in those days as far as knowing right from wrong and wanting to work? Did your mother do that?

Clif Fox: My mother and my grandmother. They were both religious but they didn't go to church. I went to Sunday school; I walked over to Delaware Gardens to go to Sunday school by myself. There was an American Legion Post over there and I was a drum major for a couple of years. I didn't know music but I could get out there and keep time with that drum and just march with a big hat in front of the band. They had 2 or 3 parades a year. I always liked work and anytime I worked I wanted to do something with it. I worked on this dredge down the bay. We worked in the Schuylkill River one time, making channels, ship channels. I fell overboard one time at 3 in the morning in the dead of winter, oh man. Those mud scows had pockets you would wind up with a chain on a ratchet. The American Dredging company had this property down the bay in the flats. They had a pump dredge down there and they would dump their spoil and pump it ashore. They made millions on the property once it was filled in. The dredge had big chains that ran a bridle on the doors that came up over a big pulley and then out on a pall on the side of the dredge. Well the mate, I was mate, moved the scow ahead and the operator filled one pocket and you moved it ahead and these deck hands, we had four deck hands, were supposed to keep the chain clear. The only people they could get to work as deckhands on this muddy, dirty job were Swedes and Norwegians and most of them couldn't understand English. You'd get out on the bulkhead with a sledgehammer and beat the chains to break up the mud so you could wind them up. Those deckhands

couldn't get them wound up. I am walking up and down and, of course, the operator is waiting to dump a bucket of mud in there. This particular time, I went out there with a sledgehammer and beat those frozen, muddy chains. I got the great big bar by myself and got out on the end of it. The bar was 4 foot long and we had a 3 foot deck. I put the bar in the pall and gave a heave and it broke loose and came out. Overboard I went with the bar. We were making 40 foot of water and I was wearing coveralls with felt boots and gloves. It was cold, middle of the winter. It was just like a vice pushing my chest together. I was about half out and I came to when I hit the bottom with my feet. I came to, still holding the bar, dropped the bar and pushed up. I didn't think I was going to make the surface. I got up and they threw a life preserver on a rope and pulled me over the side. I went down in front of the boiler, dried off, put on clean clothes and went back to work. In the morning Captain Curly said "you fall over last night?" "Yes sir." He said, "You lose our bar too?" Yea, he said, you crazy, why didn't you go to bed?" I worked anywhere I could make a buck.

OEO: You probably didn't have much time or money for partying.

Clif Fox: No, none at all. We played a little, you made your own recreation, tin cans, stick hockey, basketball at night once in a while, I was never good at basketball and football. No, I never had much for recreation. I know I was talking about the theatres that they had the shorts and all this and that. You could take a girl to the movies on a Saturday afternoon matinee and get a sundae afterward. Out of 50 cents you'd still have 10 cents left. There was a German ice cream place, homemade ice cream up on Pike Corners. You would take a bowl, a serving dish, in there and for a quarter they would pile the ice cream up at least 8 or 10 inches high through a big piece of wax paper. We would chip in a nickle apiece, 5 or 6 of us, and get a bowl of ice cream. We had our own spoons. We'd sit on the curb and pass the dish up and down. You'd get a spoonful, all you could get on a spoon, and then it went to the next guy until it was gone. That was a big treat.

OEO: At that time, when you got out of high school, any thought of going to college was a waste of time I guess?

Clif Fox: I got two semesters of college later. I took Mechanical Drawing and Metallurgy. That got me interested in welding and I was proper deck welder. I went to Argentina, Newfoundland after the war to start a welding shop with what later became the Seabees. I was patching torpedo holes in ships to get them back to the states for two years in Argentina.

OEO: That would have been in what years?

Clif Fox: Right at the war start, 1941, in fact December 8.

OEO: We will get back to that. So you went through this testing process and did you take a course?

Clif Fox: I was welding in this plant. I took the test and you made test pieces. They machined these pieces of 8 inch pipe with V's and two pieces and you set them up and welded them. One weld, you have to lie on the floor and they put a big 3 foot square thing over, another one you do overhead hanging up, another one you do on a table, one vertical, one horizontal. Then they cut coupons out of the pipes you welded and machine them flush with the pipe. Then they bend one against the weld and one with it and twist one and pull one to see if the weld is good. When the weld testing was finished they called us in and appraised our work. The superintendent went through each person's work and basically said how bad the work was. When he got to mine he said it was an example of how welding should be done. I'll tell you though, welding is more than just running the bead. If you see someone welding and this flux comes over it and then they chip it and then brush it and then look at it, they don't know what they are doing. If they know what they were doing they know what it looks like, they don't need to knock the flux off. I learned that in school, metallurgy. I worked a couple of years there, and welded for a year. Then they come up with a bid, it was a high union place, closed shop union and they bid layout machine shop jobs. I bid on it and it was the highest hourly salary rate in the shop. I got the bid and it was a lot better than welding because you didn't have all the smoke and heat. I did that for about a year then they were going to lay off 30 men. They would send a man over from the personnel office to ask who would you like to bump, you had plant seniority and you could pick any man and bump him, then you had 30 days to make good on that job. I said I would do anything at all but I am not bumping anyone. You tell me what you want me to do. I said I would sweep the floor because you kept your same rate for 30 days. I said when my rate is cut I am out of here. I hated the plant. But, I had a good job so after about the 3rd time a guy bumped me off and they said who do you want to bump I said anyone you say. I said I would sweep the floor, anything at all for 30 days and when I got a rate cut I said, pay me off. He said Sam Steiner over on the drill press has a new machine, maybe you can help him set it up. So I went over there and about 3 days later they came back. I had a management transfer back to the layout for 30 days. So I went back to layout. I worked night shift, then after 30 days they asked who I wanted to bump. With that I quit and the personnel man said well you haven't got a rate cut. I said, no I don't, but I like to know where I am going to be working when I come in. That was the end of that job.

Then I went out to Jeannette to visit my sister and brother-in-law. He worked for a little transfer company, Glass City Transfer. Two brothers ran the garage and they had about a half a dozen trucks. They said they would give me a job but you had to belong to the union. You couldn't join the union because you were not driving a truck and you can't drive a truck because you don't belong to the union. So I hung around the union hall and drank coffee with them for a couple weeks and pretty soon someone calls and needs a driver and they have no one else there so they gave me a book and signed me up for the union. I went to work for the transfer company picking up freight in about 10 or 12 small towns and hauling it into Pittsburgh where we would peddle it to different trucking companies. One day at Continental Transportation they got talking to me and suggested I buy a couple trucks and haul their freight out and load vehicle bodies and bring them in. He said he would guarantee that I wouldn't lose any money. If it didn't work out they would take the trucks off my hands for what I paid. So, I ordered two Dodge trucks.

Then the Pittsburg union said I couldn't bring the bodies in and take them out, only load and unload them. We will have to send road men out with the bodies, drop them and then pick the loaded ones up. Only one truck could do it. I didn't like that. If you could keep driving everyday you would be alright. But you would go to New York and Baltimore and Washington, you would get a union man who had to go with you and he would want four hours in and so he would get his 4 hours in and say it's too late to load that day. Then you had to lay over. I was growling about that when this Dodge dealer needed somebody to haul his new cars from Detroit. They painted up my truck with their name and numbers and I hauled automobiles for two years out of Detroit. I didn't get much sleep but I made money. That was the period before I was in the Marine Corps.

OEO: We are talking about now before you went to boot camp with the Marine Corps?

Clif Fox: I went to boot camp at Parris Island. I think we had something like 3 months including the rifle range. We would shoot up to 600 yards. We had pistol and rifle and bayonet. The big bayonet course had silhouettes and men all around the course, men stuffed with straw, and a big sign that said "The bayonet fighter either kills or is killed. If the bayonet sticks, pull the trigger and it comes out easy." Anyway, I finished the boot camp.

OEO: Talk about boot camp, how did it strike you?

CF: Well I had this Sarge, name of Baxter, red headed guy and boy I mean he was rough. We had 80 pound marching orders. You'd stick that on your back and go through mud and slop up to here. In fact, years later, a couple of recruits drowned and they stopped that. You probably remember reading about it and I mean that was rough. If you got on that rifle range and you made marksman you'd be on there your whole 4 years. If you didn't make it you didn't get off there until you qualified and it was rough. In the meantime, sitting around in the evening talking, I guess I was talking about the steam dredges I had worked on up in Pennsylvania. When you finished boot camp, they would come around and give you three choices of where you would like to go for duty. Most times you went the opposite direction, but that didn't matter. So they didn't call my name. I put my hand up, Yep... what is your name? Fox. They said I was not going anywhere, staying right there, running a steam shovel. You get a bad impression of Parris Island in boot camp but it's one of the best places you could be for duty because the boots do all the police work. So I found myself in the service company. Captain Phillips, a mustang (former enlisted), said "there is your pickup, there is your fireman, and over there is an old steam shovel. It hasn't been run in a long while. Get out there and get working on it and see if you can get it running, we have some dirt to haul in a few days." I said "Yes sir." The boiler and steam part was no problem. None of the tubes leaked and we got steam up, even the whistle worked. By the second day I had the thing running. It was an antique! Instead of tracks, it had wheels, big steel wheels. You had to lay a pad down, made up of oak 4 X 4's crossed each way with cable. You would turn around with the bucket, pick it up, swing around and lay it down and run up on it.

OEO: When you say antique, when do you figure this thing was built.



Clif Fox: Well this was 1934 and it was probably 40 to 50 years old. At that time they didn't have to worry about boiler inspections or anything like that. It worked well. About that time, the Captain said that they had an old hulk of a tractor and needed to move a house. Could I try to get it running so we can move the house. This was Captain Phillips, he was a good egg, I really liked him. So I went out to this big old hulk, a big 4 cylinder with a huge fly wheel. You put a bar into the fly wheel to crank it. It had a gas tank about 2 feet round and 8 foot long and tracks in the back. There was a big roller wheel out in the front and when you free wheeled without any load, you had to steer the tracks and the wheel, but when you put a load on, the wheel would lift up. I cut two old trees and made skids, put them under this house, jacked it up and we pulled that house about a half a mile. He thought that was great. I was the only one at Parris Island who could eat in the mess hall in dungarees.

Now the company commander was a Captain by the name of Hardesty. Captain Phillips and Hardesty did not get along. Phillips was a mustang and they got rid of most of them after WWI. Phillips was one of the few left in the Marines at that time. It was known that these two officers had quarreled at some previous base. They called Hardesty "Hair Trigger." I don't know where he got that name but, "Hair Trigger." He didn't like me at all because I got out of drill and got to eat in the mess hall in dungarees. One day I got three haircuts. I passed him and he said "Get a hair cut." I had a hat on but had side burns. I kept them trimmed and we weren't bothered. "Yes sir", so I went over and got a hair cut. They cut the sideburns off and I came back and he got a matchstick, a little safety match 2 inches long. He stretched the curls out, two inches was the regulation length of your hair, and it was too long. He said "too long, get some more cut off." "Yes sir". I went over got it all cut off, came back, took my hat off and he said "that's good, keep it like that all the time."

I was at Parris Island about a year. It was real good duty because they'd get recruits to do the police work on Saturdays, mow the grass, sweep the streets, grease the bridge and I was in charge of most of them. You couldn't get them all to a work location in a half a day and then gather them up again so I would put a bunch of them in the carpenter shop and lock the door. I told them not to make any noise, then I would let them out at noon time. I had a gang over cutting grass at the General's house. I think he was later Commandant of the Marine Corps. So, it was too early to quit and I had dungarees on and I sat on the front step waiting for quitting time. These guys were cutting the grass. There were 6 or 8 of them. He came out in khakis and a T shirt. I jumped up and he said sit down and sat down beside me. He said, "How long have you been in the Marine Corps?" I told him, and he said "how do you like the Marine Corps" and I said, "Well I'll tell you general. Ever since I could remember I wanted to go to China and I thought the best way to get there was to get into the Marine Corps." I said "Where am I? Parris Island." He asked who my company commander was. I said "Hollingsworth", he said "well ask him for a transfer". I said "he just laughs" and Capt. Phillips is my service officer. He said "you'd really like to go to China?" I said "Yes Sir," He said "What is your name?" He went into the house and came out with a letter under his signature. "To who it may concern, Private Clifton P Fox is transferred to Shanghai, China on the next

available transportation”. He said “take this over, I think the Captain will sign off on it.” Of course, Captain Hollingsworth was glad to get rid of me but, not Captain Phillips. He stomped and pushed his sleeves up and pounded. He said “you’re crazy, you stay here I will make you staff sergeant.” He said “Your gonna come back with all these crazy Asiatic guys coming back from china yada yada”. He got his pen out and signed it. I got two weeks vacation then. It was the only two weeks leave I had while in the service. I went home and I took this other Marine, Laurence Black, with me. I introduced him to my family and he later married my sister.

I was going to Shanghai. It was very rare that a first enlistment Marine would get to Shanghai. They were assigned Asiatic duty time which started at Guam, then if the guy was a pretty good Marine, 6 months later the next transport might take him to the Philippines, but by that time it’s time for him to come back home. If he’s a really good Marine and reenlists, they might reenlist him for Shanghai. I got there and won a machine gun competition in D company, the machine gun company, and got a job in the storeroom. That was great because I had my own room over the storeroom with a Chinese boy. Every time you took your greens off they would want to iron them before they hung them up. You’d get up in the morning you’d have your hot water basin, your shaving cream squeezed on the shaving brush, your razor laid out. You stand there and he hands you a towel and washcloth. I had it real good the whole time I was there.

OEO: We need to go back and talk about boot camp. Was boot camp hard for you? You were a tough son of a gun, weren’t you?

Clif Fox: Well, I was used to hard work and I remember my grandmother saying “Hard work never hurt anyone”. I’d go out and work like mad in the garden, we’d bury all our vegetables in the ditch and straw and dig them up in the winter, beets, potatoes, carrots, and they’d keep. I worked day and night. I’d get an express wagon and go out and pick apples and bring them home, she’d bake dumplings, pick wild strawberries and raspberries. She cooked on a wood stove and I’d go down the railroad track with the express wagon and pick up coal. The old engineer or the fireman would throw me out a couple shovels full and I’d bring a whole load of coal home in the express wagon, and then I’d have to chop wood.

OEO: Didn’t that drill instructor, or whatever he was called in those days, get on your nerves?

Clif Fox: No, not at all. I’ll tell you what got on my nerves more than anything, and we took it out on the guy after taps. We had to wash skivvies, socks, shirts, we wore khakis everyday and we’d wash them on a scrub board, big long thing. Then after you got them in your bucket and you fell out, he would find fault with some piece that you had washed, put it back in the bucket and turn the bucket upside down so you had to scrub everything again. That night he didn’t get much sleep!

OEO: Did you get knocked around a lot in boot camp?

Clif Fox: No, you didn't get knocked around, but I'll tell you, you got drilled and drilled and drilled and you went on hikes in double time and heavy marching orders and that rifle. You had that rifle and it better be clean and shining all the time or you slept with it.

OEO: Was this a Springfield?

Clif Fox; Yes sir, you kept the same one and anything that you could see you'd hit. It's still basically the best rifle in the world today, all around, as far as trajectory, operation and all.

OEO: Anything more you want to say about boot camp, anything that you can think of because this is interesting stuff. We are talking about a time in Marine Corps history that was a lot different from today. This is the kind of stuff that is good to get on paper.

Clif Fox: Boot camp was tough, really tough and it didn't bother me. If anyone else could do it, I could do it better. I was always like that. If people could do 10 chin ups, I'd do 11. I always managed to do it in later years at work.

OEO: Did they wash out a lot of people at boot camp?

Clif Fox: No, they didn't wash out too many, but I'll tell you, they gave you the business before you got out of there. Physically and mentally, they worked you over pretty well.

OEO: That process went away in a hurry once the war started.

Clif Fox: We signed for 4 years or longer "at the convenience of the government" I think was the way it was worded.

OEO: What was the best pay you received in your 4 years in the Marine Corps?

Clif Fox: When I was discharged I still got my \$18.20 cents a month, but over in China I got \$52.00 dollars, same as a sergeant, for running the storeroom, but I was still a private.

OEO: Why was that? How were they able to bump your pay up?

Clif Fox: It was a technical rating and you couldn't get a rating unless someone left who had one. It didn't go in your record book. They put a loose page in there to throw away when you left.

OEO: They probably don't work it that way anymore!

Clif Fox: No I don't think so, see we didn't even have dog tags (laughing). No, I am sure they don't do it that way anymore. Actually I was fortunate because they wanted the best machine gunner in their company. There were other machine gun companies and the competition was with our battalion's two machine gun companies and two in the first battalion.

OEO: What machine gun was that?

Clif Fox: Browning Water Cooled.

OEO: OK, so you boarded USS Chaumont to sail to China.

Clif Fox: When I got on at Norfolk, they discovered I was going all the way to Shanghai, so I became the Captain's orderly. They didn't have to break in someone else at Guam or the Philippines. That was great because I ate up on the bridge and the Philipinos served my meals. I got my clothes done in the ships laundry. I slept down in the hold with the rest but had it made all day. We were 92 days from Norfolk to Shanghai. I was the only one going all the way because all Asiatic duty was Guam and all the marines that went out there went to Guam. They would then pick the best marines and take them to the Philippines. Then, from the Philippines, they'd pick some up to reenlist for Shanghai. Shanghai, at that time, was still under Chiang Kai Shek. It was considered the best duty in the world as far as the Marine Corps went at that time.

OEO: So it took you 93 days to get there.

Clif Fox: We went to Cuba, Haiti, both sides of Panama, up to Mare Island Navy Shipyard near San Francisco, Honolulu, Guam, and then to Wake Island. When we were docking in Honolulu I had a little encounter with the Captain. The radio operator brought a stack of messages to the bridge for the Captain to see. He was busy docking and tying up so I started looking at the messages and the Captain caught me. He said "Anything important?" I said "No Sir" and he said "I will look at them after while". After they got tied up he came up and said "this is a beautiful place. Have you ever been ashore here?" I said "no sir" and he said "would you like to go ashore?" I said "Yes sir." He said "well secure the watch." I was going down the gangplank and the Officer of the Day said "where are you going, Marine?" I said "I have Captain's permission to go ashore sir." "Very well." I mean, boy, that Captain was king on that ship! I was ashore for 2 or 3 hours, long enough to watch this guy go up a coconut palm and knock down a bunch of coconuts. I took a burlap bag of them back to the ship. I had it good on the ship as the skipper's orderly.

At Wake we took the first men that stayed overnight on Wake Island. The ship anchored about a mile off and you looked through the glasses and it looked like a sandbar, no vegetation or anything on it. They lowered a raft and a kicker and 4 guys got on it and took off and they established a refueling station for the Pan American Clipper. The Clipper could only run 3000 miles, California, Hawaii, Guam, Wake Island, the Philippines, then Shanghai.

OEO: They were the first Americans to go onto Wake?

Clif Fox: Yes, to stay overnight. They were civilians with Pan American Airways. They started that flight to China. I had an envelope that I sent on the Clipper addressed to

myself but, over the years, it got lost somewhere or someone got a hold of it, I don't know. It would have been a nice memento. They called that trip "The first flight on the China Clipper." From there we went to the Philippines, then to China, a stop in Hong Kong and then up to Shanghai.

OEO: What were things like in China then? Who was fighting who and how close were you?

Clif Fox: After about a year the Chinese and the Japanese were fighting. The Japanese tried to take over Shanghai. We had sand bag barricades out on the Sou Chou Creek. The U.S. Marines had the Yangtze River and the Sou Chou Creek. We had about 2/3 of the perimeter of Shanghai to protect and the English had the rest of it.

OEO: That was the purpose for being there?

Clif Fox: Right, they told us the reason we were there was to protect U. S. interests. The Japanese and Chinese weren't fighting when we were out there, but then the Chinese Reds were going to take over Shanghai. They were trying to turn China to communism, which they finally did.

OEO: Were you also responsible for protecting the American Consulate?

Clif Fox: Right. Standard Oil and several big companies had holdings there.

OEO: Your duties were pretty unique.

Clif Fox: The First Battalion was right downtown in one barracks. The Second Battalion was scattered outside the perimeter. I was in the Second Battalion. Once a month we had to march to the race course downtown in dress blues, white leggings and white belt. Regardless of how hot it was, you marched. You put those leggings on and they better not see any creases in them. You had to take a toothbrush and slide it down inside to straighten them out. The Chinese room boys would polish the brass buttons on them. Our barracks was a big old brick building with a squad in each room. I had the storeroom in a separate little building. My room was up over the storeroom and I had my own room boy. The other guys had one room boy per squad.

OEO: Were there any skirmishes while you were there?

Clif Fox: Three marines were killed while we were out on the creek with the machine guns. The word was that they were killed by stray bullets. To start with, we had orders not to fire. After they were killed, orders came down the firing line "if you are fired upon you can return fire." I'll tell you they opened up and no one got killed accidentally with stray bullets after that. Just before we got back to Frisco the Japanese sank the Yangtze River boat. I thought they were going to turn around and take us back. They dumped us off and picked up a new crew and headed right back out there.

They sent about 6 of us to the east coast on an army transport. After experiencing a Navy vessel, that Army transport looked like a sink tank. The only good thing about it was my younger brother was at the Panama Canal in the Navy. He rode through the canal on the ship with me. That was nice.

OEO: Are there any incidents from your Shanghai days that kind of stand out in your memory?

Clif Fox: One thing I remember is shaking hands with Joe E. Brown. He was entertaining at this hotel night club where I met him and talked to him. They had a ballgame and he threw out the first ball.

I had a really nice and very intelligent girlfriend there. She was the chief operator for Shanghai Telephone Company. All the operators spoke several languages. Her private office had a switchboard in it. If the operators got a call they didn't understand, they would send it to her switchboard to handle. She may not get a call for 2 or 3 days or she may get 2 or 3 in one day. She was educated in England. She took me to all these Chinese banquets and they were something. Unbelievable food and drink.

OEO: She was a big shot? What other kind of events did she take you to?

Clif Fox: Yes, she was. The first banquet was in a room with a huge long table and glistening floor. The chairs were carved and beautiful. There was a whole roast pig on the table with burners to keep it hot. You had a bowl of water and a bowl of rice. You would reach over and get a hunk of meat, rip it off like Henry the Eighth, and then throw the bone over your shoulder and the cooley wiped the floor. They were there with a wash cloth, a wet warm towel for you to wipe your face and hands. All these cooleys in big long coats stood there waiting for something like that to happen. I wouldn't toss the bones the first couple of times and my girlfriend always gave me hell. She said you have to do like they do, watch them, it's hospitable. We sat down one time at one of these with a Chinaman sitting next to me in fancy Chinese clothes with a little thin mustache. He was an old man with the little round hat on the back of his head. On the other side of him was an Englishman. We were having the soup course and the Englishman said to the little Chinaman "you like soupee?" The Chinaman just nodded his head and after the dinner, which lasted a couple of hours, they announced that Doctor such and such was going to speak. The little Chinaman gets up next to me and gives the most eloquent speech, in English, you ever heard in your life. When he sat down he turned to the Englishman, and didn't whisper either, and said "do you Likee speechee?" (laughs) That was an unforgettable event, my girl trying to get me to throw the bones on the floor and all the other happenings at the dinner.

OEO: When you went on these events with her did you wear your uniform?

Clif Fox: No, civilian clothes and there would be other foreigners present. It was like a council meeting, a city meeting of some kind.

OEO: That race course you mentioned earlier was quite a popular place wasn't it?

Clif Fox: Oh yes, that was downtown where all the formal parades took place. We had to march down there. The First Battalion lived right close to the race course but our battalion had to march all the way down and back.

I could understand a little bit of Chinese. My room boy was really an old man. After a few months he wanted to know if he could bring his son. So he brought his son in and they were both there. This boy was supposed to be 14 to 15 years old but I think their time ran in cycles instead of centuries, and he was probably about 12. He had a little book with English on one side and Chinese on the other. He would come up and point to it in Chinese and say the English word. He would remember most of it and I'd forget half of it. After they were both there for about 3 months and the boy was broken in, the father quit and then just the young boy worked for me.

OEO: Was he good?

Clif Fox: Yes, he was good. We weren't supposed to bring them any food. I would build up a great big sandwich because he was in the room all by himself. I was talking to the Corporal of the Guard at the gate one night and he mentioned the sandwich my boy was taking home. So I asked my boy if he maybe didn't like the sandwich. He said "Number One, foo ding how." He was taking it down to the chow binger on the corner who had a cart with rice and fish heads. He could trade that sandwich for enough rice and fish heads to last a week. From then on, I made him sit and eat the sandwich in the room. He felt like the sandwich was too good for him to eat.

Another story from Shanghai. The Park Hotel had a nightclub with good entertainment. Two of the regular entertainers were Americans who went by Betty and Nelly (I never knew their real names). After I went back home and married, my wife and I were traveling between Pittsburg and Jeannette one time and stopped at a diner that served good food. As we were eating, my wife saw these people waving at us from outside. I turned around and there stood Betty and Nelly by their big sedan with luggage on the top. We ended up inviting them to our house. They had been on their way to New York City for a show. Turns out, they had spent several years in Shanghai.

OEO: OK so you're back, when did you get back to the United States.

Clif Fox: About 6 weeks before my February 1938 discharge at Philadelphia Navy yard, the same place I enlisted.

OEO: Then what did you do?

Clif Fox: I was thinking of reenlisting but I didn't and have always kicked my rear end for not doing it. I was on guard duty at night at the Navy yard and it was cold and windy. I was lying on my sack in my dungarees and T shirt and a corporal came in to tell me that the Sergeant says the Captain wants to see me. I told him I had to get into uniform and

he said go like you are. I never heard of going into the Captain's office in my dungarees and t-shirt. I get there and the Captain says "Good morning Fox. How are you today? Sit down." You know the whole time I was in the Marines it was "yes sir, no sir" and now it was sit down and it kind of got to me. I thought of all those times when they were so strict and such now they want me to reenlist. The officers got promoted on points at that time and reenlistments earned them points. I think the only reason I didn't reenlist was because I could say no. When he decides that I am not going to reenlist, he offers the reserves. No, I said and he gives me a couple of days to think about it. The whole informality of it just didn't set well with me. I was also sorry that I never took out government insurance. It was really cheap then but I didn't have a nickel to rub against another. I should have had enough sense to take advantage of it.

OEO: So you decided not to take them up on their offer. What did you do next?

Clif Fox: I went out to Pittsburgh and got this job driving trucks for this company. Then I bought these trucks and hauled freight and automobiles, finally selling out. Then I got into the construction business with a couple bulldozers. They were all cable machines then before they had hydraulics. This brother-in-law and his brother were hard up so I took them in as partners. His brother was a good worker but my brother-in-law spent more then we could earn so I sold out to them. They lost their butt on it. I started a garage and welding shop and ran that a couple of years. I built a 3 level stone house, right in the middle of Jeannette on the best residential lot in the whole city. I cut all the stone in the mountains by hand and hauled it 60 miles. I laid stone on nights and weekends for 7 years. I installed radiant heat back when all they could tell you was how good radiant heat was. The house was beautiful. This was before the war. When I went off to Argentia the house was framed and livable but the stone work was a long process.

OEO: Then you did the Argentia thing.

I lived out in Jeannette, about 45 miles from Pittsburgh. Dec 8 was a Monday morning. I was down at the recruiting office in Pittsburg with my discharge papers before the doors opened. The recruiter was Sergeant Linkosky. He had won some kind of Barbwire Crown boxing on the west coast years ago and they called him Barbed Wire. I did duty with him in China and we talked old times. He said "shipping over?" and I said yeah. So he started getting forms out and I laid out my discharge and he said "not married are you?" I said "yes." He put the papers away and said no married men. They still had peacetime rules on December the 8<sup>th</sup> and no married men were accepted. I said well they'll be taking them before long. You give me a call, and gave him my phone number.

I was only home a few days and got a call from the Navy at Newport, Rhode Island. He said, Clifton Fox, you have an American Welding Society welding certificate. We'd like to talk to you so get on a plane and come up here. I went up and they told me they were going to start a welding shop with Seabees up in Newfoundland. They had just started to build a base at Argentia. They said they would come and give me a welding test but after looking at my certificates they said they were good enough. They needed someone who knew how to weld to go up and start a welding shop for the Seabees so they could start a



Seabee's rating. Off I went to Argentina, but the Seabee's didn't get there for two years. The first ones they got didn't know too much. They did have some good mechanics and they got going.

OEO: When did you go up there?

Clif Fox: About two weeks after Pearl Harbor. Ships were getting hit by torpedoes just a little below the water line. They had no way to haul the ships for hull repair but they would shift ballast and empty tanks. Then they would hook onto a big stiff leg on the dock and get that hole just above the water line. I would weld a patch plate over the hole which was enough to get the ship back to a shipyard in the states.

OEO: These torpedoes were going through and not exploding?

Clif Fox: They would go into one compartment and not go all the way through. They would go into one compartment and the ship would have water tight doors. The ships that didn't have water tight doors would sink when hit. There were more ships sunk in the North Atlantic during that part of the war than people realize. We had materials shipped up there 3 or 4 times that never got there. I was using sixty penny spikes for welding rods so the welds had gas holes and pin holes. They would say "good enough, that will get her back to the states. There is another one waiting to be repaired." I had half a dozen telephone poles lashed together afloat as a work platform.

OEO: And you were the only one that was able to do it.

Clif Fox: Right, I did that for two years until the Seabee's took over. It was cold and windy and miserable but the pay was excellent.

After that, a large oil company was going to dig up a pipeline, clean it and reclaim it while pumping gas through it. They wanted me to run this backhoe, an old machine but it was in tip top shape. They wanted to lease my friend's backhoe and he wouldn't lease it unless he knew who was going to operate it. He wanted me to run this backhoe that summer. I really wanted to finish my house but, after talking to the oil company people, I decided to take the job. After that job was over they wanted me to go on regular and I said well the pay wasn't high enough to go on regular so they boosted it up a little bit and I started working for the oil company. My first job out in West Pittsburg went well so they wanted me to go up to Lancaster County. They had two houses that were empty where there had been a former pump station. The man said stay in one of them to see if you like it or want to go back. We lived in one of their houses for a year. I was building pumping stations and putting equipment in and putting pipes in the pipeline. I had learned some things from a neighbor by the name of John Lyons. He was a retired millwright. Large machine outfits had trouble lining up machines when they built a new mill. They would call him to come and line up their machines at night and on weekends when the mill was shut down. I would go down with him and got a real education on lining up machinery. When I went to work for the oil company and went out on my first job they were trying to line up the pump and motor at a new pump station and were doing

a terrible job. I told the superintendent that I could line things up if he gave me a couple of good men. I had things lined up in nothing flat. After that, every station they built or pump they replaced, I went and supervised the job using their local repair people.

In later years we automated two thousand miles of pipeline. It took 5 to 6 years to get all that equipment automated. All the tank farms and pumping stations were operated from one room in Philadelphia. They were the first company with an automated products line. When it was established they said that since I was familiar with it I should just keep running it. I beat my brains out day and night over 4 states in the northeast.

This was back in the 50's and 60's. I retired in 1972 from that job at age 60. I was with them about 25 years. I have been retired ever since. I moved to the eastern shore and boated on the bay. I would buy boats, fix them up and sell them as a broker. I also built a trawler with a six cylinder Detroit diesel. The plan was to live on it but, being 52 feet, it wasn't large enough to live on. I had a Chinese junk built in Hong Kong and shipped over on a freighter. I sailed her for 8 years. Since the trawler proved to be too small, I searched around for a larger hull but never found what I wanted. So, I bought a motor home and we went into land cruising. I looked around for a motor home with a diesel engine without much luck until I found the Foretravel Company. They didn't build diesel powered units at that time but the owner, Clarence Ford, agreed to build an experimental for me at cost if he could get it tested and use the information for advertising. They built it and it was a beauty. They were a very small company at that time and have grown tremendously. They bragged for years that we put them in the diesel business. We traveled in that rig for several years until we settled in Lake County, Florida. I finally sold the motor home which was a mistake because we missed the travel. So then we went to trailers. Later, we went to "fifth wheel" units which I pulled with a cab-over diesel engine. I put a hydraulic crane on it so I could load the motorcycle behind the cab. I later used a special built rig I designed with a Toyota diesel engine. It was quite a piece of equipment. These days, I keep busy working with equipment and doing different jobs.

OEO: I see a motorcycle in your front yard.

Clif Fox: I first rode a motorcycle when I was 14 years old. I am still riding every day at age 94.

OEO: You have led an exciting and multi-faceted life which included a fascinating tour in the Marine Corps. I know you are very proud to be a Marine. What did that time in the Corps mean to you and what impact did it have on your later life?

Clif Fox: When I enlisted in the Marine Corps I was told I was now a member of the finest fighting force in the world. I believed it then and still do, even though the science, technology and methods have changed. My time in the Corps helped me to get along with my fellow man. Also, it earned me bragging rights with Army and Navy retirees!

OEO: Thank you for sharing your story.