

Lieutenant General Milton A. Reckord:
A PERSONAL MEMOIR OF NINETY-FIVE YEARS

An interview conducted by
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INTRODUCTION

The rifle has been a symbol of American independence and individuality for the entire span of our nation's history. Only within the last few decades has the citizen's right to possess firearms come under serious public scrutiny and become a recurring subject of debate in the halls of Congress. In the forefront of those who have most steadfastly defended the right to possess firearms have been the members of the National Rifle Association of America, and for more than half a century they were led by a tall, Lincolnesque son of the State of Maryland, Lieutenant General Milton A. Reckord. From the middle twenties to December 31, 1965 when he retired as Adjutant General of Maryland, General Reckord was the undisputed spokesman of American rifle-shooters. Even now, at age ninety-five, he is still a factor of no small importance within the counsels of the National Rifle Association which he served as executive vice-president for more than twenty years and on whose board of directors he still sits.

Milton A. Reckord was born in a small town in Harford County, Maryland on December 28, 1879. The town, Reckordville, had been named after his grandfather who was the major landowner in the community. Young Reckord grew up in the town of Bel Air where his father owned a milling business. He attended school there and was graduated from the Bel Air High School in 1896. He worked in the mill and very early showed a capacity for leadership by directing crews of both black and white laborers put to work when the mill became the source of electrical power for the surrounding area.

College education was more than the family could afford when the elder Reckord died prematurely at age fifty-three and on his son were thrust the major responsibilities for running the business. At the outbreak of the Spanish-American War in 1898 the young man sought to enter military service but was refused enlistment. But on his twenty-first birthday, after first overcoming his mother's dark concern, he joined Company D of the 1st Maryland Infantry of the Maryland National Guard. Thus began a long career in military service that spanned sixty-four years.

During his military career General Reckord performed many services for his nation and his native state. He served under many of our most noted military leaders, including Generals John J. Pershing, Dwight D. Eisenhower, George C. Marshall and Douglas MacArthur. In the course of his career he had personal contact with Presidents Calvin Coolidge, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy. In what follows he recounts some of these personal relationships and makes

frank evaluation of the impacts these national leaders had upon legislation and the execution of national policies effecting marksmanship training for Americans and particularly the support of the National Matches held annually at Sea Girt, New Jersey or Camp Perry, Ohio.

For hundreds of thousands of Americans the National Matches of the NRA loom as important as any baseball World Series or any football Super Bowl championship. The struggle to preserve the National Matches during the twenties and thirties is recounted here in some detail by General Reckord who was in the thick of the fight to obtain adequate federal funding of the event. The struggle often involved open conflict with military leaders in the War Department and reached frequently into the halls of Congress and the White House. Scholars of military history and national defense will find interesting General Reckord's recollections of those struggles and the arguments offered by the contending groups. Here, too, is revealed in some detail how congressional support is developed and cultivated both to achieve desired new legislation or to defeat or amend it. Friends and enemies in the Congress and the White House are identified with a frankness that has been characteristic of the respondent throughout his long lifetime. Large credit is given to others for their work. Most notably is that accorded the late Karl T. Frederick of New York for his role in firearms legislation and promotion of shooting competition in the Olympic Games and international matches.

The relationships of the National Guard, the Regular Army, the Baltimore and Los Angeles Police Departments, and the veterans organizations vis a vis the NRA will prove of interest to scholars of recent American history. The role of the NRA in the complex of conservation organizations is less well revealed here. General Reckord knew Gifford Pinchot only slightly but offers an observation of his part in the conservation movement. He registers some concern over the current role of preservationists in the conservation of natural resources.

Internal conflicts within the NRA itself are not glossed over. The ouster of General Fred H. Phillips, Jr., in the middle twenties gets a full airing, and the radical change in publication policies are recounted. Changes in association by-laws, development of new programs for youth and police departments, analysis of membership growth--are all discussed candidly. The impacts of America's involvement in World War II on subsequent growth of NRA membership are discussed here. So also are those of the Great Depression and the steady rise of crime. Throughout the interview, General Reckord emerges as a person of amazing vitality and power to recall details of the past. Both physically and mentally he impressed me as being better equipped than most men twenty-five or thirty years his junior.

Concerning the actual making of the interview: In the winter of 1973 I was invited to do a series of oral history interviews with leaders of the American conservation community. As a member of the Natural Resources Council of America, the National Rifle Association was one sponsor of the series. After reviewing my published interviews with Clinton R. Gutermuth of the Wildlife Management Institute and Alfred C. Redfield, Senior Oceanographer of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, the directors of the National Rifle Association invited me to do an interview of similar order with General Reckord.

Louis F. Lucas, vice president-finance of the NRA, opened the records of the organization for my research into the role General Reckord had played and I spent a week examining them. On March 13 and 14, 1974, Mr. Lucas and I drove from Washington, D.C. to General Reckord's home in Towson, Maryland where tape recordings were made of the interview which appears here in print. The unexpurgated recording of the interview is preserved as a part of the collection of original tapes in the library of the Forest History Society at Santa Cruz, California. The published volume is shortened to eliminate certain repetitions which crept into an interview which spanned two days.

Transcription of the tapes was done by my wife, Eleanor, to whom I owe also a debt of thanks for editing and final typing the work. Barbara D. Holman of the Forest History Society's oral history department produced the index and prepared the illustrations.

All uses of this work are covered by a legal agreement between the directors of the Forest History Society and Lieutenant General Milton A. Reckord. The work is thereby made available for research purposes. All literary rights in the manuscript, including the right to publish, are reserved to the co-authors of this work during their lifetimes and to the Forest History Society thereafter. No part of the work may be quoted for publication without the written permission of the Executive Director of the Forest History Society.

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Elwood R. Maunder
Executive Director
Forest History Society

Santa Cruz, California
November 30, 1974

Elwood Rondeau Maunder was born April 11, 1917 in Bottineau, North Dakota. University of Minnesota, B.A. 1939; Washington University at St. Louis, M.A. (modern European history) 1947; London School of Economics and Political Science, 1948. He was a reporter and feature writer for Minneapolis newspapers, 1939-41, then served as a European Theater combat correspondent in the Coast Guard during World War II, and did public relations work for the Methodist Church, 1948-52. Since 1952 he has been secretary and executive director of the Forest History Society, Inc., headquartered in Santa Cruz, California, and since 1957 editor of the quarterly Journal of Forest History. From 1964 to 1969, he was curator of forest history at Yale University's Sterling Memorial Library. Under his leadership the Forest History Society has been internationally effective in stimulating scholarly research and writing in the annals of forestry and natural resource conservation generally; 46 repositories and archival centers have been established in the United States and Canada at universities and libraries for collecting and preserving documents relating to forest history. As a writer and editor he has made significant contributions to this hitherto neglected aspect of history. In recognition of his services the Society of American Foresters elected him an honorary member in 1968. He is a charter member of the international Oral History Association of which he was one of the founders. He is also a member of the Agricultural History Society, the American Academy of Political and Social Science, the American Historical Association, the Organization of American Historians, the Society of American Archivists, and the American Forestry Association.*

*Adapted from, Henry Clepper, ed., Leaders of American Conservation (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1971).

FAMILY LIFE IN MARYLAND, 1879 TO 1900

Elwood R. Maunder: I am speaking from the home of Lieutenant General Milton A. Reckord in Towson, Maryland on Thursday, March 14, 1974. Joining us soon will be Mr. Louis F. Lucas of the National Rifle Association of America. We are here to conduct an oral history interview with General Reckord. General, I wonder if you could start by telling us where you came from, what your family background is and a little about your early boyhood years. Were you born here in Maryland?

Milton A. Reckord: I've been in Maryland all my life. I was born in Harford County, the county just east of the one we are now sitting in (Baltimore County) at a little town on the Little Gun Powder River --the boundary line between Baltimore County and Harford. The town was in Baltimore County on the west side of the stream and was named Reckordville for my grandfather who owned everything in the town. It was very small. My father and mother lived in a house they had built on the east side of the stream in Harford County. I was born there, believe it or not, ninety-four years ago on December 28, 1879. When I was eight or nine years old, my grandfather and father and a brother by the name of Walter Reckord built a milling plant at Bel Air, Maryland, which is the county seat and is about six miles from Reckordville. My father moved up there to take charge of the business that was to be established. I went to the local public school. I was not able to go to college. I always regretted this very much but my father was not financially able to send an older brother, a sister, and me to college. I went to work at my father's milling plant after I had graduated from high school. This was in the days before we had electricity in all the small towns. Shortly afterwards, probably four or five years, my father conceived the idea that if he could purchase a dam and a small power plant on a stream called Winters Run, which was only a couple of miles out of town, he could organize an electric company to furnish electricity not only to run his mill but to furnish the lights within the town. He made a deal with the owner of the property. This gentleman had owned it for many years but he had reached very advanced age and his attorney approached my father (or my father approached his attorney, I don't know which would be correct), and the deal was made that if my father would pay a dollar a day to the owner of the property for as long as he lived, they would deed the plant to my father. This was consummated. My father paid, I think, for only the first month when the old gentleman died. My father got

this small power plant on Winters Run with quite a bit of acreage for one month's payment. I helped build the power lines; helped plant the poles and string the wires and commanded the gang that did the work. At that time, I was only twenty-one or twenty-two years of age and full of pep and vinegar. I feel the experience in handling those men, black and white, all mixed into one working gang, helped me later on when I became an officer in the Maryland National Guard, and finally colonel of the Maryland Regiment in World War I. I learned early how to get along with people who really had to learn to work together. I always gave my father great credit for whatever success I had in the military.

ERM: He had a lot of faith in you to give you that much responsibility so early in life.

MAR: I think he did because he and I were very close. My older brother, who was in college, didn't get to know my father as well as I did. My father, unfortunately, died early in life. He was only fifty-three when he passed away and I succeeded him in operating the milling plant at Bel Air.

ERM: The Reckord family goes back a long time in American history.

MAR: Oh, yes. We can't carry it back as far as I would like to carry it, but on my father's side, the records show that his ancestry goes back to Kendel, which is a little town in the Northern part of England up near the Scots border. He emigrated to Maryland in (I may not have the exact date in mind) 1639 or 1659 to a little spot now called Peach Bottom up on the Susquehanna River. And how in the world he ever met the young girl by the name of Gil who lived in Baltimore, I can never tell you. The record shows he met and married Miss Gil of Baltimore. From that marriage there were five children, my father being the oldest living child. That's my early history.

ENLISTMENT IN MARYLAND NATIONAL GUARD, 1900

ERM: How did you begin your career in the military?

MAR: That's another story, but if you want it, I'll give it to you. Following the Spanish-American War in 1898, I was too young to enter the military service. Although we had a National Guard unit in Bel Air, Company D of the 1st Maryland Infantry of the Maryland National Guard, I was not able to join that infantry unit with some of my friends who were two or three years older than I. Some of us played ball together and some of the members of that team joined the military company. I desired to join it to be with them but my mother objected. She didn't think she wanted me to be associated with some of them. She was right in a few cases. They drank too much liquor and swore a lot and my mother didn't like that. She knew who they were and she opposed my desire to join the military. When I reached twenty-one, I went to her again. I said, "Mother, someday the United States is going to have a war with Germany and if I join the military now and learn to protect myself, if I have to go into battle, I will be able to protect myself much better than if I had never been trained." She said, "Well, you are now twenty-one. You are your own man so if you still want to join, I withdraw any objection I have."

I went down and joined the military unit. The unit was reorganizing following its return home after federal duty in the Spanish-American War. The captain, an older man, was our next door neighbor and had been after me all these years to join. My Mother didn't really know this and that probably is the reason I continued my interest. At any rate, the company was in poor shape. Few of the older men who had served for nine months in federal service rejoined.

My captain, in a very short time, did the unusual thing. He made me a sergeant. A few months later when we went to summer training camp, the first sergeant was elected to be second lieutenant of the company, filling a vacancy, and I was made first sergeant of the company. This was all because the company in its reorganization had so many new young men that rapid promotion, while unusual, could be accomplished. I didn't know enough to be first sergeant but I was studying all the time. I got by in a very satisfactory way so that about two and a half years later, before my three year enlistment expired, I had been elected by the men of the company to be captain. The captain's horse had run away with him and he had been thrown out of his buggy; his head hit

a stone and he was killed. It's hard to believe that in three years I was captain of the company.

I say again, and repeat what I have just said, I wasn't experienced enough to be captain of the company but I was probably better qualified than any other man in the company during this period of reorganization. All this time, I had been trying to improve my military knowledge by working map problems in the field and in drilling. I tried to be a good captain although I knew I didn't have all the knowledge necessary. I continued my studies and built up the company in a short time to full strength, which was sixty-five men in those days.

We attended the Baltimore fire and I surprised the general by reporting a full company. I never received my commission. Two months elapsed. I was elected on my twenty-fourth birthday, December 28, 1903, and the Baltimore fire was, I believe, on the following February 5th or 6th. I was still operating as a first sergeant when I had been elected captain. While we were in Baltimore, I went to the first lieutenant and second lieutenant and told them I thought I ought to be operating as captain of the company; that I had been elected, but had never been appointed and commissioned as far as I knew. I asked them if they had any objection to my speaking to the general who was then actively commanding the brigade on duty at the Baltimore fire. They said they hadn't. They thought I had every right to take command of the company. I went to see the general and he was surprised. He said, "Hasn't the adjutant general sent your commission to you?" I told him I had not received it. He said, "Well, you go on back and in a day or two, I will see that you have it." I received my appointment and commission and then I was a captain without proper uniform. It just happened the captain who had been killed had been my neighbor in Bel Air. We were almost the same build so I went up to his sister and borrowed one of his old uniforms. She also loaned me his saber. I put them on and came back to Baltimore and commanded the company. That's how I received my early promotion.

ERM: What was the nature of the assignment in Baltimore at that time?

MAR: It was guarding the banks that were in the area which had been destroyed by the fire as well as larger office buildings. Some of them had been completely gutted by the fire. The night of the fire, I was on a high point on West Baltimore Street watching because I was so interested. The fire was being described as burning the city. Some of we young men got an evening train and came down to watch the fire. We were standing in the middle of West Baltimore Street

when the fire jumped from the Equitable Building. It jumped the street three or four blocks east of us. As we watched, the fire jumped from one twelve or fifteen story building to another. Every wooden window frame broke into flames at the same time. It was an amazing sight to watch. Then we walked all around the fire area, from the western part all around the south and up the street on the east before the fire got to those streets. It was terrible. Hard for me to describe it. We guarded all the buildings and institutions and an area into which nobody but those who were authorized were allowed to enter. All the people wanted to get back to see if their papers or offices had been destroyed. They had to have passes. We were in Baltimore for about twelve or fifteen days, as I recall, until the police were organized and they took over for us.

ERM: A little earlier you made a statement that I would like to explore with you. You told your mother when you asked her permission to go into the military that you foresaw the day coming when this country would be involved in a great war with Germany. What had caused you to anticipate that war?

MAR: I think it was because even at that time, everything that I read indicated the German emperor was arrogant in his actions with other European nations. There was something in the air in those days which indicated very definitely Germany was inclined to try to take over and be the boss of Europe. Following the 1871 war with France, Germany annexed Alsace-Lorraine which always stuck in my craw. I always thought it was a terrible thing for them to do. I served in Alsace-Lorraine in World War I before I went up to the big front. I saw that country and became more familiar with it. There was something in the action of Germany even in those days that indicated war. I think my statement to my mother was that someday we were going to have war, I believe, in Europe, and I thought it was going to be Germany because they were so arrogant.

ERM: When the war did finally come with Germany, ten years later, how did you respond to it? How did it affect your career in the military? Had you continued in military service after your initial hitch?

MAR: A few years prior to World War I, things went along normally and this is hard to believe, I was the third senior captain in the regiment because many of the older captains who had served in the regiment in the Spanish-American War had not returned. When they got out, they resigned or retired so that the turnover was very heavy. An election was finally held to fill one of the vacant major positions. Again, I was very much surprised. All of the officers of the regiment

entered into an agreement which was based on the fact that the colonel of the regiment, who had served in the war as a major, wanted one of his old buddies to fill that vacancy. While the old buddy was a fine gentleman and a fine comrade, he hadn't joined the regiment. He had not contributed anything to the reorganization. Our captains did not agree the colonel was right in bringing him back and promoting him when he had not earned that promotion. They agreed to fill the vacancy based on seniority from among the senior captains active in the regiment. The first senior captain they selected was a very old man, almost ready to retire and he refused the appointment. But the second senior captain was the buddy of the colonel's and he was not accepted. I was the third and I was elected and accepted. I was still a major in 1916 when we were ordered to the Mexican border. I don't know whether you want me to go into all that.

ERM: We can briefly sketch this up to the time of your coming to the National Rifle Association. I think it provides a background to your career.

MAR: You will have to bear with me a little bit because it will undoubtedly be lengthy. There is no way to avoid it because it was the basis upon which I became the executive officer of the 115th Infantry and later on an officer of the National Rifle Association.

ERM: Don't you agree that is a necessary prerequisite to the other part of the interview?

MAR: I think so.

ERM: I will let you spin out the story as you recall it. From time to time, if I think of some supplementary questions, I'll interrupt you.

MAR: I was a major for about a period of almost ten years when we were ordered to the Mexican border in 1916. I was on the border about four and a half months when we were returned home in the fall. In the spring of 1917, we were ordered into federal service. I'm trying to get my dates in my mind. In that spring, the last days of May, I was selected to go to the first Army School of Fire as a student. The school of fire was held at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. I had been improving my military knowledge in every way I could during my first ten or twelve years in addition to the border duty. When I completed the school of fire, I found I had very good marks. It didn't surprise me because in those days I knew pretty well the answers to all the normal questions.

At any rate, I had a better than fair rating. In the last week of my service at the school, I received a telegram from the brigade commander, General Charles D. Gaither, asking me if I would agree to transfer from my old regiment, the 1st Maryland Infantry, to the 5th Maryland Infantry which was a Baltimore city regiment. The reason was to fill a vacancy in the grade of lieutenant colonel created by the retirement of the colonel of the 5th Infantry and the promotion of the lieutenant colonel. I didn't want to leave the old regiment because promotions were regimental promotions rather than statewide. My loyalty was more to our regiment than it was to the entire National Guard. I really couldn't answer that telegram at first. I wanted to think a little more about it. By that time, Mrs. Reckord had come out to Fort Sill to meet me and see that part of the West. She was boarding in Lawton, which is the town just outside of Fort Sill. I thought I'd carry the telegram in and talk it over with her before I replied to it. I held it and took it in to her, and I give her credit for this decision. This was the conversation after she gave it some thought: "Well, you're in the federal service now and you are one major in about thirty in the State of Maryland. Remembering you are in federal service, you may immediately be transferred whether you like it or not, wherever the federal government wants you to serve. If you transfer, you'll be only one lieutenant colonel out of three in the brigade. I think you ought to accept it." I then wired back I would be glad to accept. Consequently, I was promoted to lieutenant colonel of the 5th Maryland Infantry the last day of school, a promotion I didn't receive until I arrived in Baltimore. I called my old colonel. He was mad as a wet hen because I had left his regiment and said, "Don't call me, call Charlie Gaither, he stole you away from me. Call him. I don't know what he wants to do." He was very angry about it. I called General Gaither informing him I was reporting for duty and told him I appreciated his thought of me and his consideration and that I was ready to do whatever he wanted me to do.

MARRIAGE , 1910

ERM: May I interrupt you with a question? You spoke of Mrs. Reckord. Would you give me her maiden name and tell where you met her and when you married her?

MAR: Her name was Bessie, not Elizabeth, Bessie Roe Reckord. She was a Baltimore girl. Really, I should say a girl from this area, the Towson-Ruxton area, where we are at this moment. Her family lived in Towson about two miles from here. They had relatives up in Harford County. They used to spend a few weeks or months every summer with their relatives. I was a young man about twenty-one or maybe a little older when I first met her. I knew her relatives. There were two or three girls in the family I had known very well and in visiting them and the families, I got to know Mrs. Reckord. Some years later, when they moved back to Baltimore where they normally lived, she and I were married.

NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

ERM: General, can you recount some of the story of your experience with the National Rifle Association? Can you begin by telling me what your first association was with that organization?

MAR: My first connection with the National Rifle Association began in 1926. I had been adjutant general of the State of Maryland since 1920. Immediately after the war, the governor of Maryland, Governor Albert C. Ritchie, asked me to be his adjutant general. After some discussion and assurance by him that he would not attempt to play any politics in the appointment of the officers in the Maryland National Guard, I accepted. While I had never been personally interested in NRA affairs, I was, as an adjutant general, a member of its board of directors although I had never attended a single meeting. Under the New York law, where the NRA was organized, there was a provision in the by-laws which provided that all adjutant generals throughout the United States would be members of the association.

We obtained a legal opinion many years after 1926 stating this was illegal and although we had acted as directors for a number of years and many of the adjutant generals had been attending meetings of the board and voting on questions, it was all illegal under the New York Membership Corporation law. Eventually, this was stricken from the by-laws.

In 1926, I sent the Maryland National Guard Rifle Team to the National Matches. Although I had never attended the matches, my National Guard Lt. Colonel Douw, was there and participated. One morning I had a call from him from Camp Perry, Ohio telling me my name was being considered to replace General (Fred H.) Phillips who had been secretary of the NRA. General Phillips had gotten into some difficulty and finally resigned or was forced out of office and would not be replaced. Colonel Douw wondered if I would be interested in the position. I told him I didn't think I would be because I was adjutant general in Maryland. He stated the job was not a full-time job and didn't see any reason why, if I wished to undertake it, I couldn't stand for election and handle that job as well as my job as adjutant general. To make a long story short, I agreed to put myself in the legal position by becoming a life member of the association. He paid the dues, only \$25.00 in those days, prior to the annual meeting which was held at Camp

Perry. I was then legally a life member and legally a member of the board of directors. I also found I had been elected to the executive committee. The following January or February, I attended my first meeting of the executive committee.

ERM: I think I can confirm that, General. The board of directors of the NRA in June 1925 acted to remove General Fred H. Phillips, Jr., as secretary of NRA. It was shortly thereafter they called upon you and elected you to be the secretary.

MAR: I'll try to be specific on that. It was February 1926 at the board of directors' meeting held in the Lafayette Hotel in Washington, D. C. I was there because of the influence of the assistant secretary of war who was quite interested in the affairs of the association. Colonel A. J. Macnab of the Regular Army who was a liaison with the assistant secretary's office and the assistant secretary influenced me to take this job with NRA. They, together with some National Guard officers who were on the board, undoubtedly got enough votes for me. I was elected at that meeting to be secretary to replace General Fred H. Phillips, Jr. I think General Phillips had been the adjutant general of Tennessee. He had conducted the affairs of NRA in a very unsatisfactory manner as far as some of the key members of the board were concerned. In fact, they had already secured his resignation or there would have been no election.

ERM: As I read the record, after your election, you were authorized to consult counsel and you did with reference to possibly suing General Phillips in regard to his management of NRA.

MAR: That's true.

ERM: Counsel advised you he felt you should pursue the case and indeed you did.

MAR: That's right.

ERM: Can you recount how that proceeded? What did you find as a result of that action?

MAR: I had our attorney prepare to take him into court to sue for something under \$1,000 which we believed belonged to the NRA in material in addition to several hundred dollars in cash. He had withheld some materials. He would not give those up. I was ready to sue for those materials and the cash. When he threw in the towel and agreed to return all to the NRA, the suit was dropped.

The suit was settled and I never saw or heard of General Phillips after that time.

ERM: You have no recollection or knowledge of what he did after that happened?

MAR: He was no longer adjutant general of the state at that time. He had been out of that job for several years and he was never in the national guard. Subsequently, I never saw or heard of him afterwards.

ERM: What effect did all of this have, General, upon the relationships of NRA to the federal government at that time? Did this scandal cast any blight upon the relationship in any way?

MAR: I wouldn't use that term. It hadn't built up to be a scandal and the NRA, speaking frankly, was in such poor condition, financially and otherwise, that very few people in Washington were at all interested. The assistant secretary of war was the only man really concerned with the NRA other than General F. C. Ainsworth and the employees, including Mr. C. B. Lister. He was trying through Colonel A. J. Macnab, his liaison officer, to get the affairs of the NRA back on a decent basis. The association was practically bankrupt. To be very frank and honest, it wasn't of any interest to anybody in Washington except Mr. Benedict Crowell, General Ainsworth, and through General Ainsworth, Senator Francis W. Warren of Wyoming.

ERM: At that time, wasn't Senator Warren president of NRA?

MAR: He was chairman of the military committee of the Senate and they had to approve the National Matches funds in the federal budget.

ERM: Had Senator Warren also been president of the association?

MAR: Yes, through General Ainsworth's influence. The connection there was this: About that time or subsequently, I learned that when Senator Warren was a young attorney just beginning the practice of law, General Ainsworth was in the medical corps and sent to Wyoming. Here, he and Warren, about the same age, became good friends. Warren became a United States Senator and Ainsworth became the adjutant general of the army. He was a friend of Senator Warren of Wyoming who was chairman of the Military Committee of the Senate.

One of the first things I undertook was to change the organization of the NRA, and provide an amendment to the by-laws for an executive vice-president. I was subsequently elected to that office. Lister, who had formerly acted as secretary, was elected to be secretary. Those changes were made at the annual meeting in the fall which was held at Sea Girt, New Jersey. We had a new president replacing Senator Warren, Lieutenant Colonel Fred M. Waterbury of New York. He was an annual attendant at the National Matches as captain of the New York National Guard Rifle Team. The vice-president was from Missouri.

ERM: How much of your time were you then giving to the affairs of the association?

MAR: I would say from then on, for years, I spent at least fifty percent of my time on NRA matters and fifty percent of my time on National Guard matters. I still remained as adjutant general of Maryland until I resigned, many years later. When I reached seventy, I retired from the NRA. I was eighty-six before I retired as adjutant general.

ERM: Were your offices, as adjutant general, here in Baltimore?

MAR: Yes. I also had an office in the capital at Annapolis which I didn't attend too often. Under our law, my office was supposed to be at the capital of the state. I kept an office there although I lived in Baltimore. I moved into Baltimore because taking on the Washington duties did not permit me to live in Harford County. While I had formally complied with the law and maintained an office with my clerical force in the capital at Annapolis (with the Governor's approval), I also had an office in the 5th Regiment Armory in Baltimore where I spent most of my time on National Guard matters.

ERM: You must have done a great deal of commuting back and forth between Baltimore and Washington.

MAR: I drove to Washington twice a week for about twenty-five years. I would go on Monday morning, spend the night at the Army-Navy Club of which I have been a member for many, many years and return home to Baltimore last Tuesday afternoon or evening. I would be in my Baltimore office on Wednesday and Thursday I'd go back to Washington to the NRA office, spend Thursday night at the Army-Navy Club and return home Friday. In those days, we worked on Saturday and I spent Saturday in the Baltimore office.

REORGANIZATION OF NRA

ERM: As you look back over those years, General, how do you appraise your work? What accomplishment of your period of leadership in NRA are you most proud of? What stands out in your own mind as being the real accomplishment of your term of office?

MAR: I think the real accomplishment was the fact I was able to revamp the by-laws immediately after I saw the need for it in 1926. Contacts which I had, because of my previous position as the adjutant general of Maryland with members of the general staff such as the secretary and assistant secretary of war, senators and congressmen, helped me to restore the National Matches which had been stricken from the federal budget. I was able to immediately restore, reorganize and properly set up the office.

ERM: In other words, your first major accomplishment was in the reorganization of the NRA through a re-writing of the by-laws and through more efficient reorganization of the staff.

MAR: That was one of my early accomplishments. I won't say it was the first accomplishment because I was elected in February and I didn't have the opportunity to present the amendments to the by-laws until the following summer when we were at Sea Girt for the National Matches.

In the early days when I was checking over the administrative and business affairs of the association, I found they were in terrible condition. We were almost bankrupt. The first Saturday I was afraid to allow the clerical staff to be paid because I didn't think we had enough money in the bank. I waited until Saturday's and Monday's receipts were in before I allowed the staff to be paid that week.

I found we were publishing a magazine which was absolutely worthless. You could hold it in your hand and it was like a little magazine which today is called The Tournament News. Frankly, it was of no value at all. Besides that, the NRA in those days had a membership of only around 20,000 throughout the whole United States with \$2.00 annual dues. The magazine was supposed to cost the individual members another \$2.00 per year. I discovered very early only fifty percent were paying for magazines. In effect, we had a magazine which supposedly was supported by 15,000 members at \$2.00 per

year and only one-half were paying dues. That was the first thing I changed after I discharged the editor.

The first Monday morning I was in the office, I happened to notice the editor as he came in. He evidently had been under the influence of liquor the entire weekend. He was blurry-eyed and not completely sober. I sent for him and told him I didn't drink and I was not opposed to a man taking a drink if he knew how to handle his liquor. I stated I had observed him coming in and it was evident he had been imbibing too freely over the weekend. I told him I could not condone this and that we all made mistakes. I had him promise me before he left the office it would never happen again. I warned him if it did happen again, he would be discharged. About a month later, he repeated it and I discharged him. I had to hunt for a new editor and started work on a better magazine.

Six arms manufacturers at that time were contributing for a full-page ad, each in this worthless magazine. The proposal I discussed with Mr. Lister, who had been with the association a long time, was that I would scrap the magazine and raise the dues to \$3.00 which included a monthly magazine. Before making the change, I visited all the arms manufacturers to see if I could persuade them to double their price for a better magazine and keep the full-page ad. I made a trip to New Haven and East St. Louis to talk to all six manufacturers. Everyone agreed to do it. With a new editor, we were off to a good start. The result is we have a splendid magazine published every month, The American Rifleman. Through my efforts, Congress restored the National Matches in the budget.

THE NATIONAL MATCHES

ERM: Restoring the National Matches was a difficult thing to do as I understand it. There was a faction within the War Department which was alleged to be economy-minded, but I suppose there were other reasons.

MAR: The other reason was they claimed the matches ran interference with the summer training of the Regular Army. In those days, not only did the budget carry some money for support of the National Matches but the Army was called upon to supply range officers and range personnel. It was a drain on the units of the Regular Army to support the National Matches. One individual in the War Department was responsible. Several Regular Army people and I were asked to help by Lieutenant Colonel Mosley, assigned to the office of the assistant secretary of war at the time. I believe his name was Benedict Crowell of Cleveland, Ohio. Another officer acting as liaison between that office and the NRA was Colonel A. J. Macnab. They were favorable to the National Matches. They didn't agree with General Drum. Drum didn't ask for their opinion. When he was reviewing the budget before it went to Congress, he struck out the National Matches.

ERM: How big an item would this have been at that time?

MAR: A half million dollars.

ERM: I presume that did not include the time of the army personnel who would have to supervise the range.

MAR: No, it didn't include the pay and subsistence of the army people there, but it covered all other expenses like the National Guard Rifle Teams.

ERM: How about paying their transportation to the match?

MAR: Their transportation and subsistence, and the civilian rifle teams needing help. I would say all of them used it. I had the half million dollars restored in 1927 with the help of the people who were in the secretary of war's office, the assistant secretary's office, and the people I knew down on the Hill. We were able to keep it in the budget until we ran into trouble in the big depression of the early thirties. We then voluntarily relinquished the matches

for three years and did not hold them.

ERM: In 1928, the War Department again knocked out of the appropriation bill funds for the next National Matches. Confronting that fact, you gathered your allies which were the veterans' organizations, the National Guard Association and the Reserve Officers Association.

MAR: And the American Legion.

ERM: Yes, and you prevailed then upon Congressman John C. Speaks of Ohio to introduce an amendment to Section 113 of the National Defense Act of 1916 which would make it mandatory that an annual appropriation for the National Matches be included in the budget of the War Department.

MAR: That's right.

ERM: The first time this amendment was put before the Congress through Congressman Speaks in 1928, the effort failed. Then Speaks obtained some additional help from Senators Smith W. Brookhart and William F. James of Michigan.

MAR: Brookhart had been the president of the National Rifle Association.

ERM: These men together with your help had this amendment approved by the Congress and it was passed into law and signed by President Calvin Coolidge on May 28, 1928.

MAR: I don't recall the year but that's all correct.

ERM: How were you involved in the writing of the amendment?

MAR: I wasn't involved at all except for dictating it to my secretary as I had done previously for the National Guard and as I did later. There isn't anything difficult about preparing a bill if you know what you want.

I fought to protect the National Matches so that an officer like General Drum couldn't just run his pencil through the item. Together with an army officer, Lt. Colonel George C. Shaw in the office of the National Board for the Promotion of Rifle Practice, I prepared the legislation. I don't want to take too much credit to myself for it because I conferred with Colonel Shaw. When I had dictated that and put it in shape to present it as a bill, I changed the section. I was not sufficiently careful enough because if you will look at the old National Defense

Act, you will find I did not say in this new bill that the former section was repealed and as a result, they were both printed. The old section remained in the bill. My new section which provided for the National Matches being held contained the word "shall". The National Matches shall be held annually and they shall include not only the matches provided for by the National Board for the Promotion of Rifle Practice but the NRA matches shall be included as part of the National Matches.

ERM: May I read from the record and see if you approve what has been recorded there ?

MAR: Yes, but that's been changed now. It's been changed because when the law was codified a few years ago, the young lawyers who did that took license with it and struck out that provision. It's not in there now.

ERM: This amendment was in two sections and Section 1 provided:

That there shall be held an annual competition known as the National Matches, for the purpose of competing for a national trophy, medals and other prizes to be provided, together with a small-arms firing school, which competition and school shall be held annually under such regulations as may be prescribed by the Secretary of War. *

MAR: I think that is the present law.

ERM: This is what was signed into law on May 28, 1928.

MAR: You didn't say the NRA matches were included. You didn't read that.

ERM: This is taken from the law itself, as the amendment.

MAR: Must be because you didn't read the section that I had back in 1928.

ERM: It goes on to say in Section 2:

The National Matches Competition in this act shall consist of rifle and pistol matches for the national trophy, medals and other prizes mentioned in Section 1 above, to be open to Army, Navy, Marine Corps, National Guard or organized militia of the several states, territories and the District of

*James E. Serven, ed., Americans and Their Guns (Harrisburg, Pa.: Stackpole Books, 1967) p. 221.

Columbia and civilian military training camps, rifle clubs and civilians, together with a Small Arms Firing School to be connected therewith and competitions for which trophies and medals are provided by the National Rifle Association;...

MAR: That's right. It's in that section.

ERM: ;...and for the cost and expenditures required for and incident to the conduct of the same, including the personal expenses of the National Board for the Promotion of Rifle Practice, the sum necessary for the above named purposes is hereby authorized to be appropriated annually as part of the total sum appropriated for national defense.

MAR: That's right. That is the 1928 law but I thought I had it in the other section.

ERM: Now, may I clarify one thing? There was only one break in the War Department budget support and that was for three years during the great depression?

MAR: During the great depression, we voluntarily, as our contribution, (maybe somebody opposed it, I don't recall) agreed the matches notwithstanding that law, should not be held. For three years we ran along without the matches. Finally, I decided it was time for us to request the National Matches be held in accordance with that law.

I went to Washington. I remember there was a congressman from Mississippi, Ross Collins. He was a tough old bird but he and I became very close friends over a long period of years. He was chairman of the Army Subcommittee of the Finance Committee of the House. I made a deal with him--a deal just between the two of us. He walked from his chair over to the door and locked the door so nobody could interfere with us. I don't know why, but he didn't want anybody to interfere.

Before he unlocked the door and let me out, I had agreed to request him as chairman to put an item of \$350,000 instead of \$500,000 in the budget. We would hold the National Matches and those funds would pay for that particular year. The next year I would come back and ask for the \$500,000. The year following the three-year hiatus for lack of National Matches, we conducted the matches at Camp

Perry, Ohio. The matches were held on a modified status so as to stay within the lower amount. However, if you notice the way that law was written, we stressed not only the word "shall" but we also mentioned by name the Small Arms Firing School, I think in two different instances. This was done to overcome some of the opposition and gain new support for the matches. Because of that feature, even some of the people in Congress and in the general staff subsequently agreed to go along.

ERM: What was that opposition? Could you identify it?

MAR: Only what I have already stated. The opposition of those who were thinking about the summer training of the units of the Regular Army.

ERM: I see. But were there any civilian groups or military groups outside of Washington?

MAR: No. The civilian people clamored for it. I could understand the objection on the part of some unit commanders because I had been a unit commander in my earlier days in the National Guard. On the other hand, we went to summer training camps but we arranged our National Guard training dates so that there wasn't any interference. But the army wouldn't do that and, of course, the company commander who lost a lieutenant to Camp Perry didn't like that and that's where the opposition came from.

Editor's note: At this point Mr. Louis F. Lucas joined the discussion.

ERM: You must have known Colonel Coward, who in 1929, was the Executive Officer at the National Board for the Promotion of Rifle Practice and the Director of Civilian Marksmanship.

MAR: Yes.

ERM: Do you have any recollections of Colonel Coward?

MAR: I know that he was very helpful and cooperative and I don't know whether it was under his administration or earlier that I became a member of the National Board. The tie-in between that office and the NRA office became close and my activity was such that in subsequent years there was some objection to the fact that the NRA was running the National Board. Now that was one way of saying that I was running the National Board.

Coward and I cooperated, one with the other. I carried the program to the National Board and fought for the board to support it because they had federal dollars. As long as the dollars were there, I didn't want to spend NRA dollars. I wanted to spend the federal money. Coward cooperated with me to the fullest.

ERM: In regard to the creation of the National Board for the Promotion of Rifle Practice, the NRA is the sole civilian agency through which the Director of Civilian Marksmanship carries out the program of the Board?

MAR: The Director of Civilian Marksmanship was, I think, the colonel you just mentioned. He was the executive officer of the National Board which was an army board. NRA had nothing to do with that as such, but as the active head of NRA, I was appointed a member of the National Board by the secretary of war along with several civilians and several Regular Army officers. I met General Courtney Hodges there. Hodges was then a brigadier general with the Regular Army. In World War II, he was commanding general of the American First Army. He was a close friend of mine and he was chairman of the National Board, I would say, at least three years. At that time, I was chairman of the executive committee of the National Board. It was easy for people who were opposed to the National Rifle Association program to find that the tie-in was too close and that I was having too much to say when I attended the National Board meetings.

That, of course, depended upon where you sat, but I didn't have any trouble with the Board or with Hodges. It was just the people in the War Department like Drum who thought we were interfering too much with the training of the army units themselves. I think before it was all over we finally overcame that.

ERM: And there has been no repetition?

MAR: In the last years, we've had nothing but the best cooperative effort.

LFL: Nothing until 1967 when the Department of the Army discontinued Camp Perry and cut way back on the program, but there's no problem with our relationship with the Board.

MAR: Well, there's no money in the federal budget for the matches now.

LFL: Only to send military personnel to them.

MAR: Only for the military personnel. You see, later on after I retired, somebody knocked that out of the federal budget.

LFL: General, military personnel are to compete only. But the last two years, we've had a small contingent of reserves who have helped in certain phases of the operation.

MAR: Yes, but they are not competitors.

LFL: No sir, they are in a training status, but we don't have any money in the budget earmarked for that purpose.

ERM: How much do these funds amount to?

LFL: You mean from the military?

ERM: Yes.

LFL: I don't know. It's not earmarked.

MAR: It's in training money now.

ERM: There is no specific dollar amount now? General Reckord referred to a half million dollars.

LFL: Yes, there is an amount but it's very limited to \$150,000 or \$200,000.

ERM: It is substantially less now even though costs have greatly increased.

- LFL: That's right. Even then, there was more money spent than the itemized budget because we used other funds.
- MAR: Yes. Some competitors used their own funds for pay and subsistence and they just moved in the army unit--the officers and men set up their own camp and ran their own mess. It was all paid for by the army out of its regular funds. We can say the federal budget has not supported the National Matches for a number of years as it formerly did.
- LFL: Since 1967.
- MAR: Yes, and I think that's probably because we are not making the same effort. We are better financially now than we were in the days when I took over the NRA.
- ERM: The matches have not diminished either in their importance or in the number of participants, have they?
- MAR: No, but that's not because of what the War Department contributes in the way of help. They don't contribute nearly as much as they did formerly.
- ERM: Today the association has larger strength so that it can sustain the operation with a lesser subsidy.
- MAR: I would change the word "can" to "does". It does because of our interest and desire in the NRA to continue the matches. We don't have army support or federal support. We carry the matches on as best we can; we insist they be held every year because we think it's worthwhile to do so.
- ERM: Is there any financial support for the matches beyond that which is supplied by the military and the association?
- MAR: The National Board contributes something, doesn't it?
- LFL: No, sir. I think we ought to clarify why we took them over. We took them over only because the secretary of the army decided to discontinue the National Matches. He announced tightening of the budget as his reason. We have reason to believe it was due to pressure from certain people in Congress who were in favor of gun control. We took over the matches and have run them since 1968 with no help at all from the military except their permission to use the equipment stored in the warehouse. We even rent the

range from the Ohio National Guard for a period of six weeks. Two years ago a few reserves were sent there to practice their assigned work. Last year we had approximately 160 reserves who came for two weeks or more of training at Camp Perry. For instance, they sent military police to train and also patrol the camp.

- MAR: I don't want to mention any names, but I can recall some of what Luke refers to. I realize where the opposition came from but I don't want to put the names on the record. I don't think that will accomplish anything. I believe the law still requires the National Matches "shall" be held. Do you remember?
- LFL: It does. It has not changed.
- MAR: The word "shall" is still in there.
- LFL: Yes, sir.
- MAR: I remember calling your attention to the fact that the people who recodified the old National Defense Act struck the provision out which I had included in 1928 whereby the matches of the National Rifle Association were actually by law a part of the National Matches. It isn't true anymore. The statement was taken out of the law when it was recodified. Not that it makes too much difference at the present time, but I believe someday maybe the NRA ought to try to build up enough authority to go to Congress and point out the facts and try to get the National Match money restored. I'm too old to undertake that job.
- LFL: General, do you believe the need and value of the program is equal today as to what it was before?
- MAR: If the program was worthwhile before, why isn't it just as worthwhile now?
- LFL: I was looking for a more positive statement.
- MAR: I think the Regular Army can object to detailing their officers to go there as competitors but I don't see that they have any justification for objecting to sending assistance out there in the way the over-all Regular Army commander of the units are sent to do the range work as range officers or range personnel. The Regular Army training people have some justification in ordering a captain of a Regular Army company to go out there on what to him is a three weeks' vacation to enjoy competition in rifle shooting with National Guards.

This doesn't justify taking that individual away from his unit when it is going to summer training camp. The training camp and the National Match dates need not conflict and this particular individual could do both if they didn't conflict. I think if an effort was made again (as I did in the late twenties and early thirties after the depression) and there was a determination perhaps based on a resolution at the annual meeting of the association that it was time to do this again, and if we had the contacts in Congress, we could obtain greater support of this activity. Perhaps I'm wrong because we know certain individuals in Congress today who will oppose anything the NRA presents. Maybe it isn't worthwhile to try.

ERM: Are those in the Congress to whom you refer, but whom you don't identify, clearly identifiable by people like Luke, for example?

MAR: I could give you probably three names and they will oppose anything we present. Automatically, just because it's the National Rifle Association.

ERM: What do you suspect is the basis of their feeling that way? Why are they so bitterly anti-NRA?

MAR: I can't answer that.

ERM: Have you any ideas, Luke?

LFL: Yes. I think it's because they feel we are responsible for the opposition to their proposed gun control legislation.

MAR: I think you are right. I didn't have that in mind but I think Luke's answer is absolutely correct. Anything we present is opposed. They attacked Mr. Franklin Orth when he was the active executive vice-president before his death. They accused him of being a lobbyist. Mr. Orth wasn't a lobbyist. He spent practically all of his time at the NRA office on the work and duties of that office. They never accused me of being a lobbyist because they knew I was adjutant general of Maryland just as they knew Mr. Orth was the executive vice-president of the NRA. When they became so tied up in this fight on gun legislation, they accused everybody who went there in opposition to their proposal. I won't go on to say anymore on that because I don't want to mention any names.

PROMOTION OF NEW NRA PROGRAMS IN THE TWENTIES

- ERM: Let's go back to your first year with NRA. There were a good many things done, General, which I would like you to comment upon. For one thing, you initiated an NRA marksmanship qualification course.
- MAR: Don't give me too much credit for that because I found it had been initiated before I became active. It was a youth program sponsored by one of the arms companies.
- LFL: It was the Winchester Junior Rifle Corps.
- MAR: Winchester, and I guess through Lister's efforts. Who was the young man who was brought down from Winchester to our office? He died shortly afterwards.
- ERM: It may have been Herbert Goebel.
- MAR: The Winchester association had a junior shooting program. Before I became active in the association, someone had worked out a plan with Winchester to take that over. While I supported it wholeheartedly, I did not actually accomplish that. This had been done previously. I started the police pistol program. This program attracted a man we called a "pistol nut" because he knew the pistol so well and was a good shot. I don't know what his background was but he was interested in police. I think I was instrumental in giving him the job of urging police departments to train their policemen in the use of guns.

I might refer you to my old friend General (Charles D.) Gaither, who years before, had been president of NRA. He was the brigadier general of the National Guard three years previously when I was a captain in the National Guard.

When I became adjutant general, he looked across a double desk one day in my office and said, "Reckord, would you like to do me a favor?" Remember, I had been a captain under him. I was then a general, and as adjutant general, I was his superior although he was senior to me in the same grade, brigadier general. I replied, "I'd be delighted to do anything I can do for you because I believe I owe you a great deal for making me colonel of the Maryland regiment in the first war." I asked, "What would you like me to do?" He said, "There's going to be a vacancy in the Baltimore City Police Department. I'd love to have that job. Would you mind speaking to the governor

who has just named you as adjutant general?" I said, "I don't mind and I'll do all I can to get him to appoint you." And I did that and he was appointed.

He found some of the officers of the police department had never fired the gun they carried in their holsters. He also found a private who had a gun that was kept clean and that he knew how to shoot. A lot of senior officers in the police department of Baltimore City laughed at the fact that this fellow played with his pistol so much. They changed their tune when General Gaither, as police commissioner, promoted him to sergeant and directed him to take charge of training the police of the department. In a way, this ties in with the National Guard because Gaither had been a general in the National Guard before he became police chief. He had also been president of the association.

This man and Frank L. Wyman, whom I took into World War II (and who came home a major), I used during the war to help train the military police in the handling and cleaning of their pistols. It all ties in one with the other. We built the police support and we now have a number of police departments affiliated with NRA.

ERM: The Los Angeles Police Department launched this program at about the same time as Baltimore.

MAR: Yes, they did. They were ahead of everybody else. I remember I visited them and went to their pistol range. They had something there I saw for the first time, and never did like. I still don't think much of it. They had a double deck shooting range. It would shoot on one level and then they had a second level up above which I never thought was as secure and firm and safe as the lower level. It didn't seem to me to have the same foundation and this might affect the shooting. However, I visited them to show our interest. They have always been the leaders and I think they still are.

ERM: Up until that time, were the police departments of this country oriented to use of other means of maintaining law and order more in the tradition of the English bobby with a night stick rather than a gun?

MAR: Oh, no. Nothing like the English bobby. The English bobby is a member of the local community. He's a well dressed, well known individual who is entirely different--with no weapon, doesn't carry a gun. Let's say he is a local gentleman. But he's on the force as a bobby and he's a friend of the community. It's a concept which has never been accepted here in America, in my opinion. Our people

are trained differently. I don't think the British lose anything by it. I wouldn't say they are any better than our police departments in our communities. I think we need our system even more than we would need the British system. I don't think the British system would work here because it's built on a different concept. The policeman there, the bobby, is more a member of the local community and everybody respects him. He helps ladies across the street. He looks after the children. I don't know what a female bobby would be called. If she isn't there, the bobby will stop all traffic and see that the children are helped across streets. I don't mean our police officers wouldn't do that, they don't look upon it the same as the British do.

ERM: To what extent did this new or expanded program of the police, beginning with your term of office, bring increases in NRA memberships as a result?

MAR: I think we can say it was definitely noticeable almost immediately in a few instances. It didn't build up very rapidly. It took some good hard work before there began to be any appreciable numbers.

ERM: General, I asked earlier what you felt most proud of having accomplished during the time you were with the NRA. You started off by telling about your reorganization of the association and then spoke about what you had done along legislative lines.

MAR: Yes, and then the change in the by-laws.

ERM: What other things did you accomplish which you think of as being of major importance?

MAR: I think you have to take them all together, really. I don't know that there is any one thing that stands out but the association was in terrible shape in every respect. Old General Ainsworth was a retired army general. He was trying to run the show based on the fact that he was friendly with Senator Warren. He thought he could get from Senator Warren assistance, primarily money, out of the federal government for the National Board and for the National Matches.

I think he was partially successful in that because we did get the financial support from Congress and from the National Board for the National Matches. I think General Ainsworth deserves credit probably more than anybody else.

He was fortunate to have an assistant secretary of war to whom the secretary had delegated his authority and charged him with assisting the NRA.

I fell heir to that and found Colonel Mosley and Colonel Macnab in Mr. Crowell's office. Macnab was the liaison from the War Department. He came over to see me in order to urge me to take this job with the NRA. You see, the secretary was really vitally interested. They wanted to get rid of Fred Phillips and put the association back on firm ground again. They were much more interested in the association and its internal operation than they have ever been since because when I got in there I didn't want the secretary of war or a Regular Army colonel telling me how to run the association.

ERM: Who helped you to put the association on a firmer financial basis?

MAR: Everybody. When I say everybody, I mean the people in the association. Even the clerks seemed to be glad there had been a change in personnel at the head because old General Ainsworth was a peculiar individual.

He fought with the chief-of-staff of the army before he retired. They had a regular battle because he didn't want to give up some of the authority he had had for years. The new chief-of-staff came in and wouldn't put up with that condition. Consequently they had a real fight. Ainsworth was at fault.

He fought the same way in the NRA but because he knew Senator Warren so well, the people who were then active in the NRA kept him as vice-president. Before I actually did anything in the NRA, I crossed him because he was not in the group who wanted me to be elected.

When the board elected me secretary at the February, 1926 meeting, he yelled from the podium, "Well, I resign" and stomped out of the building. He went home and pouted until I went to see him and got him back on the track. He became very friendly afterwards. I can't honestly say he ever did anything to oppose me after I had gone to his home to see him.

LFL: General, have you covered in your reorganization the combining of the magazine and dues?

ERM: Yes, we did that earlier. I want to read something to you that is dated back at the time you took over. This is taken from published NRA history. It appears on page 213 of Americans and Their Guns

and it follows the announcement of your appointment as secretary by the governing body of the association:

The close studies of its affairs had disclosed some hidden weaknesses in the Association's structure which those in charge of its destiny promptly cured. As a result, the Association gained rapidly in stature and membership, and was able to state without fear of rebuttal: "In the final analysis, the National Rifle Association of America is the average rifleman--no more, no less. The Association is not a mystical organization of a few individuals and a few officers in Washington. . . . It is rather an organization of everyday citizens who believe in the rifle as a means of recreation and national defense, banded together for the purpose of advancing the sport, and, in a sense, pooling their resources in order to accomplish a most worthy end."

MAR: I think that's a correct statement. I think the attitude of everybody definitely changed. I know I obtained the absolute support of everyone who was interested in a very short time.

What was our director's name who was the son of the California writer who was opposed to the NRA and knocked it in everything he wrote? The great army colonel?

LFL: Crossman?

MAR: Yes, Crossman's father. Colonel Crossman's father, Captain Edward C. Crossman, was a writer of some note on firearms. He had been very much upset and put out because of what was happening and how the NRA was more or less falling apart.

When I was elected, he didn't know me at all. He made the mistake that some writers have made subsequently. They write about subjects they know nothing about and make mistakes. He started out by lambasting me in his articles immediately after I was elected even though he didn't know me from Adam. He wasn't going to support me because I was going to be head of the association. It became so bad I thought we ought to have a confrontation. I boarded a train and went

to Los Angeles to visit the Los Angeles Police Department and their pistol range. I made it a point to make an engagement with Captain Crossman. I went to see him at his home, talked to him, and asked him to get back on the track. Apparently, I wasn't what he thought I was. I was an honest man with a good war record from World War I and I was adjutant general of my state. Nobody had found I didn't live a proper sort of life. I thought he ought to get his facts straight. I wanted him to get back on the track and support the NRA. He invited me to stay for dinner with he and his wife. As a result of that visit, he reversed his position one hundred ninety degrees. He became a staunch supporter and was until he died. His son is now a retired army officer and member of our board of directors. He is a splendid member of our organization.

ERM: What had he misunderstood about you?

MAR: Fred H. Phillips had taken over the association as though it belonged to him. We never had the court find him guilty of embezzlement. However, the day we took him into court, he agreed to return several hundred dollars and a large amount of goods he was holding. These items belonged to the NRA. Captain Crossman knew this and apparently thought everybody connected with the NRA was crooked. He took me on as soon as I was elected. I wasn't going to stand for that, so I went to see him. As soon as we had a talk, I convinced him things were going to be different.

ERM: Was he a magazine or newspaper writer?

MAR: He wrote for several magazines in the specialty field.

LFL: He was a freelance writer.

MAR: Yes, he was a freelancer. He had articles in several publications of the firearms industry people; things like that. He got on the track and became a very staunch supporter of mine.

ERM: Thinking back to men you were responsible for bringing into the organization, who do you think of as having done the best job?

MAR: I would give the credit to Colonel Macnab. Macnab was the individual who had the most to do in bringing me into the NRA. I don't know who at Camp Perry, that summer, talked about me and mentioned my name. I do remember Colonel Douw of Maryland telephoned me, as I have already stated, and stated my name was being mentioned.

- ERM: You reorganized the staff considerably and brought many new people in to help you.
- MAR: No, I don't think that's quite true, unless you can name them. I don't think I brought many in at that time.
- ERM: I picked up several names. In 1928, you employed O. N. Raynor as a full-time director of the NRA Service Company.
- MAR: He was just a young fellow.
- ERM: That was a growing thing then but it soon ran into difficulty.
- MAR: The organization had been operating under Phillips, and he grabbed all the material as though it was his. Raynor was a young fellow and in reorganizing I put him in charge of it. I think he had been a clerk in the office. He didn't have any great weight at all in the reorganization. He merely filled the job very satisfactorily, as I recall. You will have to find somebody a little higher up than he.
- ERM: You employed somebody new to oversee your youth program.
- MAR: That man was actually in the office when I took over. He had come from Winchester a month or so before when the NRA arranged with the Winchester Arms Company to take over their youth activities. I've forgotten his name.
- ERM: What about the man you hired to replace the editor you fired? Thomas C. Samworth went out.
- MAR: That was really a quick change and I would say a very important one. Samworth isn't the man I discharged. His name was Rowan. Rowan was editor and Samworth was a contributing editor. He had been a former editor and was then living in either North or South Carolina and still contributing to The American Rifleman. As I said earlier, the first thing I had to do was discharge Rowan because he couldn't handle his liquor.
- ERM: You replaced Rowan with L. J. Hathaway in June 1927.
- MAR: Hathaway was a man from the eastern shore of Maryland. He was an entirely different type and was editor for several years. I think he did a very good job.

ERM: Do you have any recollections of why you hired Hathaway? Was he special as an editor?

MAR: I chose Hathaway because he had been interested in shooting. He was a freelance writer of lesser moment than some of the others. Somehow or other, I had a contact with certain people on the eastern shore of Maryland who backed him up and recommended him as a good, honest, substantial citizen.

ERM: Another thing you did rather early, was to bring all of the people of NRA's various offices together into one office.

MAR: I did because when I took over we were on three floors and I remember there were about five single offices with perhaps one or two people in each office. It was not a good set-up. A new building was being erected on 17th Street named after the builder, Mr. A. H. Barr. I was able to fit all of our people into that new building and all on one floor. I made a deal with Barr to take one floor. I was perhaps his first tenant before the building was finished.

FIREARMS LEGISLATION

ERM: Can you comment on the progress you made toward the passage of firearms legislation in the late twenties which you called the Copeland Bill?

MAR: To be frank about it, I didn't know much about firearms legislation at that time. I knew National Guard legislation by heart because I had been chairman of the National Guard Legislation Committee for several years. I knew several people on the Hill but I had never taken an interest in firearms legislation up until that time.

I would give Karl T. Frederick credit for what we accomplished on the Hill. I took Karl there and introduced him to these people. He was one of the attorneys from a national organization which had come up with the Uniform Firearms Act. They had an association and he had been put on the committee. I think he became chairman of the committee. Although he was one of our directors, he worked in New York.

Charles V. Imlay, a crippled man in Washington, and Karl were on the same committee. Those two men had much to do with firearms legislation. When I came in at first, I introduced them to people I knew in Congress and let them do the talking. After two or three years of studying conditions of that period of time, I began testifying. I think it was in the year 1934.

In 1933, representing the National Guard Association, I had written the National Guard Bill. In 1934, I felt I knew enough about it not to find it necessary to have Karl come from New York every time I went to see someone about a National Rifle Association bill.

LFL: Was it Homer S. Cummings who was trying to get this?

MAR: Yes.

LFL: Was that around 1930?

MAR: About the same time, maybe a little later.

LFL: A little later we came up with the machine gun problem. The first

one was the National Firearms Act which came up in 1934.* I think the Federal Firearms Act came about 1938.**

MAR: Yes, that's about right.

LFL: What did you give Karl Frederick credit for?

MAR: I give Karl Frederick and Charles V. Imlay credit for anything accomplished in the first two or three years I was there. I remember one bill, never enacted into law, was before the Senate Committee. The Senator was a New York doctor. His name slips me for the moment.

I happened to know he was a duck hunter. Every fall he would come to Havre de Grace, which is near Bel Air, and go to the Susquehannah Flats to hunt ducks. There was a bill before his committee which would have required him to not only register his shotgun but to in some way register or account for the fact that he had gone through a dealer and bought shotgun ammunition. I remember my method of killing that bill. His name was Royal S. Copeland.

I was before the committee and said, "Senator, if you pass that bill, next fall when you want to hunt ducks in Maryland on the Susquehannah Flats of Havre de Grace, you'll have to not only register your shotgun but you'll also have to register the fact you bought and carried shotgun ammunition from New York to Maryland." I told him to turn to a specific section in the bill and read it. I waited until he saw that I was correct. He cracked the old gavel down on the desk and said, "Gentlemen, this committee is adjourned." As I said, that killed the bill. It never went any further. This was a personal incident with the chairman of the committee who happened to like to shoot ducks and didn't want the conditions to be such as they would have been under that legislation. I remember that very distinctly.

When Mr. Franklin D. Roosevelt was governor of New York, Karl and I went to New York where there was a firearms bill before the legislature. My contact was a member of the New York National Guard, a brigadier general, who was a member of the legislature. I let Karl do most of the talking because he was a New York attorney who'd had experience on firearms commissions and who had written the Uniform Firearms Act. He was much better qualified at the time than I to explain the details. I introduced him to a friend of mine, a New York general in the National Guard. We got the New York Legislature to pass a bill, which if it had been signed by

*National Firearms Act of 1934, 48 Stat 1236.

**Federal Firearms Act of 1938, 18 USC, Sec 921, 52 Stat 1250.

Governor Roosevelt, would have repealed the noted Sullivan Act which we've always objected to in New York City.

This was accomplished because of my personal contact through the National Guard with that member of the legislature. When the bill passed, we asked that there be a hearing on it so we could present our side to the governor. Karl and I went to the hearing. We had arranged for probably 300 New York citizens to be present. There was no one on the other side but the police commissioner of New York. Mr. Roosevelt listened to him and vetoed the bill. We never went back because we felt it would be useless to do so. Mr. Roosevelt was in some ways a very opinionated man. He was very egotistical and conditions in New York City were such that he was close to the police commissioner. No matter what we said had any effect on them. The bill was vetoed.

*An act to amend the penal laws in relation to the sale and carrying dangerous weapons. Sullivan Act of 25 May 1911, Consolidated Laws of New York, ch. 40 sec. 265.05.

PRESIDENTIAL SUPPORT OF NRA

ERM: General, you have been the close observer of many presidents in your time. Which of these presidents do you remember as having been most friendly to your cause and the National Rifle Association? Who have been most sympathetic with your position?

MAR: I don't know that I can honestly say anyone of them were very friendly. My connection with President Truman and President Eisenhower was naturally very close. When I was a colonel in World War I, President Truman was the captain in the National Guard of Missouri. This contact gave me an entering wedge with him. I remember when he was in the Senate and the chief-of-staff, General Marshall, ordered me to Washington to attend a hearing before Mr. Truman's commission on camp construction. (Camp construction was costing entirely too much.) General Jacob L. Devers of the Regular Army was brought in because he'd been in charge of a large camp in the South. I was brought in because I was then on active duty and my headquarters were in Fort Meade. We went before Mr. Truman's committee and I remember when the meeting adjourned Senator Truman took me by the arm and we walked out of the meeting room together. He blamed the Regular Army personnel for the over-run costing so much. Senator Truman knew I was in the army of the United States and he didn't hesitate to tell me what he thought of those so-and-so people in the Regular Army. When he became president, I had a new reason to see him. I think I went to see him only two or three times.

Before that, I had been chairman of the National Guard Committee assigned to see Calvin Coolidge when he succeeded to the presidency. An effort was being made to cut the National Guard expenditures. You have to bear in mind the National Defense Act at that time, as well as today, states the units of the National Guard shall drill so many times a year and attend ten to fifteen day training camps each year and shall be paid so much per day while training. There was an effort then to cut the National Guard funds to a point where we wouldn't have those funds available. I was legislative chairman and went to see Mr. Coolidge. I'll never forget it.

He was a very peculiar gentleman in some ways. He hardly opened his mouth when he spoke. We went into the room and he received us standing, not sitting behind his desk, but coming across the floor some distance to meet us. Although he knew he had an appointment with us to discuss a certain subject, he addressed the three of us:

"Gentlemen, did you wish to see me?" We were in his office to see him and here he was with his mouth half closed asking us if we wished to see him. At any rate, he invited us to sit down. When he was in his chair, we all sat down. I sat at the end of his desk. I had a copy of the National Defense Act with me and had marked the page with the paragraph containing the language upon which we were making our presentation. I was half-way through my presentation and I said, "Mr. President, the law says for these services the individuals of the National Guard shall be paid." I said, "The word in law is shall." He said, "Let me see that." With that I handed him the National Defense Act. He took his time to read the section and then he looked up. All he said was: "Gentlemen, you will get your money." We immediately arose, said "Thank you, Mr. President," and he said, "Good Morning," and left. We did receive the money. He was a peculiar individual but he was an honest man and he read the law.

I would say Mr. Coolidge, Mr. Roosevelt, General Eisenhower and Mr. Truman are the four I knew best. I went to see them at different times.

Of course, Ike was in quite a different status. I was the adjutant general of the State of Maryland after World War I and had been for three or four years, when Ike, as a major of the Regular Army, was ordered to Fort Meade to command a machine gun battalion. Ike, as president, was still in my eyes a major general rather than the president. I thought he was the ideal man for the job he had to perform in World War II.

I had no trouble when General George C. Marshall sent me over to be provost marshal general. When I heard Ike had arrived in London, I made an appointment to pay my respects to him. I can remember when I went into his office. It was a room not as long as this room, but it was a large room, and he was diagonally across the room from the door that I entered. He got up from his desk and came out to the middle of the room with his hands stretched out. He said, "Milton, I haven't seen you for ages. I've been trying to remember where we were last--the last time we were together." By then, he had me by the hand and led me to the desk and he sat down and asked me to take a chair. I said, "Well, General, I remember very well the answer to that, and I'll give you just a moment to see if you can remember." He couldn't remember and I didn't want to embarrass him, so I said, "I'll tell you when it was. The mayor of Baltimore had built a stadium on 33rd Street ten or fifteen years ago. (I hadn't seen Ike for that period of time.) The mayor wanted to have a gala opening. He

invited you with your football team from the Third Corps Area at Meade (Ike was then coach of the football team) and the Marines of Quantico to play the opening football game." With that, he threw both hands up in the air and he remembered it all and his remarks were: "Didn't they lick the hell out of them?" (Which they had done.) "But didn't we have a hell of a time that night at the Maryland Club?" After the game, Governor Ritchie had taken Ike and me and several other friends to dinner at the Maryland Club and some of them got half tight. Ike remembered that. I served under him for two years and I had a wonderful service under him.

I never will forget the day he came out to Reims and heard I was out on the big Reims Airport. My office had made plans for bringing Americans and British prisoners of war from the German prison camps. I heard the sirens approaching and it was Ike pulling up to see how things were going along. He and I stood there together and we counted twenty-six planes from Germany and Poland loaded down with Americans and British. Our plan was to let them unload. The Britishers went over and got on a large British plane and in an hour they were in London. Our Americans got into a large American plane and immediately came to the United States. It was really a magnificent operation if I do say it myself. Ike watched it that day with me although we had no previous arrangement to be there together. He didn't know I was out there until he got out of his car. It worked out perfectly and he was very pleased with it as was everybody else.

Long before he got into politics, he was Chief-of-Staff. Acting for the National Guard, and without any authority from the Reserve people, I worked closely with him in those years. I went to see Ike one day and said, "General, there's a subject I want to take up with you in the interest of non-regular people who I think ought to have some type of retirement." "Oh no," he said. "God, that would cost too much." This was following World War II. It sort of scared him to death. His first reaction was that it would be too expensive. I said, "No, there are not too many who will be able to get very much out of it but there are some fellows, some individuals and, I said, "Like myself. I think I'm entitled to some retirement. Why am I not?" He said, "I couldn't support that." Before we were through, he said, "Maybe you can come up with a proposal that would provide a retirement for those who come in future years." I replied, "Oh no, don't to talk to me about that. I think those who served in the war certainly have a right to some consideration." He said, "Milton, come back and talk to me in about thirty days. Give me time to think it over." He made an engagement to see me in thirty days and I went back in thirty days.

In the meantime, I had been working in the National Rifle Association office with my secretary preparing a bill which I handed him in type-written form. I knew if we made it cost too much there would be no chance so I had to create a formula which wouldn't be too expensive.

Ike asked me to sit down and we discussed the matter again. He said, "Well, how many general officers would be covered under this bill?" I thought a little while and made a mistake. I think I told him not over a dozen and the bill went down to the Congress and passed and went up to President Truman and was vetoed.

I am not clear whether I went to the White House or to the War Department when it was vetoed. At any rate, I went to some headquarters to find out why it was vetoed. The answer given was that there were more generals than I had told Eisenhower who would fall within the purview of the bill. I said, "Is that all that's the matter with it? Is that the reason the president vetoed the bill? Give me the bill." I took the bill and rewrote it in the identical language except I changed the formula. I took it down to the Congress without any reference to the secretary of war. I explained to the Congress and apologized to the committee for having made an error which was an honest error because I had named the men to General Eisenhower but I had missed some from the middle and far west. I should never have tried to do it from memory. I told them what the facts were and asked them to approve the bill with the changes. They approved the bill and the Congress passed it a second time and it went up to the White House and the president signed it.*

Today, a thing like that could never happen. But I got that bill through Congress twice and the president changed his mind. Truman was president and that made it easy for me. That's probably the reason I got it through the second time.

*National Guard Bill to Provide Retirement Pay for Non-Regular Army people, 20 June 1949, 63 Stat 202.

THE OLYMPIC GAMES

ERM: You mentioned earlier a close association and friendship with Karl Frederick. You and Karl Frederick together accomplished some really important things within the NRA in the re-establishment of international shooting competition. Could you relate a little about some of the things you did in that area in bringing American shooting teams back into international competition and in reconstituting shooting as an Olympic event?

MAR: I would give a large percentage of the credit to Karl because he was, in my opinion, one of the best members the NRA ever had. He was what I would term an ideal, intelligent American citizen. He was a good lawyer. He stood well in the legal profession and in the community as a young man and older man. He was one of our outstanding pistol shooters.

He was a member of the U. S. Revolver Association as well as our association. I remember he was selected by me to be the captain of the pistol team we sent to Mexico City. He wanted me to go along representing the association. I said, "No, we can't afford a joy ride for me when I don't even shoot the pistol. You represent the association and be team captain too." He urged me to go. However, I did not go.

I can't speak too highly of him as a citizen and as an American. He was an ideal American in my book and I don't recall what his contact was with the Olympics. My contact with the Olympics was almost nil. I did think the shooting in the Olympic Games was fairly absurd and certainly not satisfactory because it was only shooting of .22 rifles; the .30 caliber wasn't even involved. I wouldn't go to Los Angeles when the Olympics were held there because all we had in the Olympics were .22 caliber shooting. I was so disgusted with it I wouldn't attend the Olympic Games although by then I was on the Olympic Committee.

ERM: Shooting was done under very poor circumstances, was it not?

MAR: It certainly was. I think we operated under those conditions until Franklin L. Orth came in.

LFL: It was Floyd A. Parks who started it. Floyd took the team to Moscow. It was the first time we had a real solid team.

- MAR: I would say Floyd Parks and Frank Orth did much more than I was able to do.
- ERM: President Fred M. Waterbury was authorized by you and the board of directors of the association to go to Europe in April 1927 to attend a meeting of the International Olympic Committee in Monaco with a view to restoring shooting events in the 1928 games.
- MAR: He was really not a good representative. Fred was the salt of the earth and an excellent gentleman and a good friend of mine, but he was very much interested in the shooting game.
- ERM: There were, however, international competitions which followed shortly thereafter with the U.S. teams being represented. The Swiss teams repeatedly continued to dominate the matches for a number of years.
- MAR: Yes, they did because they gave more thought to the team shooting. Whereas, we'd get a team together with only a couple Regular Army people on it, perhaps more. We belonged to the International Shooting Union.
- Colonel Waterbury, in his last year as president, was named captain of the team to go to Italy with the National Guard group which I wanted represented on the team. He was a National Guard lieutenant colonel.
- I don't know whether he expressed the desire to go with the team or whether I said, "Fred, why don't you captain the team and let's together try to get some National Guard men on the team." I don't know how many we had on the team but he did captain that team.
- LFL: Is it not true, General, that the type of shooting competition conducted by ISU and at the Olympics was different from the type of shooting we had been conducting in the United States?
- MAR: I think the ISU had always had the .30 caliber match but the Olympics had not. They had eliminated what I would term all larger bore shooting, such as the .30 caliber shooting. I didn't think it was a good National Match without the .30 caliber. For that reason, perhaps, it was my fault we didn't get into the Olympics more. I always presented it and was out voted on the Olympic Committee. We never did, during my administration, attain worthwhile shooting in the Olympics. As we have said, the credit for that belongs to somebody else--General Parks.

FLOYD PARKS AND OTHERS

MAR: General Parks came into the NRA as executive vice-president through my efforts. Now, I'll give you that story. You see how one leads to the other?

Parks was a splendid Regular Army general whom I'd gotten to know well. He had been the public relations officer in the office of the chief-of-staff or the secretary of war. All of a sudden, he was named corps area commander and promoted to lieutenant general and ordered to Fort Meade. Here I was, a few miles away, the adjutant general, with my headquarters at Annapolis and Baltimore. During World War II, I had already been corps area commander. He and I became very close friends. Can you tell me whom he succeeded?

LFL: Merritt A. Edson.

MAR: Edson died suddenly and Parks had to retire. I said to myself, "He'll be an ideal man if I could interest him in being executive vice-president." I telephoned him, got into my car, and went to see him. I said, "General, I came to see you on a personal matter." I told him about the NRA and the fact Edson had died suddenly and that I would like him to turn the matter over in his mind to see if he would like my presenting his name to the committee which would select a successor for the position of executive vice-president of the NRA.

ERM: General Edson died August 1955.

MAR: Yes. I had been the corps area commander in 1943 and 1944. I was in the service for the war--1941, 1942, 1943, 1944 and 1945. The first year I was the division commander of the 29th Division. When I reached the age of sixty-two, I had to relinquish the command. Instead of sending me back to civilian life, General Marshall ordered me to Baltimore to command the corps area. I commanded the corps area for two years--1942 and 1943 when I was approaching age sixty-four which was the retirement age for generals of the Regular Army.

At that time, there was no retirement whatever for a non-Regular. I don't know whether General Marshall knew there was no retirement for us at the time because his statement to me in a short note was: "I understand you are about to reach the age when major generals

must retire." There was no such law which could retire me. I never was in the Regular Army. I belonged to the army of the United States for which in 1933 I had written a bill.* This bill became law and stated that in a time of war, the army of the United States would consist of the Regular Army, the National Guard of the United States and the Army Reserves. Section 127 states that all changes in the status and all people who were brought in from civilian life in time of war will be commissioned in the Army of the United States, not the Regular Army, the National Guard or Reserves.

I, being a major general, not of the Regular Army, signed all my communications Milton A. Reckord, National Guard. General Marshall picked it up one day and asked me to see him. "Look," he said, "I noticed how you sign the communications. I want to make this one army and I want you to sign your name, Milton A. Reckord, U.S.A.." I said, "General, that's not legal. I don't belong to the United States Army. I am not a Regular Army officer." He said, "I realize that but I want to make this one army." I said, "Is that an order?" He said, "Yes, that's an order." I said, "All right, I'll sign it that way." I was never in the U. S. Army. I obeyed General Marshall's order because it didn't amount to too much to me but in some of the records in the War Department, I'm listed as U.S. army officer, where I don't belong. I could never sign as the army of the United States because my National Guard status was not changed. I had never received a promotion to lieutenant general which I am now.

I was in the National Guard of the United States all through the war although I signed U. S. A. However, it never made any difference.

LFL: We started off on a moot question of timing here. What I want to make clear is you were not serving as executive vice-president of NRA but you were serving as a member of the executive council when you retired. Is that not true? When you talked to Floyd Parks about coming to NRA, you had already retired from NRA.

MAR: Yes, I retired when I reached seventy years of age. I had been retired six years. I retired in Denver.

LFL: And they elected you to the executive council in that capacity?

MAR: Yes.

ERM: Parks came to his position as executive director in March 1956. An interesting thing about Parks is that he had enlisted in the army as

*National Guard Act of 1933, 10 USC Sec. 101, 591 et seq. 48 Stat 153.

a private.

MAR: No, in the National Guard in 1918.

ERM: And worked his way up through the ranks?

MAR: I don't know about that but he was a gentleman. He was another American whom I admired very much.

ERM: Was he a very close friend of President Eisenhower's?

MAR: Oh, yes. They played golf together. I could tell you a little story about that. I don't know whether you want this on tape or not, but he liked to play golf.

He'd been our executive vice-president for several years. George R. Whittington was president at the time. He and Whittington happened to be driving past one of the golf courses, Burning Tree Golf Course. One or the other of them remarked about playing golf. Floyd Parks said to Whit, "I could play golf with the president on that course but I just don't feel that I want to spend the initiation fee." I think it was \$350.00.

LFL: No, it was more than that--\$3,000.

MAR: Whatever it was, he didn't want to spend the money to join that club. Whit said, "It might be worth the cost to us because you'd be able to put a word into the ear of the president when you were playing golf." I believe the NRA paid his initiation fee to join the golf club so that he could play golf with Mr. Eisenhower. Am I right?

LFL: I don't recall that. I know he's been at the club. He must have joined.

ERM: Now remember you are testifying here under oath.

Laughter follows...

MAR: Those little things come up. I think Whit told me that story and I said, "Whit, I don't think you should have spent the NRA money that way." He said, "Well, at that time I thought we should and we did."

GIFFORD PINCHOT AND CONSERVATIONISTS

ERM: General, I want to ask you about another man you knew, Gifford Pinchot. He used to come to your offices in the NRA.

MAR: I didn't know him very well. He had been governor of Pennsylvania. He was quite a conservationist and I mean really a nut on the subject. I don't mean that expression unkindly at all. For some reason, he thought we could be helpful to him. Whether we were or not, I will never be able to say definitely. We did have a pleasant contact but I would say it was never very great or very important from the NRA's point of view.

ERM: What was it he was seeking your help in doing?

MAR: To support him in what he was trying to do before the Congress. He was trying to get some conservation bills through.

ERM: Wasn't he seeking to get legislation that would regulate the lumber industry in some way?

MAR: Not to my knowledge. All he ever discussed with me was saving the trees and the environment. He was an original conservationist.

LFL: He was also a friend of Karl Frederick.

ERM: Yes, he was a friend of Karl Frederick but he was also one of Teddy Roosevelt's key men when Roosevelt was president.

MAR: He very definitely was, but that was before my time.

ERM: Your knowledge and acquaintance with Pinchot was a very casual one, I take it.

MAR: Yes, although I believed in the things he was advancing and helped him as much as I could.

ERM: How have you felt about conservation matters during the years of your involvement in this work?

MAR: Today I think the conservationists have carried it maybe a little bit too far. We are finding that out right now because we can't use the millions of tons of coal we have in the ground. We are all waiting

in long lines to get gasoline. We wouldn't be in this energy pinch if we hadn't gone too rapidly and too far with respect to the bills on conservation that have been passed by the state legislatures and the Congress. I think we ought to be reasonable about it and agree now that, under the present regulations, laws ought to be modified so that some of the coal that is available here in the United States can be made available. I believe that's going to be done. We can't have our lives disrupted by some conservationists who think we shouldn't use all these millions of tons of coal.

ERM: Of course, a lot of hunters and shooters are among those conservationists who feel that way. They don't want to see their land torn up and strip mined and their hunting grounds offended.

MAR: That isn't the main reason. The main reason is that some of the coal is dirty. There is some coal in the United States that can be used but there are millions of tons of coal in certain sections of America that dirty the environment. You can see the smoke and gases coming out the tops of the chimneys. I think some method has to be found to permit that coal to be used. I think our leaders in Washington are open to severe criticism on a number of things that are important to us. I am getting off of the subject of the NRA, but I feel very keenly about this.

The people of America have got to live and we can't be living under today's conditions when a bunch of Arab nations can cut off our oil supply. We can't live our normal lives when the conservationists have gotten Congress to pass laws that won't permit these millions of tons of coal to be used. We've got to find a middle ground, in my opinion. I think it's an important matter.

ERM: The NRA has over the last twenty or twenty-five years in particular, become more closely allied with other conservation groups--wildlife groups, for example.

MAR: That's definitely true. I am a little bit critical because I think we have moved too rapidly on this. We've got to see to it that the people who think more of conservation than they do of rifle and pistol marksmanship are taught when they come into the NRA that we are willing to go along with them to a certain degree but we are not willing to turn the National Rifle Association over to the conservationists. We have to watch our steps and keep an even balance. I do think, for instance, that right now (maybe I shouldn't put this on tape) the man who is our president is very much interested in that kind of work.

LFL: Yes, he is, but General, I think you have to distinguish the pure conservationist and the ecologists from the preservationists that are involved with a lot of this coal problem.

NRA MEMBERSHIP GROWTH

- ERM: When you came to the association in 1926, the membership was less than 20,000 (15,172) and in one short year it jumped up to 22,054. The number of Life Members more than doubled and the association has moved onward and upward constantly ever since. What do you see as being the factors that have most strongly influenced its growth in membership?
- MAR: Now, I want you to get this correct. It didn't jump as fast as you think it did immediately after I took over. It jumped from twenty to twenty-five thousand. It didn't go beyond sixty-five thousand or seventy-five thousand until after I left the association to go to World War II in 1941. I would say in 1941, the association's strength had moved from twenty thousand to sixty-five or seventy-five thousand. During the war, Mr. Lister was acting in my place, wasn't he?
- LFL: Yes, he was acting as the chief executive.
- MAR: While I was on active duty stationed at Fort Meade, we still conferred. Through my contact with General Marshall, Chief-of-Staff of the army, we agreed to a training program for young men who would be caught under the draft and would have to go into the army. General Marshall thought so much of the program that he personally supported us to the extent that he spoke before our meetings twice in one year. I can't recall the year. He supported what the NRA was doing in this effort to teach young men subject to the draft how to shoot the rifle before entering the army. Frank Parker worked with Lister on this because Frank was brought into Washington as a captain in the Ordinance Department. He cooperated in this effort with Lister for several years during the war.
- ERM: Let me ask you a question in that regard and see if you agree with what I have to say in closing. This concerns the development of an accelerated youth training program which included taking over the Winchester Junior Rifle Corps in the twenties, the acceleration of a police training program, plus the coming of World War II with the training of hundreds of thousands of new men who had never before been exposed to shooting of any kind. Afterwards, they became veterans and returned to civilian life, perhaps with a new interest in shooting. How did these various things contribute to the growth of NRA? How important were each of them in your view?

MAR: I don't know that, taken singly, they amounted to very much. When you think of all of them, they undoubtedly contributed materially. I think there must have been a membership drive while I was away during the war because when I returned to the NRA after five and a half years in the army, the NRA was much larger. The membership was much greater than when I left for the war. I don't want to take credit for that. Somebody else deserves it.

ERM: I am not talking about anybody's credit, General. I am talking about phenomena that occurred in our society and which go beyond any credit to any one person or group of people. Things like the war created an immediate gun-educated group of people that had not been gun-oriented before. When they came out of the war, were they not more likely to become members of NRA than when they went in?

MAR: I would say a very few of them fell into that class. Many of the men who came out were glad to lay down their rifles and never see them again. They were willing to join the veterans organizations but they had had enough of war. They didn't want to bother with the rifle or with shooting at all. What happened in the NRA after I came back was that a committee was created. A man from Florida by the name of Brown was made the chairman.

LFL: That was the Building Committee. Let me ask you a question, General. How important do you think was the fact that surplus rifles were made available to people who belonged to NRA?

MAR: I think that was a material contribution. We had millions of rifles but the soldier was tired. He was glad to lay his rifle down and become a civilian again but not necessarily a member of NRA. You could say a few of them were nuts. They liked the rifle. They were good shots and they were anxious to make the affiliation.

LFL: Weren't a lot of those army rifles converted to sporting rifles?

MAR: Yes, they were. I think a lot of the former soldiers joined the NRA because by paying a few dollars, they could perhaps obtain the very rifle they carried during the war. I don't know whether an effort was made to give them their own rifles. Through the National Board, hundreds of thousands of rifles were made available for a cost of about \$6.00, weren't they?

LFL: More than that, but I'm not sure, exactly.

MAR: I wasn't much more than that.

LFL: When did we first have the Garand rifle available?

MAR: The Garand was available before the war. That's an interesting

story because I had to criticize that rifle. I noticed the NRA magazine had Garand's picture on the front page the other day and I read the article with great interest.

Mr. Garand was a splendid man but he came up with a rifle that wouldn't function on the best ammunition we could obtain for the National Matches.

I'll give this to you just the way it happened. In those days, around 1920 and 1930, we had the Ordnance Department make a special National Match ammunition for the National Matches. It was stronger ammunition; with more power to it. When the Garand rifle was first used, I went to the War Department and the Ordnance Department to have them send 500 Garand rifles to the National Matches so we could use the new rifle. We found it would not function properly with the stronger ammunition.

ERM: What would happen to it?

MAR: I'll try to describe it for you. The rod which recocked the rifle didn't have the proper support causing it to bounce and it wouldn't operate freely. When we examined it, we found that the point at the end of the barrel was not a true part of the barrel. It was a little appendage about an inch long that fitted over the end of the barrel of the rifle and, of course, if that wasn't on there exactly the way it should be, the bullet would come out of the barrel and hit the side of that appendage and wouldn't go to the target as the shooter had aimed. Another thing, the piston that went back to recock the gun repeatedly failed to function properly.

I came home from the National Matches and went to see General Wesson, Chief of Ordnance. I'll never forget it. He said, "General Reckord, that rifle is not built to operate with National Matches ammunition." I said, "General, do you mean the rifle is not built to operate perfectly with the best ammunition Ordnance can make?" He said, "That's exactly what I mean." I said, "Well, I can't believe what you are telling me." He said, "Well, I'm telling you what I believe." The net result was that the next year we agreed we would shoot the National Matches with the regular '30 caliber ammunition. The result was that our objection to the rifle, or my objection, was so strenuous he listened to it and the rifle was perfected. It was materially changed until it became a dependable weapon and was used in the war.

LFL: General, you said you thought availability of surplus arms was

important. Before that, we had the Springfield and before that we had another one.

MAR: Krag.

LFL: Were the Krags the first surplus available to us?

MAR: The Krag was the rifle when I joined the National Guard at the turn of the century, followed by the Springfield which was followed by the M-1 rifle.

LFL: What I'm trying to find out is how was it arranged so that NRA members had the availability of this first surplus firearm?

MAR: I think it was arranged by a presentation before the National Board.

LFL: Did you not include that in revisions to the law pertaining to the National Board when you re-wrote it? Or was it done before that?

MAR: No, I don't think I changed it then. I don't know whether it was done before or after but I don't deserve any credit for that.

ERM: I think that goes back to 1903.

MAR: No, that's too far back. That's the time of Secretary Elihu Root.

ERM: Congress created the National Board for the Promotion of Rifle Practice then.

MAR: It was when Secretary Root changed the whole War Department. In his bill, he created the general staff and the National Board for the Promotion of Rifle Practice in 1903. The National Guard received their first million dollar appropriation in 1901. In 1903, we received three million.

When the depression hit us at the end of 1929 and early 1930, we had gotten the National Guard appropriation up to thirty-two million dollars. In the first year of the depression it was cut back to eight million. I went to see Douglas MacArthur, Chief-of-Staff. He and I together had it raised to eighteen million before we had a disagreement. But that's another matter and doesn't pertain to the NRA.

ERM: We are getting on towards the end of the afternoon, General, and I wonder if you might like to talk a little bit about the Federal

Firearms Act of 1938 which was hailed by the National Rifle Association as an "excellent, law, sane, reasonable and effective."* It was, you may recall, a law passed in response to public concern over an upsurge of gangsterism and crime during the earlier part of the 1930s.

LFL: That's the one you gave credit to Karl Frederick, isn't it?

MAR: Yes. Listening to Karl Frederick give his presentation educated me but the key point on that bill was that everything pertaining to registration was eliminated from the bill. That's the reason we supported it. No other.

*Federal Firearms Act of 1938, 18 USC Sec 921, 52 Stat 1250.

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