Eugene A. Herold
Veteran

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New York State Military Museum
Interviewer

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Q: Sir for the record, could you state your full name and date and place of birth please?
EH: My name is Eugene Herold, I was born in Clifton Park on May 17th, 1930.

Q: Did you attend school in Clifton Park?
EH: Yes, I did, I went for eight years to elementary school, one room school. After finishing 8th grade, I went on to burnt hills Ballston Lake central school and graduated from there four years later.

Q: What year was that?
EH: 1947.

Q: When you graduated from high school did you go right to work, go to college, what did you do?
EH: I didn't go to college. I took a vocational course in high school. I was able to get a job in a repair shop. After the war there seemed to be a lot of repair work for vehicles. I was able to get a job locally starting out with mechanical work for a few years.

Q: I see you entered the Marine Corp in January of 1952. Were you drafted or did you enlist?
EH: I was drafted, at that time the Korean conflict was going on. This conflict resulted in everyone who was able to be drafted. My twin brother, incidentally, was drafted before I was into the army. At the time everyone around here thought I'd be drafted in the army and be in the same branch of service as him. As I got to the draft board in Albany, I was chosen to go to the Marine Corp. They were short personnel at the time and that was it I was drafted.

Q: Where did they send you for your basic training?
EH: I went to Paris Island South Carolina. I received my basic training in eight to ten weeks.

Q: Now was that your first time away from home?
EH: After graduating high school, my brother and I and another fella drove to Florida and back. We spent the first winter in Florida, but other than that, that was my first time away from home.

Q: When you went to basic was there anyone there from Clifton Park or Albany?
EH: No sir. The way I understood this, in this region there were five draftees sent to the Marine Corp. The furthest one north was from Glen falls. All other draftees were scattered I didn't know anyone. The fella from Glens falls was our leader, he was in charge of making sure we got where were supposed to.

Q: Once you completed your basic training where did they send you next?
EH: For reasons I'm unsure of, maybe because of my mechanical background, I was sent to Turner field Quantico Virginia Marine Corp schools. I was put into an engineering squadron, the only one of us type unattached by any marine air wing. I was put in what was known as a check crew to learn the details of maintenance on the aircraft we worked on.

Q: What type of aircraft was that?
EH: Over the period of time that I was there, we started out on a squadron of F6F Grumman Hellcats. They were fighter planes from the navy.

Q: Were these all World War ii planes left over from the war?
EH: Yep, the way it worked the Navy sent them up to the Marine Corp then they were brought to our squadron. I think there were about twenty of them. We painted them with our Quantico insignia. They were in our squadron for a period of time then they were transferred. We got a squadron of F8F Bearcat by Grumman. That was the newer version of the F6F that was smaller with more firepower and really was a nice plane. Finally, they were shipped out and we got a squadron of F4F Corsairs. They were the last of the group and they were quite popular on aircraft carriers towards the end of World War ii. There was a lot of history in that plane and those were the three types of planes that came into the squadron.

Q: Now what kind of work did you do on them?
EH: Well, I started out in what was known as a check crew. A check crew, in an engineering hanger, pertained to pulling maintenance on the aircraft itself. Whatever it took, the basics like fluid levels and tire pressures and everything of that type. Then it went into more detail, every thirty hours of flight time they had to have maintenance done on them. From that, the next one was sixty hours then ninety. They would add more maintenance until it got quite complex. The more hours on the plane the more complex the inspection and repairs had to be done on them. They had to be well maintained because they had a mission at Marine Corp school which I thought was very unusual. But that's how it worked out for

being in a check crew. While I was check crew, there was several in a squadron, and I worked my way through and they liked my way of doing things. Yeah, I advanced quite rapidly there.

Q: Now what rank were you?
EH: When I left, I was a sergeant. The interesting thing, when I was in that squadron, I learned that the mission of it was at the pleasure of the commanding general of marine Corp schools. Which was general Cates, Clifton B Cates, he was the commanding general of Marine Corp schools. Previously he was a commandant of the marine corp. As history had it, there was an incident when he was in conversation with President Truman. He wanted to be recognized and have a member of joint chief of staff of the Marine Corp. They got into it, a heated discussion as I understand it, he acknowledged the fact that he believed that the Marine Corp was a police force to the navy, and they don't deserve it. So, at that point after he had left being a commandant in 1952, he was given the job as a 3-star general. There is only one four star general in the Marine Corp, so he was given three stars and commanded the Marine Corp school in Quantico. The mission of the squadron was to put on demonstrations every so often, every five to six months. It was to show civilians and leaders of this country the importance of the Marine Corp and their fire power and support for ground troops. It was known as the joint civilian orientation commerce. That was the official name of it. We would rehearse and get everything in order to put on this demonstration for all the civilian leaders. It would continue for the duration while I was there. Every five to six months we would put on a demonstration for the civilians. The idea was to maintain the importance of close air support for the ground troops from the air system of the marine corp. That's what the mission was and that's what I participated in while I was in Quantico.

Q: Were you there in Quantico for your entire military service?
EH: Yes sir, two years active duty I spent my entire time there. At the time I was leaving they wanted me to ship over again, and I said I had to go home and think about it. At that time, they phased out the gasoline driven aircraft, they were starting to get into navy jets which was a whole new field that got started. As a result, I thought it over, I enjoyed working on the regular engines, so I went into the reserve to finish my tour.

Q: Now you mention a colonel Marion Carl, did you know him personally?
EH: He was stationed at the squadron for a period of time, and he flew out with our aircraft. I didn't get to know him that well, I knew and respected him for being his rank. They said he was such a wonderful pilot, that he was unrestricted at flying any aircraft that Marine Corp had. He was that good, he was the first Marine Ace in the pacific in World War ii. He had a lot of recognition. I remember him flying a twin-engine Grumman aircraft, he would fly it to the west coast. This was impressing that one man would fly a single cockpit across country

by himself. He had belly tanks on his aircraft to fly to the west coast and come back on business for the Marine Corp. That was the interesting thing I remember about him. At all circles of the base, he was well respected.

Q: Now you got to do some flying yourself?
EH: Yes, the way it was as I was coming up the rank in the check crew, by being interested in aviation, every month the squadron would offer flight pay for any person working on aircraft as an incentive to good work and everything. It was a four-hour flight time so as a result I enjoyed it. It would mean I would take a hop in a plane, to any place any pilot was flying. Could be Cherry point or Norfolk or any place there was a hop going out I would get permission from operations to get on board. The pilot would sign my flight sheet. It was required that you got four hours of month. You had to keep track of it, or you missed out on a monthly basis. I enjoyed it and I always participated and got my time in; it was enjoyable.

Q: What kind of money were they paying you for your flight time do you recall?
EH: Fifty dollars a month extra, and when I got there it was seventy-five for private first class for the month.

Q: So that was pretty good pay for you?
EH: Yeah, you figure when everything else is paid for you know. The uniforms, the lodging, and meals and everything and education. I enjoyed it and I appreciated the fact that I was able to deal with working on the aircraft, I always liked that.

Q: Before I forget why don't you show us those pictures and tell us a little bit about them?
EH: Well, these are from when I came home on leave after basic training. I was private first class, and those pictures were taken by my brother. At the time he lived right next door to where I lived. We had the pictures taken around late April or May. This one picture was that of an airshow I attended shortly after. This isn't the type of plane I worked on, I knew the fellow who had that plane, it was a mustang P30.

Q: So, you got out of the Marine Corp in January of 1954, so you spent two years? Once you got out you mentioned going into the reserves?
EH: Yes sir, it was an obligation of six years in active reserves.

Q: Did you have to attend-
EH: No, that's the difference between inactive and active. For active reserve you had to go once a month for training. Active reserve was standby in case of any emergency I could be called back to duty where I left off at the time. Luckily, I kept my uniforms and everything intact for six years until my obligations were over with. Finally, I got a full release from the obligations.

Q: Did you join any veterans' organizations at all?
EH: I did the American legion and that was the extent of it. I didn't join the Marine Corp league or anything. But the American I joined them and I'm still with them.

Q: Did you stay in contact with any of the people you were in service with?
EH: A few of the fellas yes. There was one fellow in fact from Detroit Michigan, he was in the same squadron as me. When he came home from serving down in Quantico with me, he got married. He was on vacation heading east to the coast one time and he stopped and visited a couple years afterwards. That was about the only extent of any person I was stationed with that kept in contact. We exchanged Christmas cards and stuff like that but other than that that was about the extent of it.

Q: Were you able to make use of the GI bill? Were you eligible for that at all?
EH: I didn't! The way that happened, previously to going in, I was a motor equipment operator for the local highway department. At the time I came out of the service, I went back to my same position with the highway department. As a result, I had a steady job and I thought more seriously about settling down and getting married. Finally with the highway department, I spent I think a total of forty-nine years with them and ended my career as deputy highway superintendent. I started out locally in Clifton Park, went into the service and came back and stayed with the Clifton Park highway department for all my career.

Q: Sounds like quite the career.
EH: Yeah, I worked my way through the ranks of the highway department. Like I said, when I retired I was deputy superintendent and that was the extent of it.

Q: Now when did you retire?
EH: I'd say about ten to twelve years ago. We have a little place here with several acres. I enjoy working in the garden, I start my plants from seed in the spring of the year and transplant them into my green house and back. Do things of that type like mow the lawns and take small trips to the coast for vacation and that's about the extent of it.

Q: How do you think your time in the service changed or affected your life?
EH: I think for the better. Like the old saying goes that "It might be tough in Paris Island but there's a reason for being tough." At the time that I was there it was important to stress the training. It was so vital because we had just left World War ii and the country is in another conflict. I didn't pull any strings or anything, but I was sent to Quantico Virginia and there's where I stayed. Some fellas had it

tough in Korea. I respected it, the training I got, I wouldn't take a million dollars for it. It was so good, even at Quantico with the squadron I was in, it was very strict and demanded a lot. It was the reward for the accomplishments we were able to achieve. I always respected the military background for how it helped me to understand a lot in life. I think it was well worth it.

Q: Did you brother end up going to Korea?
EH: No, he was in the army. I had two brothers and the older brother lived next door. He was in the navy in World War ii. He traveled around quite a bit, I forget what ship it was on. But my twin brother was in the army in I believe an aircraft unit at the end of long island for some reason and never went to Korea either. I don't know why but he ended up at the end of long island in an aircraft battery and I ended up in Quantico Virginia in the marine corp.

Q: Are your brothers still living?
EH: They're both dead. My twin brother died first then my older brother died soon after he retired. He worked for the General Electric company forty some years. He retired and Roy never got to draw his retirement, he passed away with a heart attack. So I'm the only one left.

Q: Do you have any children or grandchildren?
EH: Yeah, we have three daughters. One that pat knows that lives in Charleston South Carolina. One in Scotia and one right here in town right up here in White Road. So, my youngest daughter lives on White Road and my oldest daughter lives in Scotia. Three daughters and a number of grandchildren. One grandson and four granddaughters.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to touch on maybe we missed or anything that comes to mind?
EH: I can't think of anything really. The interesting thing I always remember was at Turner Field where I was stationed at marine Corp school, was the home start of Marine aviation. Finally, they developed the first marine airwing at Turner Field. At the time I was there, in the squadron across the from the barracks, the Marine Corp had started a helicopter squadron experimental, it was HMX-1. I thought the interesting thing was that I saw a program on television recently and that the home base of the marine one. They still have the presidents helicopter stationed at HMX-1 Quantico. I thought it was interesting that there is a lot of history in Turner Field Marine Corp Schools.

Q: Were you ever offered a chance to work on helicopters, or no?
EH: No, what it was at the time I was there, the Marine Corp was dealing with experimental use of helicopters. Companies would bring their helicopters there for experimental flying to get the pilots acquainted with that. It took quite a while, even while I was there, for the Marine Corp to decide on one type that

would be functional for the Corps. It was very difficult, different companies would bring up different helicopters, some that was unusual looking that never advanced past the testing stage. I think it was a Sikorsky helicopter that they finally went with at the start of Marine aviation in helicopter. I don't think they had helicopters at all during World War ii.

Q: I'm not sure if the Marines did, I think the Army did, but it was in its total infancy. They only had a very few of them.
EH: They come a long way. I thought it was interesting the start of marine aviation and the helicopter business started right at Turner Field at Quantico.

Q: Anything else?
EH: I think we covered everything I can remember.

Q: Well, thank you so much for your interview.
EH: Thank you for stopping by, I appreciate it.

Q: My pleasure.