

JANUARY 2024

www.mca-marines.org/leatherneck

LEATHERNECK

MAGAZINE OF THE MARINES

Spiritus Invictus

Marine Raiders
Are All Grit,
No Quit

Has Media Coverage
Changed Society's
View of War?

Vietnam Tankers
Take the Initiative
To Preserve History





My title is Marine Raider. I will never forget the tremendous legacy and sacrifice of those who came before me.

At all times my fires will be accurate. With cunning, speed, surprise, and violence of action, I will hunt the enemies of my country and bring chaos to their doorstep. I will keep my body strong, my mind sharp and my kit ready at all times.

Raiders forged the path I follow. With Determination, Dependability, and Teamwork I will uphold the honor of the legacy and valor passed down to me. I will do the right thing always, and I will let my actions speak for me. As a quiet professional, I will not bring shame upon myself or those with whom I serve.

Spiritus Invictus, an Unconquerable Spirit, will be my standard. I will never quit, I will never surrender and I will never fail. I will adapt to the situation. I will gain and maintain the initiative. I will always go a little farther and carry more than my share.

On any battlefield, at any point of the compass I will excel. I will set the example for all the others to emulate. At the tip of the spear, I will teach and prepare others to seek out, dismantle and destroy our common enemies. I will fight side by side with my fellow countrymen and partners and will be the first in and last out of any mission.

Conquering all obstacles of mind, body, and spirit; the honor and pride of serving my country will be my driving force. I will remain always faithful to my fellow Raiders and always forward in my service.

From the Publisher & Editor-in-Chief



CPL HENRY RODRIGUEZ, USMC

A Marine Raider with Marine Forces Special Operations Command initiates contact with an adversary on a tracking patrol during a jungle mobility course, Aug. 8, 2023. See “A Day in the Life of a MARSOC Critical Skills Operator” on page 36 to read about the history of MARSOC and the qualities needed to become a Marine Raider.

I hope that this month’s *Leatherneck* finds you either in the final stages of holiday celebrating or recovering from said celebrations in good order. Best wishes to all in 2024.

This edition of *Leatherneck* is somewhat unique in that we are presenting a feature article that complements content presented in the January edition of *Marine Corps Gazette*. Since all Premium Marine Corps Association members can access both magazines online at www.mca-marines.org, we hope that exploring different perspectives of a common topic will give readers more to enjoy and think about. This month we take a look at “A Day in the Life of a MARSOC Critical Skills Operator.” Marine Raiders have conducted foreign internal defense, counterinsurgency, direct action, special reconnaissance, maritime interdiction and counterterrorism operations. But what separates Raiders from their special operations peers who hail from branches of the military? According to one MARSOC Marine, it comes down to one factor. Unlike special operations soldiers, Sailors, and airmen, all CSOs are Marines first, operators second. The January *Gazette* features a letter from the Commander

of MARSOC, Major General Matthew G. Trollinger, titled “Marines are Who We Are, Special Operations Are What We Do” that certainly echoes this statement.

Other standout articles in this month’s edition of *Leatherneck* include an excerpt from the book “The Wingmen” by Adam Lazarus. This excerpt details the special bond between two legendary Marine aviators: former astronaut and Ohio senator John Glenn and a true giant of baseball, Hall of Famer Ted Williams, a relationship that was forged while serving in the Korean War. Also noteworthy is “Keepsakes from Hell: Marine Mementos from the Pacific War” by frequent contributor Geoffrey W. Roecker. From swords to children’s toys, this photo essay documents the myriad of souvenirs and trinkets collected on the battlefield during World War II.

Once more, Happy New Year and Semper Fidelis.

Colonel Christopher Woodbridge,
USMC (Ret)



Contents

LEATHERNECK—MAGAZINE OF THE MARINES

JANUARY 2024
VOL. 107, No. 1

Features

16 Blurred Boundaries: The Front Lines and The Homefront

By Michael Jerome Plunkett

From Matthew Brady's startling black and white photos to images gathered using modern-day technology, the way we view the battlefield has changed dramatically since the Civil War.

26 A Self-Imposed Charter: Marines Take the Initiative to Record their Own Histories

By Kyle Watts

For more than 20 years, the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association has preserved the history of its members. Read about the example VTA is setting for other Marines, and how it continues telling tankers' stories.

32 The Vintage Veteran Barber of L.A.

By Ty A. Ford

Esgar Reynega was a "barracks barber" with a battalion-sized reputation. Now, current and veteran servicemembers flock to his Leathernecks Barber Shop in Los Angeles for a haircut and some Marine Corps history.

36 A Day in the Life of a MARSOC Critical Skills Operator

By Mac Caltrider

Marine Raiders have hunted the Taliban in Afghanistan and defeated ISIS in Iraq. Learn about the evolution of MARSOC and the qualities needed to become a member of this elite group of warfighters.

48 Support Without a Stigma: NMCRS Helps Marines, Sailors Get Back on Their Feet

By Jacqueline Jedrych

When hard times wash ashore, the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society is there to help servicemembers resume a normal life.

54 The Wingmen

By Adam Lazarus

Astronaut and Senator John Glenn and baseball Hall of Famer Ted Williams became fast friends while serving in the Korean War. This excerpt of a newly published book details the special bond between these legendary Marine aviators.

60 Keepsakes from Hell: Marine Mementos from the Pacific War

By Geoffrey W. Roecker

From swords to children's toys, this photo essay documents the bevy of trinkets leathernecks acquired during World War II.



Departments

4 Sound Off

10 In Every Clime and Place

24 Corps Connections

44 We—the Marines

52 Leatherneck Laffs

58 Sea Stories

66 In Memoriam

68 Passing the Word

71 Reader Assistance

72 Saved Round

COVER: Marine Raiders with 1st Marine Raider Battalion, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, provide security during a simulated night raid on a warehouse in Los Angeles, Calif., Sept. 3, 2015. Read about MARSOC's mission and history on page 36. Photo by Sgt Scott Achtemeier, USMC. Copies of the cover may be obtained by sending \$3 (for mailing costs) to Leatherneck Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134-0775.

LEATHERNECK AND MCA MEMBERSHIP PRICES: 1 year \$42; 2 years \$79; 3 years \$119
Toll-free (866) 622-1775 • Email mca@mca-marines.org

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF THE MARINE CORPS ASSOCIATION'S 5TH ANNUAL GOLF FOR THE MARINES!

We'd like to thank our Sponsors and Raffle Donors who supported our 2023 Golf For The Marines Tournament. You helped us raise over \$30,000 in support of our professional development programs for Marines.

THANK YOU TO OUR 2023 GOLF FOR THE MARINES SPONSORS

PLATINUM



GOLD



SILVER



BREAKFAST SPONSOR



LUNCH SPONSOR

SV Financial Group a Global Institutional Consulting Team



BEVERAGES SPONSOR



GOLF BALL MARKER COIN



LONGEST DRIVE MEN'S & WOMEN'S



CLOSEST TO THE PIN



TEAM AWARDS



1ST PLACE AWARDS



TEE SPONSORS



BGEN JOHN R. THOMAS
CHARITABLE TRUST



STRATEGIC VENTURES
CONSULTING GROUP, LLC



AND OUR RAFFLE DONORS FOR OUR GOLFERS



WWW.MCA-MARINES.ORG



Letter of the Month

(Leatherneck will pay \$25 for a “Sound Off Letter of the Month” submitted by an MCA member or provide a one-year courtesy subscription to a non-member whose letter is selected.)

I just finished reading the [November issue] 2023 *Leatherneck* Writing Contest article “Into the Breach: How a Good Leader Becomes an Outstanding Leader” by SSgt Michael Montesanto. My attention was drawn to the iconic photo of Lt Baldomero Lopez at the Inchon landing taken moments before his death.

In San Francisco we have erected a Korean War Memorial at the entrance of the Presidio National Cemetery. Included on the memorial is a copy of the same iconic photo. The memorial was created by private donations, including several large donations from several Korean War veterans and the South Korean government. One of the donors was LtCol John Stevens, USMC (Ret). In 1950, then-Capt Stevens was the CO of A/1/5 and was part of the brigade and then the Pusan Perimeter.

During combat at Pusan, the platoon

commander of the 3rd platoon had been wounded and was replaced by Lt Lopez. During the Inchon landing, Capt Stevens had put Lt Lopez’ platoon in reserve due to his having never been under fire. As a result of Lt Lopez hurling himself on the live grenade to save his Marines, Capt Stevens submitted the Medal of Honor recommendation, which was later granted. Even though Lopez had only been a leader of 3rd platoon A/1/5 for a very short period, he personified true leadership in protecting his men.

As a sidenote, I had the honor of attending LtCol Stevens’ burial at Arlington on Nov. 4, 2021. His service was the most impressive ceremony I have attended.

Sgt Steve Bosshard
USMC, 1964-1968
Rohnert Park, Calif.

Outstanding! Thanks for the letter and for the work to memorialize our Korean War veterans. Lt Lopez is the namesake for the award presented by the MCA to the Honor Graduate lieutenant in each class at The Basic School. Semper Fidelis.—Publisher



SGT QUANG DO, USMC

Above: LtGen Charles G. Chiarotti, USMC (Ret), MCA President and CEO, presents the First Lieutenant Baldomero Lopez Honor Graduate Award to 2ndLt Turner H. Leigh, Oct. 14, 2022.

Below: The Korean War Memorial erected at the entrance of the Presidio National Cemetery features the iconic photo of Lt Baldomero Lopez climbing the sea wall at Inchon, Sept. 15, 1950.



COURTESY OF STEVE BOSSHARD



SALUTE TO OUR SPONSORS

We truly appreciate your support of the Marine Corps Association and Today's Marines.

We appreciate our premier sponsors, our individual event sponsors, and our award sponsors, too! For a complete list of all our sponsors please visit: www.mca-marines.org/our-sponsors — Thank you!

Leatherneck

MAGAZINE OF THE MARINES

President/CEO,

Marine Corps Association

LtGen Charles G. Chiarotti, USMC (Ret)

Publisher & Editor-in-Chief

Col Christopher Woodbridge, USMC (Ret)

Executive Editor: Nancy S. Lichtman

Deputy Editor: Kipp Hanley

Copy Editor: Lauren Jeter

Staff Writer: Kyle Watts

Editorial Assistant

Briesa Koch

Art Director: Jason Monroe

EDITORIAL OFFICES

Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134

Phone: (703) 640-0115

Email: leatherneck@mca-marines.org

Web page: www.mca-marines.org/leatherneck

MCA SUPPORT CENTER:

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION & CUSTOMER SERVICE

Hours of Operation: 8:00-4:30 EST

Phone: toll-free (866) 622-1775

Email: mca@mca-marines.org

ADVERTISING QUERIES ONLY:

Contact: Valerie Preletz 703-640-0107 or

LeeAnn Mitchell 703-640-0169

advertising@mca-marines.org

LEATHERNECK AND MCA MEMBERSHIP PRICES

1 year \$42; 2 years \$79; 3 years \$119

Leatherneck also is available in digital format at
www.mca-marines.org/leatherneck.

All overseas and foreign addresses add \$16 postage for each year's membership except APO and FPO military addresses. Periodicals postage paid at Quantico, Va., USPS #308-080, and additional mailing offices.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Please send your new address six weeks before the date of issue with which it is to take effect, if possible. Include old address with new, enclosing your address label if convenient.

Send to: *Leatherneck* Magazine, Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134 or email to: mca@mca-marines.org.

POSTMASTER

Send address changes to: *Leatherneck* Magazine, Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134.



Leatherneck (ISSN 0023-981X) is published monthly by the Marine Corps Association, Bldg. #715, MCB, Quantico, VA 22134. Copyright 2024 by MCA.

All rights reserved. Stories, features, pictures and other material from *Leatherneck* may be reproduced if they are not restricted by law or military regulations, provided proper credit is given and specific prior permission has been granted for each item to be reproduced.

Opinions of authors whose articles appear in *Leatherneck* do not necessarily express the attitude of the Navy Department or Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps. "Marines" and the Eagle, Globe and Anchor are trademarks of the U.S. Marine Corps, used with permission. When mailed, manuscripts, art or photographs should be accompanied by self-addressed envelopes and return postage. Query first on all submissions. The publisher assumes no responsibility for return of unsolicited manuscripts, drawings or photographs.

Publication of advertisements does not constitute endorsement by MCA except for such products or services clearly offered under MCA's name. The publisher reserves the right to accept or reject any advertising order at his absolute discretion.

Remembering Chesty Puller

We lost LtGen Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller 52 years ago on Oct. 11, 2023. All Marines remember Chesty as a "Marine's Marine." Exercising, lifting weights, and running: We all do "one more for Chesty" as everyone has so much respect for him.

If Marines visit Virginia, West Point and Saluda are located northeast of Richmond, Va. There is a memorial in West Point, Chesty's birthplace, and he is buried east of Saluda in the graveyard of Christ Church.

I try to visit his grave at least once a year. He was important to all Marines even though we may not have served under him. Rest well, Chesty.

Palmer C. Sweet
USMC, 1964-1970
North Garden, Va.

LtGen Puller would be humbled to know Marines still pay their respects. Semper Fidelis.—Publisher

Reader Was Startled that Sea Story Wasn't "Dry"

The Sea Story "Drunk on Duty" in the November 2023 issue of *Leatherneck* had me laughing for a while, but almost gave me a heart attack! I thought the letter slipped by the proofreader on an infraction of "no booze" in a combat zone! I know the story could have ended differently, but a hangover was all to endure for drinking on the job. Kudos to the editor for showing the human side of the service!

John Sanchez
USN, 1961-1966
Hanford, Calif.

We all know Marines will "find a way" even in a supposedly dry combat zone. Thankfully the results were relatively harmless.—Publisher

Marines Reflect on the 248th Birthday of the Corps

Marines: As we celebrate the 248th birthday of our Corps on Nov. 10, 2023, this Marine cannot help but recall his days wearing our uniform as I am sure you also might be doing the same. Since those bygone days, many changes have taken place like women fighting alongside us; technology being used on the battlefield; men and women in boot camp together; uniform changes, etc. However, some things never changed, we are still the "first to fight."

The men and women in the Marine Corps today are the greatest ever and make us proud. They may not use language and terms we long ago did like, "romping," "stomping," "hell raising,"

"death and destruction," or "we fear no evil." But with the world on the edge of another great war, fighting terrorists and those who want to take our freedom away, the Marines of today need all the support that can be mustered.

I feel the general population does not recognize this dangerous situation. We of the past who have fought such battles must educate and lead the way. So, Happy Birthday, Marines!

Jack Rine
USMC, 1953-1967
Ocean View, Del.

Happy 248th birthday to the United States Marine Corps. In these uncertain times, it is important to recall all the deeds our Corps has performed and to note them not only to each other but to all the public, especially those who would diminish this force in readiness.

John Butler
Tampa, Fla.

Almost every day, in snow, rain or shine, I go out in the backyard to throw a frisbee for my dog, Pepper. I look up at the flagpole with the American and Marine Corps flags flying in the breeze as it is today, and I am reminded of the following verses of our favorite hymn ... with the first and second verses reversed:

"Our flag's unfurled to every breeze, from dawn to setting sun. We have fought in every clime and place, where we could take a gun. In the snow of far-off northern lands and in sunny tropic scenes. You will find us always on the job, the United States Marines.

"From the halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli, we fight out country's battles in the air, on land, and sea. First to fight for right and freedom and to keep our honor clean. We are proud to claim the title of United States Marine.

"Here's health to you and to our Corps, which we are proud to serve. In many a strife we have fought for life and never lost our nerve. If the Army and the Navy ever look to heaven's scenes, they will find the streets are guarded by United States Marines."

Happy Birthday, Marines and corpsmen!

Cpl Bill Pederson
USMC, 1963-1966
Mauston, Wis.

To all who shared their 248th birthday greetings, thank you and Happy Birthday, Marines. Be assured that today's Marines maintain the fighting spirit and high standards that will prove equal to any challenge this dangerous world may throw at them. Semper Fi.—Publisher

**Leatherneck Archive Article
“See the Chaplains”
Brings Back Memories**

I recently read the April 1944 article “See the Chaplains,” which mentions my former pastor Thomas M. Reardon here at Saint James Church in Newark, N.J., when I was a junior and senior in high school. He was a chaplain in the Marine Corps who was at the Battle of Guadalcanal during World War II. You can also see in the article that they made a movie called “Guadalcanal Diary,” in which actor Preston Foster plays the role of Father Reardon.

I enlisted in the Marine Corps in March of 1960. When Father Reardon found out I had joined the Corps, he called me into his office and gave me some “pointers” about the Marine Corps. Only in the last few days did I find out that after his death, he was buried in a nearby cemetery in Bloomfield, N.J. I took a ride over there this morning and saw that someone had placed an American flag, a Marine Corps flag, and the eagle, globe and anchor emblem on his tombstone.

Sgt Julius Spohn
USMC, 1960-1966
Newark, N.J.



COURTESY OF SGT JULIUS SPOHN

Marine Corps Chaplain Thomas M. Reardon, right, was a part of the Guadalcanal campaign in WW II and later served as a pastor in Newark, N.J.

*Thanks for the photo. I'd love to know what “pointers” Father Reardon had for you as you shipped off to boot camp.—
Publisher*

Regarding the Articles on the Marines in Cuba

I receive the *Leatherneck* and *Marine Corps Gazette* monthly and have for many years. You do an outstanding job and I enjoy reading both. I invite your attention to page 20 of the October 2023 issue of the *Leatherneck* in the article “U.S. Marines, Cuba, and the Invasion That Never Was, Part II.” There is a picture

of three A-4 Skyhawks shown. Those aircraft are a part of VMA-331, MAG-31, MCAS Beaufort, S.C. We deployed from Beaufort in mid-September of 1962 to NAS Roosevelt Roads, for a planned weapons deployment. I had retrained from the admin field and had recently graduated from Aviation Ordnance School, NAS Jacksonville, Fla. I was a lance corporal.

Upon graduation, my first aviation assignment was to MAG-31, 2nd MAW, at MCAS Beaufort. Upon arrival, I was assigned to VMA-331. The commanding officer was Lieutenant Colonel Donald

ENLISTED COLLEGE
DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAM
— TOTAL FORCE —

SERGEANTS SCHOOL SEMINAR PROGRAM
READY RELEVANT CAPABLE

CAREER SCHOOL SEMINAR PROGRAM

ADVANCED SCHOOL SEMINAR PROGRAM

1-888-435-8762
WWW.USMCU.EDU/CDET/ENLISTED

Conroy. I found him to be a fine commanding officer, and I certainly respected him.

In the early 1970s, I again served with the then-Colonel Donald Conroy, I was the personnel/adjutant of Marine Barracks, Pearl Harbor. The colonel was assigned to the Pacific Airborne Command Center. I carried the colonel on our rolls for admin purposes. After being at NAS Roosevelt Roads for about three weeks, my NCOIC told me to pack my gear, as I was going with a detachment and three aircraft to NB (Naval Station), Guantanamo Bay. There were probably 20 of us enlisted and I think four company grade Marine aviators. We did have a major who was a naval aviator in charge of our detachment.

The pilots flew the three A-4s to Guantanamo Bay, and the rest of us were flown by a C-130 with VMGR-252. The reason we deployed to Guantanamo Bay was to fly a low yield nuclear weapon daily around the fence line as a show of force. I had been trained in nuclear weapons loading. That is how and why I was deployed to Guantanamo Bay.

We properly loaded and unloaded one weapon daily, and an A-4 flew the fence line. We did this show of force in the morning and again in the afternoon.

Did it every day until the crisis was over. We then ended the deployment, and we all flew back to MCAS Beaufort. We returned home in early November of 1962. There has never been a mention of this detail in all I have read. If you look at the picture on page 20, you will see mounds of dirt behind the A-4s. Every day, we filled sandbags until we got three revetments built for the A-4s. To say the least, that was a task that none of us enjoyed. We literally filled hundreds, if not thousands of sandbags. But it did keep us busy.

We slept most of the time under the aircraft or in the back of a truck and lived off C-rations. We had a water buffalo assigned to us as well. When we got ready to go home, the Seabees bulldozed our walls we built by hand. I served over 20 years in the Marine Corps. I am a Mustang officer and retired as a first lieutenant. Served about half of my tour in aviation and the rest in ground units and the drill field.

1stLt John D. Henry, USMC (Ret)
1958 to 1978
Dothan, Ala.

There is little doubt that the Cuban Missile Crisis may have had a very different outcome without the deterrence

provided by your squadron. Thanks and Semper Fidelis.—Publisher

In May 1995, I met Col Donald Conroy at a naval aviation symposium. He is the father of author Pat Conroy and was the inspiration for the character "Bull" Meechum in the book "The Great Santini." Attending the same symposium was my friend and colleague, Col Dennis J. "Deej" Kiely, USMC (Ret). Coincidentally, Kiely was the VMFA-312 CO when the movie "The Great Santini" was filmed at MCAS Beaufort, S.C., and was the pilot doing the flying in Meechum's missions in the movie.—Editor

Local Paper Published Reader's Civil War Marine Figure

I wanted you folks down there at Quantico to see this feature in the *Mount Vernon Gazette*. The reporter chose to feature one of my painted figures that represents a Civil War Marine at the Battle of Bull Run.

I painted that figure around 50 years ago when I was a teenager. I am now 62 years old and retired a year ago from MCCS at Henderson Hall. I also just recently wrote a letter to my old bunkmate from the PLC junior course at Quantico in the summer of 1980 who is from Staten Island, N.Y!



MARINE CORPS ASSOCIATION FOUNDATION

**HELP ENSURE
TODAY'S MARINES
HAVE THE RESOURCES
THEY NEED TO
SUCCEED ON THE
FIELD OF BATTLE AND
ON THE HOME FRONT.**



Donate today at www.mca-marines.org/donate-to-mcaf





COURTESY OF GREG PASPATIS

MCA member Greg Paspatis painted a Civil War era Union soldier which was photographed and featured in the Mount Vernon Gazette.

Thanks for all you do to entertain and educate the Marine Corps community.

Greg Paspatis
Alexandria, Va.

Congratulations on having your work recognized in print.—Publisher

Reflecting on My Time in Vietnam

After Vietnam, I have often wondered why I was there. Why were any of us there? I have read many articles, stories, and books about that war as it took me 20 years or so to read anything about Vietnam after I came home. The things in my mind and soul were just too raw. When I left there in Sept. 17, 1967, I looked out of the window of the “Freedom Bird” and said, “So long you SOB, my war is over.” But my war had just begun, I just didn’t know it.

I was assigned duty as the executive officer for Marine Barracks, Cecil Field, Fla., and later became the commanding officer. About 98% of my Marines were returning Vietnam veterans. Most of them had been drafted and were on their way home after serving their country. I cannot give them enough credit for their service and attitude for their accomplishments. They were, in my opinion, America’s finest young men. I never asked a single one of those Marines to reenlist. They had answered their country’s call, they had given their very best.

Life was good for me until January and February of 1968, then the real war started. A call from Headquarters Marine Corps informed me that my command would start making casualty calls as the

number of casualties was too much for the 6th Marine Corps District. Over the next two years, we made 37 casualty calls to moms, dads, wives, and families, telling them that their Marine had been killed or wounded.

That was over 50 years ago today and I am still fighting my war. I am sure some of those families still remember the day that doorbell rang, that changed their lives forever. Each time I knocked or rang a doorbell, my life changed. After each call, I was wrung dry. My emotions were spent. I found no answer to why we were sent to Vietnam and why so many men and women were killed or wounded.

My only answer to the war in Vietnam, of why we were sent there, came to me about three years ago. I went with my wife and daughter to get a pedicure at a nail salon. My daughter asked me to get a pedicure. I had always done my own nails, but I thought I would give it a try. The salon was owned by a Vietnamese family. I got in the chair and put my feet in the water. I was wearing a “Vietnam Veteran” cover. An elderly Vietnamese lady came to my station and she looked at me and said, “Thank you for my freedom.” I don’t believe the Vietnam War was necessary, but I do believe what

[continued on page 70]

**MARINES HELPED YOU
BECOME A MARINE.**

**WE CAN HELP WITH RE-ENTRY
TO CIVILIAN LIFE, TOO.**



FOCUSMARINES.ORG

WHERE THINGS START TO GET BETTER.

In Every Clime and Place

Compiled by Kyle Watts



SSGT ROBERT G. GAVALDON, USMC

U.S. and Japanese national flags are presented during the opening ceremony for the field training exercise of Resolute Dragon (RD) 23, held at Camp Kengun, Kumamoto, Japan, on Oct. 14, 2023. RD is an annual bilateral exercise in Japan that strengthens the command, control and multi-domain maneuver capabilities of Marines in III MEF and allied Japan Self-Defense Force personnel.

Okinawa, Japan

III MEF Participates in Resolute Dragon 23 Field Training Exercise

III Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) participated in the field training exercise portion of Resolute Dragon 23 from Oct. 14 to 31, 2023. This was the third iteration of the bilateral exercise hosted by III MEF and the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) and featured forces in multiple locations across Japan. Both U.S. and Japan units rehearsed to strengthen their command, control, and multi-domain maneuver capabilities as part of a stand-in force.

U.S. Army forces, such as the 1st Multi-Domain Task Force, elements of the U.S. Navy's 7th Fleet, and the U.S. Air Force's 353 Special Operations Wing worked with the JGSDF Western Army and external enablers, to include air and maritime self-defense forces in this iteration.

III MEF contributed approximately 3,300 Marines and Sailors to the exercise. RD 23 FTX showcased many firsts, including the implementation of bilateral live fire between Marine Corps M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) and JGSDF M270 multiple launch rocket systems. The Marines rehearsed rapid infiltration with the HIMARS into the Yausubestu Maneuver Area via Kenebestu Airfield. This re-



CPL TYLER ANDREWS, USMC

U.S. Navy Sailors and Marines with III MEF and Japan Ground Self-Defense Force servicemembers with Western Army transport a simulated casualty from a Boeing CH-47JA Chinook assigned to 3rd Squadron, Western Army Helicopter Unit, Western Army Aviation Group, during the field training exercise of Resolute Dragon 23 at Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, Japan, on Oct. 20, 2023.

hearsal enhanced the lethality of the partnered forces and trained them for rapid response to crises as a singular, unified force.

Another first was airfield damage repair training between III MEF, Naval

Mobile Construction Battalion 3, and JGSDF Western Army 8th Division Engineers. This training strengthened III MEF's integration with the Navy and JGSDF Western Army, and provided an opportunity to share best practices.



CPL MICHAEL TAGGART, USMC

Marines with 2nd Bn, 2nd Marines, maneuver to a defensive position during the field training exercise of Resolute Dragon 23 at Hijudai Maneuver Area, Oita, Japan, on Oct. 17, 2023.



LCPL EVELYN DOHERTY, USMC

There were 19 installations and facilities in use for the exercise, ranging from Hokkaido to Kyushu and the southwestern islands. In Kyushu and the southern islands, the Western Army and III MEF participated in a field training exercise, allowing them to rehearse tasks as a Joint Force Littoral Component Command for the first time.

RD 23 FTX is designed to strengthen

bilateral operational capabilities and interoperability between the U.S. Marine Corps and JSDF, with an emphasis on air-ground integration and combined arms live-fire training. III MEF's coordination and collaboration with the JSDF is a leading effort in both countries' shared vision of ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Sgt Savannah Mesimer, USMC

Marines with 3rd Bn, 12th Marines, 3rdMarDiv, guide a High Mobility Artillery Rocket System from a KC-130J assigned to VMGR-152, MAG-12, 1st MAW, during the field training exercise of Resolute Dragon 23 at Japan Air Self-Defense Force Kenebetsu Air Base, Hokkaido, Japan, on Oct. 21, 2023.



Above: SSgt Mark Frick, an explosive ordnance disposal team leader with the 26th MEU(SOC), dons a bomb suit (inset) and photographs a neutralized simulated improvised explosive device (above) during Exercise Northern Challenge 2023, Keflavik Airport, Iceland, on Sept. 22, 2023. (Photos by Cpl Kyle Jia, USMC)



CPL KYLE JIA, USMC

Left: A USMC Remote Controlled Man Transportable Robotic System Increment II (MTRS Inc II) carries a simulated improvised explosive device during Exercise Northern Challenge 2023, Keflavik Airport, Iceland, on Sept. 24, 2023.



CPL KYLE JIA, USMC

Above: SSgt Mark Frick, an explosive ordnance disposal team leader with the 26th MEU(SOC), defuses a simulated improvised explosive device attached to a simulated casualty during Exercise Northern Challenge 2023, Keflavik Airport, Iceland, on Sept. 25, 2023.

Iceland

IED Exercise a First for the USMC

USMC explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) operators from the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) (MEU(SOC)) participated in Exercise Northern Challenge 2023, alongside various NATO Allies and partners, from Sept. 21 to Oct. 5, 2023.

Northern Challenge 2023 is an annual, Icelandic Coast Guard-led exercise, designed to provide the most modernized explosive ordnance disposal training in the world. This year's iteration featured 16 nations, over 400 participants, and marked the first time the Marine Corps participated in the exercise. Participating nations included Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Iceland, Lithuania, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden, United Kingdom and the United States.

During each day of the training, participants responded to two "calls" term for responding to an explosive threat. Throughout the training, each situation became increasingly more complex, adding multiple, simulated, improvised explosive devices for the operators to safely neutralize while a thinking adversary countered their procedures to challenge their problem-solving skills and provide a more realistic, threat-informed, scenario-based training environment.

"This was a great experience for the Marines from Combat Logistics Battalion 22 (CLB-22). The exercise challenged our team with dynamic and relevant EOD scenarios put together by professionals in the field," said Master Sergeant George Cardenas, EOD chief of 26th MEU(SOC) Logistics Combat Element. "The combination of so many varying experiences,

perspectives and tactics, techniques, and procedures, creates a challenging and professionally rewarding learning environment that ultimately makes us better warfighters for the 26th MEU(SOC).”

Along with the EOD teams, each country provided a proctor to watch over teams as they solved various problem sets. The inclusion of proctors allowed for in-depth collaboration between participants and encouraged discussions on best practices and tactics, techniques and procedures.

“I am extremely proud of the exceptional performance of our EOD Marines, honing in on their craft and enhancing their warfighting readiness,” said Lieutenant Colonel Luke Sauber, Commanding Officer, CLB-22, 26th MEU(SOC). “Participating in realistic training scenarios enables the Marines from the MEU(SOC) Logistics Combat Element to respond to real-world threats associated with the current and anticipated future operating environments where they may be dynamically tasked to operate. Our EOD Marines represented the 26th MEU(SOC) in a positive light, marking the first time a contingent from the U.S. Marine Corps participated in Northern Challenge, a NATO-level exercise.”

The 26th MEU(SOC) serves as one of the United States premier crisis response forces, capable of conducting amphibious operations, crisis response and limited contingency operations in support of theater requirements of the Geographic Combatant Commander. The USS *Bataan* Amphibious Ready Group and 26th MEU(SOC) deployed on July 10, 2023, operating in the U.S. Naval Forces Central Command area of operations under the tactical command and control of Task Force 51/5.

Cpl Kyle Jia, USMC

Camp Pendleton, Calif. 13th MEU Concludes Valiant Mark 2023

In the amphibious and mountainous terrain of Camp Pendleton, Singapore Guardsmen and U.S. Marines strengthened bonds, increased interoperability, and celebrated the partnership between our nations. The 1st Guards Battalion, 7th Singapore Infantry Brigade, Singapore Armed Forces, alongside 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines and the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), conducted Valiant Mark 23 at Camp Pendleton, Calif., from Oct. 7 to 21, 2023. The training included various subject matter expert exchanges, live-fire ranges, a staff planning exercise, and an amphibious assault exercise.

The subject matter expert exchanges included snipers, mortars, indirect fires and fire support coordination, combat



SGT QUINCED. BISARD, USMC

Singapore Guardsmen with the 7th Singapore Infantry Brigade observe a USMC CH-53E Super Stallion taking off during Exercise Valiant Mark 2023 at Camp Pendleton, Calif., on Oct. 12, 2023.

engineers, anti-tank, unmanned aerial systems and medical exchanges. The purpose of this phase of training was to exchange tactical knowledge from both forces, improving standard operating procedures and meshing capabilities.

“The main thing we learned from the SAF is how they employ their 120mm mortar system,” explained First Lieutenant Liam O’Connell, 81mm mortar platoon commander, 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines. “The Marine Corps does not use this type of mortar, so it was interesting to learn how they moved around the battlefield with such a large weapon system and how they are able to support their infantry units.”

The knowledge and tactics shared dur-

ing the subject matter expert exchanges were applied during a live-fire exercise and a rifle company live-fire range. During the live-fire exercise, Guardsmen and Marines practiced close air support with a UH-1Y Huey and AH-1Z Cobra section from Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 267, indirect fires from the 81mm mortar platoon, and fires support coordination with 1st Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company.

“The SAF Strike Observer Mission (STORM) teams were most excited about integrating multiple fire support assets into a combined arms solution,” mentioned Captain Ari Kirschbaum, special projects officer with 1st ANGLICO. “Typically, they do not integrate mortars,



SGT NICOLAS ATEHORTUA, USMC

Above: LCpl Weston Somerville, a mortarman with 2nd Bn, 4th Marines, 1stMarDiv, and Singapore Guardsmen with 7th Singapore Infantry Brigade execute a fire mission using an M252 81mm mortar system during a live fire range as part of Valiant Mark 2023 at Camp Pendleton, Calif., on Oct. 12, 2023.

Below: Cpl Daniel Harper, a fire support Marine with 1st Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company, I Marine Expeditionary Force Information Group, I MEF, finds the distance to an impact area alongside a Singapore Guardsman from 7th Singapore Infantry Brigade during Exercise Valiant Mark 2023 at Camp Pendleton, Calif., on Oct. 12, 2023.



SGT NICOLAS ATEHORTUA, USMC

artillery, naval gunfire, and multiple sections of close air support platforms at the same time. They were eager to learn how we leverage fire support assets to increase the dilemma for the enemy.”

The rifle company live-fire range consisted of integrating Guardsmen and Marines through a course of live fire that improved their small arms tactics and developed a practical understanding of Marine Corps maneuver warfare doctrine.

Concurrently to the subject matter expert exchanges, staff from the 13th MEU, 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines, and 1st Guards Battalion conducted a week-long staff planning exercise where a bilateral amphibious operation was planned. The staff planning exercise was executed at the unclassified level so our Singaporean partners could be fully involved. Since amphibious warfighting was a focus of this year’s Valiant Mark, the planning exercise was based on a fictional scenario that required the application of Marine Corps amphibious operations.

“Our Singapore partners were most interested in the command relationship between the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps,” conveyed Major Jonathan Turello, Assistant Operations Officer, 13th MEU. “The synchronized coordination between the Navy and Marine Corps commanders, also known as the Commander Amphib-



SSGT DANA BEESLEY, USMC

Marines with 1st Light Armored Reconnaissance Bn, 1stMarDiv, demonstrate the capabilities of the RQ-20B Puma to Singapore Guardsmen with 7th Singapore Infantry Brigade during an unmanned aerial system subject matter expert exchange as part of Exercise Valiant Mark 2023 at Camp Pendleton, Calif., on Oct. 11, 2023.

ious Task Force and Commander Landing Force, during amphibious operations is the quintessential example of naval integration.”

The staff planning exercise was a critical part of Valiant Mark 23 and made interoperability improvement transcendent, from the planners to the executors.

The culminating event of Valiant Mark 23 was the amphibious assault exercise where Marines and Singapore Guardsmen executed the amphibious operation that was planned during the staff planning exercise. This amphibious assault included the seizure of two inland objectives with two reinforced companies from 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines and one company from 1st Guards Battalion.

“The successful assault of the objective as a combined force was particularly satisfying and memorable,” expressed Capt Dominic Miller, Commanding Officer, “Charlie” Company, 1st Guards Battalion. “This proved that within a short duration of only two weeks, both our forces were able to work together,

coordinate our various assets and capture an objective successfully.”

Throughout Valiant Mark 23, we enhanced overall interoperability and developed long-lasting relationships that are echoed by our strong partnership between our nations.”

“One of the most important aspects of Valiant Mark are the personal connections made throughout the exercise,” said Colonel Stuart Glenn, Commanding Of-

ficer, 13th MEU. “This is my third Valiant Mark, and I still keep in contact with my Singaporean friends. These personal connections enable interoperability with the SAF. This year’s Valiant Mark was a huge success, and I look forward to future iterations of bilateral training with our Singaporean partners.”

Capt Kevin Buss, USMC



Marines with 2nd Bn, 4th Marines, 1stMarDiv, and Singapore Guardsmen with the 7th Singapore Infantry Brigade post security during infantry immersion training as part of Exercise Valiant Mark 2023 at Camp Pendleton, Calif., on Oct. 10, 2023.



SGT QUINCE D. BISARD, USMC

This blurring of boundaries is in large part due to the proliferation of photography, videography and social media in our increasingly digital age.



Blurred Boundaries:

The Front Lines and The Homefront

By Michael Jerome Plunkett

On Oct. 6, 1862, *The New York Times* ran a short article wedged in the corner of a page in their daily paper titled “Antietam Reproduced.” The Battle of Antietam had occurred a few weeks before and had resulted in the worst casualty numbers the war had seen thus far. It would be the bloodiest single day of combat for the U.S. military until the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. Photographer Alexander Gardner and his assistants rushed to Sharpsburg, Md., to capture the aftermath of the conflict. The photographs they produced showed the state of the battlefield before the Confederate dead were removed. Soon afterward, Mathew Brady, a photographer

who worked closely with Gardner during the war, displayed these photographs for public viewing in his personal studio in New York City. “If our readers wish to know the horrors of the battle-field,” said *The New York Times*, “let them go to Brady’s Gallery, and see the fearful reproductions which he has on exhibition, and for sale.”

This marked a major step forward in the way the civilian population interacted with the Civil War. For possibly the first time, the public was exposed to “all the literal repulsiveness of [the] nature” of combat, and they witnessed “the naked corpses of our dead soldiers side by side in the quiet impassiveness of rest. Blackened faces, distorted features, expressions most agonizing, and details

of absolute verity.” The article goes on to praise the enterprise, perseverance and courage of these artists, noting that the photographs could “teach us a lesson which it is well for us to learn.” However, it is left up to the reader to decide what conclusion should be drawn from these gruesome images—from the effects of combat on the human body. But given that the anonymous author wasn’t writing from one of the bloody campaigns in the Shenandoah Valley or from the ranks of the Army of the Potomac, it is safe to assume the collective “us” he refers to is the civilian population far from the front lines. He drives this point home when he pairs the images of the soldiers killed in action with that of the throngs of people walking down Broadway in



CPL CAITLIN BRINK, USMC

Recruit Isaiah Holloman (above) and other recruits with Platoon 3084, Co I, 3rd Recruit Training Bn (right) pose for boot camp photos during training on Parris Island, Sept. 5, 2013.

Opposite page: Photos by Alexander Gardner and his assistants show a ditch filled with deceased Confederate soldiers in the aftermath of the Battle of Antietam. The publication of these photos marked one of the first times the civilian population interacted with the front lines of war. (Photo courtesy of Library of Congress)



CPL CAITLIN BRINK, USMC

New York City. The author imagines that “they would jostle less carelessly down the great thoroughfare, saunter less at their ease, were a few dripping bodies fresh from the field, laid along the pavement.” This is his attempt to force a collision between the battlefield and the homefront in the mind of the reader, to merge the two spheres and bring the horrors of war to the civilian mind.

The term “homefront” is relatively new, first appearing around World War I in various bond drive literature and other campaigns that encouraged civilians to support the war effort and the courageous

men who were fighting at the front. It grew in popularity during World War II when similar sentiments helped drive industry to support war efforts while much of the manpower was fighting abroad. But it is a concept that feels, at best, tenuous in the 21st century. If there ever was a distinction between the homefront and the front lines of war, that chasm appears to be shrinking—or may not have ever existed in the first place. This blurring of boundaries is in large part due to the proliferation of photography, videography and social media in our increasingly digital age.

Photography occupies a unique place in military culture. We still rely on it heavily to reinforce our ideal of what the military should be. Anyone who has been through Parris Island in the last 30 years knows this phenomenon all too well. There are photographers at every major training event, from the moment you step off the bus and onto the yellow footprints to the eagle, globe and anchor ceremony when you are first given the title of Marine. The quintessential dress blues photo taken near the end of boot camp doesn’t include the infamous blue coat at all but rather a modified vest (more bulletproof vest than

dress coat) that is quickly switched from recruit to recruit as they move in front of the camera, assembly line style. Outside of the military, there are any number of websites, that offer full-size cardboard cutout photographs to temporarily take the place of your loved one while they are deployed abroad. For an additional \$20, you can add a customized text bubble. This style of photography is in some ways a far cry from Gardner's wet plates of bloated corpses on major battlefields of the American Civil War. Yet in other ways, it is the exact type of evolution one might expect as photography became more accessible to the masses, as well as easier and more financially reasonable to produce.

Photography has long been an integral part of the military experience in war and garrison. From the moment cameras became compact enough to be transported, they found their way onto the battlefields. Roger Fenton documented the Crimean War in 1855, less than 30 years after the first still photo was captured by Joseph Nicéphore Niépce using a sliding wooden box camera. Alexander Gardner was just one of several photographers to document the

American Civil War less than 10 years later. While Fenton's work was largely relegated to the rear and to scenic portraits of battlefields, the American Civil War offered ample opportunities to capture the grisly effects of combat. In her book on Mathew Brady, Mary Panzer remarked that one of the unique features of Brady's work as a photographer was that his "photographs allowed viewers to see the war through the eyes of their loved ones. Gardner's, by contrast, revealed the world that those soldiers would never see. Even as early as 1860, it was clear that Brady's gallery contributed to the changed understanding of American heroes and history." Still, it wasn't until World War II that photographers attempted true combat photography in earnest.

Photographers such as Robert Capa landed on the beaches of Normandy with American forces and took photos as bullets ripped past him. These same photos were replicated in painstaking detail for the opening sequence of Steven Spielberg's 1998 film "Saving Private Ryan," which attests to the magnitude a series of photographs can have on the collective conscience of future generations.

And it wasn't until the Vietnam War that civilians began to experience something closer to the truth during war. The telegraph gave way to the phone, which gave way to cable news, and by the time of American involvement in Vietnam, civilians at home were witnessing the war from their living rooms, night after night, year after year. According to the Library of Congress, 9% of households in 1950 owned a television. That number skyrocketed to 90% by the mid-1960s. The rapid expansion of television ownership in the United States meant that the vast majority of the population had access to nightly reports from the war in Vietnam. This jump forward in communication brought about the abrupt realization that the distinction between the homefront and the front lines of combat had been punctured.

This advancement coincides with another major milestone in combat photography. For perhaps the first time in history, iconic photos of spontaneous moments in the war were exactly that: spontaneous. Whereas public movie theaters had shown carefully orchestrated propaganda reels during World War II, American citizens were witnessing the



COURTESY OF LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

"The Valley of the Shadow of Death," captured by photographer Robert Fenton in 1855 during the Crimean War, shows an empty battlefield littered with cannonballs.



USMC

Above: During the fighting on Okinawa, Marine Paul Ison dashes “through Death Valley” to a forward point of cover to avoid a hail of enemy machine-gun fire.

Right: TSgt Heber D. Maxwell, chief cameraman of the 3rd Amphibious Corps, captures live footage of Marine aviators on Guadalcanal with the Mitchell camera.

Below: An overhead view of Japanese RADM Shigematsu Sakaibara, center right, signing documents for the surrender of Wake Island into U.S. hands on board USS Levy (DE-162) on Sept. 4, 1945. Among the Marines and Sailors witnessing the signing are BGen Lawson H.M. Sanderson, center left, the commanding officer of the 4th Marine Air Wing (MAW), who signed the document for the United States.



TSGT DAVE LOONEY, USMC



USMC



CPL. M.J. SWEDLEY, USMC

CBS news commentator Walter Cronkite prepares to cover the Marine advance into Hue City, Feb. 20, 1968, for television audiences, allowing civilians at home a look into war on the front lines.

It is not difficult to see the ubiquitous smartphone as an extension of a loved one's eyes in the ever-increasing digital age ...

war in their private spaces in a way that hadn't happened before. This advancement played a major role in shaping the public perception of the conflict. It is not difficult to see the ubiquitous smartphone as an extension of a loved one's eyes in the ever-increasing digital age, especially when considering the events of Afghanistan and the United States' withdrawal. Obviously, the real, physical dangers will always pose their most immediate threat to those located on the front lines of the action. But the distinction between the two has become muddled and blurred in a way that will change the way we see war.

A similar and wider-reaching parallel can be made between smartphone ownership and social media usage in the 21st century. According to the Pew Research Center, 85% of Americans own a smartphone, which has jumped from 35% less than 10 years ago. Seventy-two percent of Americans use some type of social media, which has grown from 5% when they first began tracking this figure in 2005. These figures reflect a broad population that is using this technology daily. It indicates a deep saturation that affects how we witness the world.



LTCOL CHARLES H. CURETON, USMC

During Operation Desert Storm, an M60A1 Marine tank with Task Force Papa Bear moves through a battlefield darkened by burning oil wells, which have blocked all sunlight in the area.



Above: Vietnamese refugees from Saigon board a CH-53 Sea Stallion during an evacuation after the city fell.

Right: Afghan civilians line up and wait with their belongings to board U.S. aircraft during the evacuation at Hamid Karzai International Airport, Kabul, Afghanistan, Aug. 24, 2021.



GYSGT D.L. SHEARER, USMC

SGT SAMUEL RUIZ, USMC

Author Susan Sontag viewed photography as the most democratic of all the arts. In her estimation, “photography is the only major art in which professional training and years of experience do not confer an insuperable advantage over the untrained and inexperienced.” The proliferation of social media use only makes this idea truer. Censorship by these various applications remains a contested and ongoing conversation, but it stands to reason that it has never been easier for a single individual to voice an opinion or broadcast an event. Sontag wrote that “there is a peculiar heroism abroad in the world since the invention of cameras: the heroism of vision. Photography opened up a new model of freelance activity—allowing each person to display a certain unique, avid sensibility.”

This unique sensibility she describes

has never been more acutely felt in the mind of the American public than with the recent events of the drawdown in Afghanistan. It has only increased in the intervening decades between Vietnam and the global war on terror. Individuals now have the ability to broadcast instantly without the backing of any major network or government. There is a colossal amount of power in this. We are no longer bound by major network corporations or publications. The gatekeepers have all been removed.

In August of 2021, the United States ended its 20-year war in the Middle East in an event that was watched in real-time all over the world. The poorly executed exit resulted in mass confusion and hysteria. There were many casualties in the course of several days, including many of our allies who risked their own lives

to help the United States. The Taliban followed closely on the heels of the U.S. military and took back cities in hours that had taken U.S. forces years to capture. Anyone with a stable Wi-Fi connection could watch in real-time as overcrowded airplanes took off from the airport in Kabul, dropping Afghan citizens clinging to the outside of the aircraft to their deaths. The parallels to the photographs of people falling from the World Trade Center during the Sept. 11 attacks were remarked on ad nauseam, as were the chilling similarities to photos of the fall of Saigon in 1975 which, when placed side by side, look almost identical.

This collective reaction suggests that the compiled recorded history of war has had a lasting effect on the American psyche. It is no longer possible to fully separate the horrors of the front lines

from the safety of the homefront. The idea that there was ever any real separation was probably closer to an illusion, one that we have collectively engaged in for the last century. What we are experiencing today in the hyper-realistic and immediate realm of social media has been a long time coming. When one watches the footage captured in Afghanistan on smartphones held by everyday citizens

and noncombatant civilians, it is hard to think back to a more fully realized, virtual viewing gallery like the one Mathew Brady established during his career. Of course, those who are physically separated from the battlefield, whether it be by hundreds of miles or large bodies of water, will always be safe in the physical sense. But it stands to reason that bearing witness, however distant, is a form of

participation. If we are participants, we are in some way complicit.

There's a moment in Jess Walter's novel "The Zero," published in 2006, in which a New York Police Department detective named Paul who responded to the World Trade Center during the Sept. 11 attacks remarks, "Sometimes I wish we'd just gone to a bar that morning and watched the whole thing on CNN. You know what I mean? I envy people who watched it on TV. They got to see the whole thing. People ask me what it was like and I honestly don't know. Sometimes, I think the people who watched it on TV saw more than we did. It's like, the further away you were from this thing, the more sense it made. Hell, I still feel like I have no idea what even happened. No matter how many times I tell the story, it still makes no sense to me. You know?" Paul feels unable to accurately process what really happened to him, with the wider implication that somehow the events captured from a distance are more real than having been there in the moment itself.

This moment lends even greater weight to the idea of media and the rapid transfer of this information holding more validity in the collective American conscience because of its ability to spread a particular narrative to a wide audience. It is a scene that perfectly captures what French philosopher Jean Baudrillard refers to as "the image as simulacra," wherein the representation of reality (e.g., news footage of the terrorist attacks) contains more truth than having experienced the event in person—and therefore becomes reality. Social media use is only going to continue to grow and, with it, the responsibility for that usage. We can no longer rest on the idea of being on a homefront while we witness the events of war as they occur in the palms of our hands.

The likelihood of increased conflict abroad has only grown since the withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan. Less than a year after people witnessed the chaos and horror at Hamid Karzai International Airport, they were able to witness actual trench warfare unlike anything that has been seen since WW I from footage captured on GoPro cameras mounted on the helmets of Ukrainian soldiers and Western volunteers. In October 2023, I watched one independent journalist livestream incoming rockets from Gaza as convoys of Israel Defense Forces troops passed him along a highway in Israel. He remarked on how he was hoping to capture as many interviews as possible within the narrow

It is no longer possible to fully separate the horrors of the front lines from the safety of the homefront.



CPL JOEL A. CHAVERRI, USMC

Above: GySgt Ryan P. Shane runs into enemy fire on a street in Fallujah to pull a wounded comrade to safety, Nov. 9, 2004.

Below: This photo captures a mine clearing line charge detonating while Marines with 1st Combat Engineer Battalion conduct a clearing operation on Route 611 during Operation Outlaw Wraith in Sangin District, Helmand Province, Afghanistan, Dec. 4, 2010.



CPL JOHN MCCALL, USMC



SGT SA MUEL RUIZ, USMC

Marines who were present during the evacuation at Hamid Karzai International Airport looked after children who had been separated from their families amidst the chaos.

time constraint he had for being on the ground in country. He was using paid time off from his full-time job as a special ed teacher to be there. The era of distinct, easily identifiable divides between the homefront and the front lines is a thing of the past if it ever really existed at all. In the book “On Photography,” Sontag likened the camera to a firearm, writing, “one that’s as automated as possible, ready to spring.” If the camera is a firearm, then social media is a nuclear warhead. With growing instability and conflict on the rise all over the world, civilians will have to reckon with whether their voyeurism is just benign spectatorship or something closer to a type of participation that we are only just beginning to understand.

Author’s bio: Michael Jerome Plunkett is a writer from Long Island. He served in the Marine Corps, and after working in the financial industry for Fidelity Investments and Morgan Stanley for several years, began pursuing writing as a career. He leads the Patrol Base Abbate Book Club and is the host of the LitWar Podcast. 🐼



LCPL ROBERT ALEJANDRE, USMC

During Urban Advanced Naval Technologies exercise 2018, Marines with “Kilo” Co, 3rd Bn, 4th Marine, 1stMarDiv look at a smartphone with Beartooth radio capabilities, which allow them to talk, text and see teammates on a map without requiring cellular service or Wi-Fi, March 21, 2018.

Rosslyn, Va.

History Flight Marines Hike Across Virginia to Honor POW/MIA Awareness Day

SgtMaj Coleman “Rocky” Kinzer, USMC (Ret), center; SgtMaj Justin LeHew, USMC (Ret); and Ray Shinohara, a veteran Marine, gathered in front of the Marine Corps War Memorial with a group of Marines from Marine Barracks Washington, D.C., on POW/MIA Awareness Day, Sept. 15, 2023. Kinzer, LeHew and Shinohara had just completed a “History Hike” across Virginia to raise awareness for servicemembers who are missing in action (MIA) and to raise funds for History Flight, the nonprofit MIA recovery organization they work for. The hike started Sept. 3, 2023, in front of the D-Day memorial in Bedford, Va., LeHew’s father’s hometown. Their 300-mile journey took them along scenic Skyline Drive and through Shenandoah National Park and ended in northern Virginia, near the nation’s capital. The three Marines are no strangers to hiking for their cause; in 2022, they walked more than 3,000 miles



COURTESY OF SGTMAJ JUSTIN LEHEW

from Massachusetts to Oregon in the name of POW/MIA awareness. See the May 2023 issue of *Leatherneck* to read “The Long Road: Marines Walk from East Coast to West Coast to Raise Awareness, Money for MIA Recovery.”

Nancy S. Lichtman

Window Rock, Ariz.

GEICO Military helps 80 Young Marines Travel to Arizona for 2023 Navajo Code Talkers Day

GEICO Military donated \$2,500 to the Young Marines National Foundation, which helped underwrite a trip to Window Rock, Ariz., for National Navajo Code Talkers Day. From Aug. 12-14, more than 80 youth members of the Young Marines and 50 adults were present for the annual celebration of World War II veterans.

On Sunday, the Young Marines helped clean, pick up trash, and pull weeds at the Navajo Nation Veterans Memorial Park. The group then climbed to the outlook next to Window Rock and learned of the history and traditions of the park during a guided tour. On the same day, the group participated in the Navajo Code Talkers Parade. When they returned to the memorial, they laid a wreath at the site of the Code Talker Statue.

At the Navajo Zoo, the group again picked up trash and pulled weeds while learning about the many rescued desert animals. The team then linked up with a group of active-duty Marines from Camp Lejeune to tour the Navajo Museum and receive a briefing and blessing from a real Navajo Medicine Man, the son



COURTESY OF GINNY RICHARDSON PUBLIC RELATIONS

and nephew of two of the original Navajo Code Talkers.

“With GEICO Military’s help, our goal is to expand the Young Marines, so that youth members will gain the skills necessary to become great leaders and engaged, active citizens,” said Michael B. Kessler, chair of the board of directors of the Young Marines National Foundation.

Submitted by Andy Richardson



MICHELE COLLINS



MICHELE COLLINS

Aldie, Va.

MCA Tees Up Another Successful Fundraiser

The Marine Corps Association Foundation's 5th Annual 'Golf For The Marines' Tournament was held on Oct. 23, 2023, at The Club at Creighton Farms in Aldie, Va.

With 120 golfers and 19 sponsors participating, the Foundation raised nearly \$35,000 for its professional development programs for Marines.

The 18-hole scramble event started on a somber note with MCA Chairman of the Board Lieutenant General John A. Toolan, USMC (Ret), recognizing the 40th anniversary of the Beirut barracks bombing. On Oct. 23, 1983, 241 American servicemembers (220 Marines, 18 Sailors, and three soldiers) were killed when an Iranian-backed suicide bomber drove a truck full of explosives into a building that was the battalion headquarters and barracks for 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment.

The day concluded with an awards ceremony, which recognized the top three foursomes, longest drives, and closest to the pin players, as well as raffle winners. The group of Brigadier General John Thomas, USMC (Ret), Larry Fryer, Karl Schornagel and Pat Willis fired a first-place score of 54, including 10-under on the back nine of the par-72 course.

For Major Jacob Burton, USMC, it was a fun experience. Burton enlisted in 2011 and found out about the event while serving as a speech writer in the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps' office.

"They [MCA] put on some incredible events for the Marines," Burton said. "Already in the last six months I have gotten to go



STEVE COLLINS

to several dinners, [and] award ceremonies they put on ... It is a great opportunity for Marines to come out and be celebrated."

Andrew Mense, a Marine veteran and foundation donor, has played in the tournament since it moved to Creighton Farms in 2019.

"It's just giving back to the brotherhood, the fellow Marines," said Mense regarding why he supports MCA. "I got two buddies ... who wanted to participate and continue to be part of the Marine Corps. ... We're just trying to find a way to give back."

Kipp Hanley

"Corps Connections" highlights the places and events through which active-duty and veteran Marines connect with one another, honor the traditions of the Corps and recognize the achievements of their fellow leathernecks. We welcome submissions of photos from events like the ones featured here. Send them to: *Leatherneck Magazine*, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134, or email them to leatherneck@mca-marines.org. Submission does not guarantee publication, and we cannot guarantee the return of photos. 📷

A Self-Imposed Charter

Marines Take the Initiative to Record their Own Histories

By Kyle Watts

Marines bear the responsibility of honoring and preserving our heritage. We are instilled with the significance of our history from the moment we set foot on the yellow footprints. The qualities that define Marines and differentiate us from the rest of the military are derived from many timeless examples set across the past 250 years.

To capture the spirit of this heritage, organizations like the USMC History Division are charged with recording, preserving, safeguarding, and disseminating volumes on the cumulative experience of Marines. While these official histories magnificently document the Corps' achievements, the sheer volume of information available leaves the work incomplete.

Every Marine possesses a story worth telling. Individuals from each Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) create a unique slice of Marine Corps history, in many cases known only to those involved in that community. The stories from these niches energize and animate the details of an official history, describing not only what happened, but illuminating what it was like to be there. As time progresses, much of this history will only be passed on through individuals or groups who take it upon themselves to do so.

For one group of Marines representing an eliminated MOS, this self-imposed charter is not taken lightly. The veterans of the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association (VTA) are setting the example for other groups or individuals exploring options to preserve their own history.

The VTA launched its historical preservation efforts in 1998, even before the organization's incorporation. Volume one, issue one of the VTA's signature publication, "Sponson Box," was mailed out as a one-page document advertising an upcoming reunion for the 30th anniversary of the Tet Offensive. It listed the names of the tank officers killed in action in Vietnam from 1st and 3rd Tank Battalions.

The VTA began as a chapter of a broader organization, the Marine Corps



Members of the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association gathered for their most recent reunion in Colorado Springs, Colo., in September 2023. One hundred and sixty-two people attended the event. (Photo by Clayton Price)



Tankers Association (MCTA). At the time of the newsletter's publication, World War II or Korean War tankers filled out the MCTA. As the veterans from Vietnam neared retirement and watched their children grow families of their own, many found a renewed desire to connect with their buddies from the war. The first "Sponson Box" call went out and the group planted roots. In 1999, the USMC VTA was established as a non-profit organization.

The VTA eventually separated from

the MCTA as its own entity, allowing it the freedom to financially support its own activities and priorities. While many of the veterans retained membership with the MCTA, the new association flourished. Any Marine of any MOS who served with a tank or Ontos battalion in Vietnam was eligible to join. Membership peaked at over 500 members around 10 years after the association was established. Today, some 400 veterans retain VTA membership. These include tankers, mechanics, various support MOSs, and even several infantry Marines who did not serve directly under a tank battalion, but credit tanks with keeping them alive through their time in country.

VTA events focus on a structured effort and purpose, described in the association's motto: "Ensuring our legacy through reunion, renewal, and remembrance." Individual members passionately carry out the spirit of this creed through their financial support and avid participation in the group's events and historical programs. The VTA's methods of ensuring that legacy and preserving their history evolved significantly since the first



volume of the “Sponson Box” was mailed out 25 years ago.

“Sponson Box” remains the flagship publication of the VTA, and a hallmark of their historical program. Published four times a year, the magazine spans 48 pages with history, humor, association news and upcoming events. Individual Marines share their stories from Vietnam within its pages, affording them both a lasting place to see their work printed,

and an audience that will understand and respond to them in the following issue. Hundreds of stories, otherwise told only in conversation around a reunion table, have been recorded and are publicly available through the VTA website. Some Marines like Ben Cole have written numerous times for the “Sponson Box.” Cole served with Company A, 3rd Tank Battalion in Vietnam. He carried a camera throughout his time in combat and

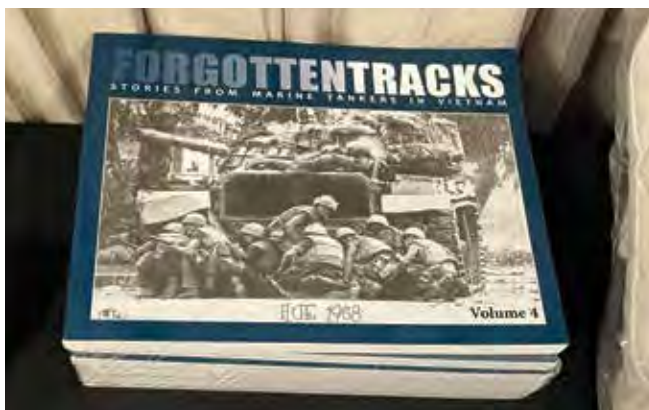
USMC VTA President John Wear, right, inspects an M48 “Patton” tank at Fort Benning, Ga., in 2018. (Photo courtesy of USMC VTA)

captured many stunning images. The newsletter provided a space for Cole to share some of his photographs with the people who would best relate to them, and explain the background stories.

Member stories from the “Sponson Box” were eventually clipped from the publication and reproduced as stand-alone books. So many writings existed from past issues that four full volumes were necessary to house them. Titled, “Forgotten Tracks: Stories from Marine Tankers in Vietnam,” each of the four books are currently included in the Library of Congress, the Texas Tech University Vietnam Center and Archive, and the Alfred M. Gray Marine Corps Research Center.

In 2014, the VTA added one of its most popular and widely recognized historical programs. A local news

Member stories from the VTA’s newsletter, the “Sponson Box,” are compiled into four volumes titled “Forgotten Tracks.” These books are currently housed in various collections, such as the Library of Congress.



KYLE WATTS



COURTESY OF NATIONAL MUSEUM OF MILITARY VEHICLES



Above: Peter Ritch, left, and John Wear at the 2015 reunion in Washington, D.C. Ritch served as a board member for the VTA and played a critical role in its history program. Ritch passed away in September 2021. (Photo by Richard Carmer)

Below left: Young Marines from the local Pikes Peak region joined VTA members at multiple points throughout the 2023 reunion, including serving as the honor guard at the farewell banquet on the final night of the gathering.

Above: Wally Young, center, and other VTA members had the opportunity to drive their beloved tanks once again in 2022 at the National Museum of Military Vehicles in Dubois, Wyo.



CLAYTON PRICE

agency attended the reunion that year in San Antonio, Texas, to record the stories of veterans from the area. The recordings grew in popularity and the agency included association members from other locations. From then on, the VTA hired a professional videographer to attend each reunion and expand their video library. At their most recent reunion in Colorado Springs, Colo., during September 2023, VTA members recorded an additional 17 interviews to be added to the collection. These included tankers and other Marines such as infantryman

Gil Hernandez. Hernandez served in Vietnam with Company G, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marines. He suffered severe wounds and was nearly killed while riding on a tank, and credits the tankers with saving his life. He is an active VTA member and has attended three reunions.

Even before the addition of interviews recorded in Colorado, the VTA YouTube channel boasts impressive numbers. As of September 2023, the channel contained 91 videos with more than 1,100 subscribers. Over 400,000 viewers from 40 different countries have spent more than

85,000 hours watching the interviews. The videos offer a unique glimpse inside the stories, allowing viewers to see the veteran in action, and hear the candid stories in his own words.

For the veterans who have no desire to write and do not wish to be on camera, VTA member Frank “Tree” Remkiewicz created a third venue for capturing their stories. In 2020, Remkiewicz recorded the first episode of the podcast, “Tracking Our History.”

“We’ve got over 30 podcast episodes now, and almost every one of these guys has never written a story or recorded a video,” said John Wear, the VTA president for the last 18 years. “Frank figured out that these guys know they can’t write or don’t want to, and that they don’t want to go on camera. But you get them on the telephone, and they can’t shut their mouth. All they need to do is talk.”

The expansive historical program maintained and operated by the VTA came about over a long period of time and through the tireless efforts of many VTA leaders. The commitment of one man, however, helped the project progress to its current extent. Peter Ritch, a former



COURTESY OF NATIONAL MUSEUM OF MILITARY VEHICLES

Above: VTA members and other reunion guests ride an M48 “Patton” tank at the National Museum of Military Vehicles in 2022.



RICHARD CARMER

Peter Ritch, far left, served as the interviewer behind the camera on numerous occasions, helping develop the impressive library of oral histories created and maintained by the VTA.

platoon commander with Company B, 3rd Tank Battalion during 1968 and 1969, took the lead for the VTA in organizing the historical program. He played a key role in curating “Sponson Box” stories for the four volumes of “Forgotten Tracks.” He initiated the video oral history program and coordinated its execution at each reunion. Sadly, Ritch passed away

in September 2021, but his impact on the program endures. His voice is heard from behind the camera as the interviewer in many videos, and he took part in a group recording in 2015, sharing his experience in a larger event.

An important piece of the legacy to be preserved by the VTA comes not just from being tankers, but from being Ma-

rines. Like many USMC veterans, VTA members hold their time in the Corps as a defining feature of their lives, and share that passion with younger generations. At the most recent reunion in Colorado, for example, youths from the local Young Marines organization joined in at numerous points. One evening, 15 Young Marines, ranging in age from 10 to 18, spent



RICHARD CARMER

Above: VTA member Bob Peavey conducts the “Fallen Heroes” presentation at the 2019 reunion in Seattle, Wash. At every reunion, Peavey creates a presentation detailing the life of a tanker killed in action in Vietnam. These stories include commentary from surviving family members, when possible, and leave a profound impression on the viewers at each occasion.



COURTESY OF USMC VTA

From left to right: Peter Ritch, Robert Skeels, Harold Riensche, and Mike Bolenbaugh discuss their viewpoints on the tank retriever ambush of March 24, 1969. For his heroic actions that day, Riensche received the Navy Cross.

The VTA reunion group gathered at the National Museum of Military Vehicles in Dubois, Wyo., in 2022.



COURTESY OF USMC VTA

several hours at the hotel reception area with VTA members asking what it was like to be a tanker and fight in Vietnam. The older veterans explained in many different ways what it meant to them to be a tanker, but more importantly, what it meant to wear the uniform of a United States Marine.

In 2018, the VTA held a small reunion at Fort Benning, Ga. (now Fort Moore), where the leadership sought ways to further preserve their legacy by giving back directly to the active-duty community. They met with staff members from the Marine Corps' armor schools and the leadership of the Marine detachment on the base. The groups combined efforts and set in motion a series of awards sponsored by the VTA. Honor graduates from the different schools would receive a formal recognition, named in honor of a decorated VTA member who served in the graduate's specific MOS. The staff of Tank System Mechanic class 2-19 presented the first of these awards on March 14, 2019.

The honor graduate received the inaugural Master Gunnery Sergeant Harold A. Riensche Award. Riensche, a VTA member who served as a tank mechanic, received the Navy Cross for his heroic actions in March 1969. His incredible one-man stand is told in detail in the September 2019 issue of *Leatherneck*. By applying names like

Riensche's to awards for the young graduates, the VTA hoped to cultivate a lasting relationship with the schoolhouse and set the stage for the future continuation of Marine tanker history. Regrettably, this line of effort came to

importance of passing the torch onto the generation of tankers who came after them.

"Most of the younger tanker veterans from Desert Storm or the Global War on Terror are still at the age where they are highly interested in their families and their careers," said John Wear. "The MCTA is recruiting and trying to get more interest in attending their reunions, but it is a struggle."

As younger veterans reach the age where reflection and communion take on a greater importance, groups like the MCTA will be present to give them a forum to reconnect. Hopefully, the path laid down by the VTA will both inspire these Marines to share their own stories, and show them how to successfully do so. For other groups of Marines who feel their stories have not been adequately told, the VTA's example proves that, while it may be tough, and it may take time and prodding, recording your own history will have a lasting impact.



CLAYTON PRICE

John Wear, left, and Bruce Van Apeldoorn Sr., an executive director on the VTA board, at the 2023 reunion in Colorado Springs, Colo.

an abrupt and definitive halt with the deactivation of all tank-related MOSs from the Marine Corps the following year.

With the removal of tanks from the Corps, an end date now exists in the lineage of Marine tankers. For the veterans of the VTA, the change highlights the significance of their work and the

Author's bio: Kyle Watts is the staff writer for Leatherneck. He served on active duty in the Marine Corps as a communications officer from 2009-2013. He is the 2019 winner of the Colonel Robert Debs Heintz Jr. Award for Marine Corps History. He lives in Richmond, Va., with his wife and three children.

The Vintage Veteran Barber of L.A.



Once known for his haircuts on board USS *Cleveland* (LPD-7) Marine veteran Esgar Reynega now owns a vintage barbershop in Los Angeles called Leathernecks.

Now 42, the veteran corporal who served as a mortarman in the Operation Iraqi Freedom era opened his shop in 2019 with the idea that it would be more than a barbershop that specializes in military haircuts. “My business philosophy is that my shop is a place where veterans feel at home when they’re here,” Reynega said.

Growing up in the San Fernando Valley, Reynega participated in Devil Pups as a boy and Junior NROTC in high school, and said, “Like most Marines my age, I was inspired to join the Marine Corps after 9/11.” He enlisted on an open contract and served in 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines, where they deployed to Hit and Al Qa’im in Iraq, as well as Egypt, Guam and Okinawa. After honorably separating in 2008, he worked as a medic, attended college, and considered a career in law enforcement. But Reynega missed the camaraderie of the Marine Corps.

“It was my wife who convinced me to use the haircutting skills I taught myself in the Corps to graduate from barber school and become an entrepreneur and be my own boss,” he said.

With his clientele ranging from recruiters and their teenage poolees to retired colonels in their 90s, Reynega’s shop is frequented by veterans of all military branches, but the ambiance is decidedly Gyrene. Leathernecks Barbershop houses a mini-museum of authentic Marine collectibles including an original Korean War-era guidon, a set of World War II-era bunks, and dozens of recruiting posters

going all the way back to the Spanish-American War.

Perhaps the most eye-catching item on display is a 10-by-7 foot Marine Corps flag from World War II, which cost more to frame than to purchase. His most expensive item is the famous 1917 World War I Howard Chandler Christy recruiting poster depicting a “Christy Girl” (a successor to the “Gibson Girl” illustrations) in dress blues with the slogan, “If You Want to Fight, Join the Marines.”

Reynega began his Marine Corps collection while working at a veterans’ homeless shelter in Hollywood, where he noticed a vintage movie poster for sale from the 1951 World War II film “Halls of Montezuma” for \$20. Since that first acquisition, Reynega has amassed hundreds of genuine Marine Corps items. “I have only about half of my collection on display in the shop. The rest is at home,” he says of his collection. He also has a

By Ty A. Ford

Esgar Reynega knew he was no ordinary “barracks barber.” While deployed on USS *Cleveland* (LPD-7) with the 13th MEU in 2005, his tonsorial skills were so renowned that not only did he cut more than 100 Marines’ hair regularly but his battalion commander flew weekly from the USS *Tarawa* (LHA-1) for a haircut. Reynega’s haircutting reputation was such that his commanding officer even jokingly asked him, “What are you going to call the barbershop you’re going to build someday?”

Eighteen years later, Leathernecks Barbershop in the Canoga Park district of Los Angeles is not only a shop where active and veteran L.A. Marines keep themselves looking sharp, but it’s also a veritable Devil Dog sanctuary showcasing Reynega’s amazing collection of historical Marine Corps memorabilia.

COURTESY OF ESGAR REYNEGA

LEATHERNECKS

BARBER SHOP

EST. 1775



Reynega's shop is frequented by veterans of all military branches, but the ambiance is decidedly Gyrene. Leathernecks Barbershop houses a mini-museum of authentic Marine collectibles.



Esgar Reynega served as a mortarman during Operation Iraqi Freedom and left the Corps as a corporal in 2008. (Photos courtesy of Esgar Reynega)



Below: During his Marine Corps service, Esgar Reynega deployed with 2/1 to Hit and Al Qa'im in Iraq.



COURTESY OF ESGAR REYNEGA



COURTESY OF ESGAR REYNEGA

Adorned with vintage barber chairs (above) and Marine Corps memorabilia, from World War II and before, Leathernecks has become a hot spot for Marines since opening in 2019.



COURTESY OF ESGAR REYNEGA

The author's dog, Buck, sits on one of the WW II-era bunkbeds in the barbershop.



COURTESY OF ESGAR REYNEGA

Navy ship door in his business office, an authentic Zodiac inflatable boat, vintage copies of *Leatherneck*, and a recently acquired Vietnam-era recruiting poster of near-billboard size that he plans to adorn the entire back wall of the shop.

Cpl Reynega has always been skilled at finding whatever he is looking for. One of his Gunnys joked, “Only you could find ice in Egypt,” when he did exactly that while on a deployment, to relieve Marines’ swollen feet. But Reynega’s collection is far from complete, and he scours websites and flea markets constantly for heirlooms for his ever-growing menagerie.

“What interests me most are Marine Corps historical items from World War II and earlier. My goal is to collect an original of every Marine Corps recruiting poster ever made. I have around 200 so far.” He’s always on the lookout for rarities like signed items by the legendary Lieutenant General Lewis B. “Chesty” Puller and Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone, the latter of which he recently narrowly lost an online auction for a signed letter.

Besides the Marine Corps memorabilia, all of the furnishings at Leathernecks are authentic relics. “All of my barber chairs are at least 100 years old that have been restored. I have an antique cash register and a saloon bar that are also over 100 years old,” he said of the old West tavern furnishings that serve beverages to all customers with a cut. Reynega, who is also a competitive shooter, woodworker, and artist, designed the barbershop logo himself, inspired by the blackjack and the crossed-rifles insignia of 2/1 and prominently displayed on the storefront.

Reynega estimates that 90 percent of his barbershop patrons are either active-duty, veterans, or retired military, and that an equal percentage of his clients maintain military regulation haircuts. A few of his clients faithfully get a haircut every week, just as they did in their Marine Corps days. All of the barbers at Leathernecks are former Marines, and, through word of mouth, Leathernecks’ clientele has grown to include civilians and even celebrities like actor J.D. Pardo and Cooking Channel celebrity chef Brad Miller.

After business hours, Leathernecks Barbershop has grown to become a gathering place for area Marines. “We sometimes use the shop as a meeting place for our detachment of the Marine Corps League. We’ve hosted holiday parties and fundraisers for disabled veterans here in the barbershop,” Reynega said of the MCL’s Los Angeles West Valley Detachment No. 1490 of which he is a founding member.

“I want my barbershop to be part of the veteran community in the Valley,” Reynega said. “It’s not just a business for me. I want to give back to veterans. Vets don’t trust just anybody, and I want my shop to be a place of comfort for them, a place where they feel at home.” Judging by his loyal following, for many Los Angeles Marines, Leathernecks Barbershop is just that place.

Author’s bio: Ty A. Ford was a Mustang Marine who served at Camp Fallujah as a judge advocate during Operation Iraqi Freedom. He currently works as a litigation attorney defending Los Angeles Police Department officers in civil lawsuits.



COURTESY OF ESGAR REYNEGA



COURTESY OF ESGAR REYNEGA

For Esgar Reynega, Leathernecks is not just a business, but a haven for military veterans of all generations.



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A MARSOC CRITICAL SKILLS OPERATOR

By Mac Caltrider

It's a few minutes after 4 a.m. when Marine Staff Sergeant Steven McCall rolls out of bed. His alarm isn't set to go off for several minutes, but his body is accustomed to the early morning wakeups. He sets the alarm on his phone out of habit. McCall ambles to the bathroom, shaves, and brushes his teeth. He quietly gets dressed without turning the bedroom light on, so as not to wake his half-sleeping wife. It's a kind gesture, but she's used to the early mornings. They've been happening for 13 years. McCall has been waking up before dawn since he first enlisted in the Marine Corps in 2010. He joined as an infantryman when he was 18. Since then, he's deployed all over the world from Afghanistan to

Somalia. But he's spent the majority of his career working along the coast of North Carolina at Camp Lejeune and its satellite facilities.

Camp Lejeune—a sprawling 156,000-acre plot of coastal swamps and long-leaf pine forests—is home to the venerated 2nd Marine Division. McCall spent his first decade in the military assigned to the division's 8th Marine Regiment. But Lejeune and its satellite facilities are also home to an elite unit: the Marine Raider Regiment. It's there, among the revered amphibious warfighters, that McCall now spends his time.

It's a cool 52 degrees this morning, but McCall knows the crisp air will soon give way to temperatures in the mid-70s.

He throws a hoodie on for his drive to work and tosses his 60-pound pack in the backseat of his truck. In it, he's got everything he'll need for the day's work. McCall packed the night before, like all of the Critical Skills Operators (CSOs) in his team did. Unlike during McCall's time in the infantry, there was no packing list for the upcoming training cycle.

"They're not children," McCall said. "At this point in their careers, CSOs should know what they're going to need. If there is something special for a particular training event, they're told ahead of time. There's no need to micromanage here."

For those Marines who prove themselves worthy of serving in the Raider



SSGT ROBERT STORM, USMC

Left: Members of the 1st Marine Special Operations Battalion practice boarding and searching ships. Below: An explosive ordnance disposal technician with Marine Forces Special Operations Command prepares to safely reduce an improvised explosive device during a training event on June 17, 2022.



SGT BRENNAN PRIEST, USMC

A Marine with the 3rd Marine Raider Bn performs close-quarters battle training at Eglin Range, Fla., May 22, 2018. Marine Raiders work in small teams in remote locations with little guidance, requiring intense and rigorous training.



SRA JOSEPH PICK, USAF

battalion, there's a little more room for autonomy. There is no handholding in the world of special operations—and for good reason. Most of the missions given to Marine Raiders require small teams of CSOs to thrive on their own in remote corners of the globe with minimal guidance. Micromanagement during training only hinders the Marines' ability to excel where others can't.

Since their official inception in 2006, members of Marine Special Operations Command (MARSOC) have deployed more than 300 times to over 40 countries

and executed myriad complex missions. Marine Raiders have been called upon to conduct foreign internal defense, counterinsurgency, direct action, special reconnaissance, maritime interdiction and counterterrorism operations. In short, they do it all. But what separates Raiders from their special operations peers who hail from branches of the military? According to MARSOC plankowner Clint Trial, it comes down to one factor. Unlike special operations soldiers, Sailors, and airmen, all CSOs are Marines first, operators second.

“What you see in CSOs are the qualities you see in all Marines, but amplified tremendously,” Trial said. “The same aggressive, no-fail mindset instilled in all Marines on training day one of bootcamp shines brightest among CSOs. These guys never do anything half-assed.”

Trial adds that CSOs aren't just particularly aggressive or gung-ho—they're also cognitively gifted and intellectually capable of thinking outside the box to solve a problem. They can analyze rapidly evolving situations and consistently respond with workable solutions.

“If you give them a task—no matter how daunting or challenging—they will get it done. No matter what,” said Trial.

That no-fail Raider mentality is something Trial is intimately familiar with.

In 2019, Trial was operating in Afghanistan’s Nangarhar Province along the Pakistan border as part of a Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) special missions unit. The small team was composed of members from every branch of the U.S. military, and whose job it was to hunt high-value targets of both the Islamic State and the Taliban. While navigating through the country’s rocky terrain, Trial triggered an improvised explosive device. The blast severed both of his legs. While Trial lay in the rocky Afghan soil, hemorrhaging deadly amounts of blood, he fought to remain conscious. With his life in limbo, Trial helped coordinate a response over the radio. His actions after the explosion exemplified the grit and no-quit attitude Marine Raiders have built their reputation around.

Trial may have epitomized the spiritus invictus of Marine Raiders as recently as a few years ago, but that tradition has passed through generations of Raiders. The elite Marines trace their lineage back

to the very first official special operations unit in American history: the Marine Raiders of World War II.

When the Empire of Japan attacked the United States naval base at Pearl Harbor in December of 1941, it set the wheels of history into motion. The brazen attack became the catalyst that launched the

CSOs aren’t just particularly aggressive or gung-ho—they’re also cognitively gifted and intellectually capable of thinking outside the box to solve a problem.

United States into WW II and let the Marine Corps off its leash.

Following the attack, President Franklin D. Roosevelt directed the U.S. military to create a group of highly specialized troops similar to British Commandos. As a highly adaptable amphibious fighting force that already had a reputation for being consistently reliable, the Marine Corps was the obvious choice for where

the experimental new commandos should come from. However, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Thomas Holcomb, was not keen on designating a select few Marines as “elite.” To Holcomb, the entire branch was already considered as such. But when the Pacific Fleet commander, Admiral Chester Nimitz, seconded the President’s request, Holcomb capitulated. In February 1942, he ordered two battalions of specially trained Marines to be formed. Holcomb dubbed the new commandos “Raiders” two months before the Army established their own elite light infantrymen known as Rangers. While the two branches formed similar units almost simultaneously, the Raiders were the first to test their mettle against America’s enemies.

The 1st and 2nd Marine Raider battalions were among the first American troops to go on the offensive against the Japanese. Less than six months after forming, men of the 1st Raider Battalion—led by Lieutenant Colonel Merritt “Red Mike” Edson—landed on the island of Tulagi and fought a vicious 24-hour battle against the Japanese. The Raiders emerged victorious, suffering 45 Marines killed in action while killing more than



SGT SEAN J. BERRY, USMC

This Special Operations Command Marine provides security support of a key leadership engagement operation during Weapons and Tactics Instructor course 2-19 at Yuma Proving Ground, Ariz., April 11, 2019.



CPL BRENNAN PRIEST, USMC

While acting as a host nation military member, a special operations Marine clears a building during a RAVEN unit readiness exercise in Nashville, Tenn., April 30, 2021. RAVEN is a training exercise held to evaluate a special operations company prior to deployment.

300 enemy troops. A few days later and more than 1,000 miles away, the 2nd Marine Raider Battalion—commanded by Major Evans Carlson—used small inflatable boats launched from submarines to conduct a nighttime raid against Makin atoll in the Gilbert Islands. In spite of poor weather and stiff Japanese resistance, the Raiders destroyed several Japanese boats and inflicted heavy casualties.

Notwithstanding their early successes, the island hopping campaign in the Pacific ultimately required more conventional Marines with little need for a commando-style special operations force. So, in February of 1944, the Raider battalions were disbanded, and the men dispersed to units across the Corps. The former Raiders went on to fight in every major battle in the Pacific, spanning the top of Iwo Jima's Mount Suribachi to Okinawa's Shuri castle.

Although the need for Raiders dissipated as the Pacific devolved into total war, the Marines' venture into special operations was not in vain. The Raiders proved the value of highly trained warfighters capable of carrying out missions beyond the scope of conventional infantry. It also showed the United States that Marines make exceptional special operators—a fact that directly contributed to the creation of MARSOC six decades later.

By the time McCall pulls onto MARSOC's private compound aboard Marine installation Stone Bay, the early morning darkness has given way to dawn. When he steps out of his truck, he



During a company training event in Jacksonville, N.C., Marine Raiders refine their marksmanship techniques while firing the M2 .50-caliber heavy machine gun. (Photo by Cpl Brennan Priest, USMC)

hears the familiar hum of an unmanned aerial vehicle circling overhead. Marines who work with small, unmanned aircraft systems (sUAS) are there testing new systems most mornings. After all, it's that kind of integration with cutting-edge technology that some Marines believe separates Raiders from the rest of SOCOM.

"CSOs carry out traditional special operations missions, but they have the capacity to conduct cyber operations in ways conventional units can't. Cyber operations are emerging as one of the

things we do better [than other SOF]," McCall said.

But today isn't about cyber warfare or experimental unmanned aircraft. Today, McCall's eight-man team is sharpening their close quarters battle (CQB) skills. Room-clearing is a perishable skill each of the CSOs first learned in the infantry but have since gone on to perfect as Raiders.

"Everyone loves CQB. It's fun and it's always relevant," McCall said.

The members of McCall's team have practiced the ins and outs of fighting in



CPL BRENNAN PRIEST, USMC

A critical skills operator patrols with explosive ordnance disposal technicians with Marine Forces Special Operations Command and Air Force Special Operations Command during a training event, June 24, 2022. The EOD primer tests all aspects of a technician's knowledge and expertise needed to perform in the field.

urban terrain at every level. They've practiced CQB as individuals and progressed to working as a team, complete with an array of attached enablers. CSOs even perfect the art of CQB when they're only a small part of much larger operations. But for today, the training is about bringing it back to the basics.

In preparation, McCall's Marines have already drawn their weapons, ammunition and equipment. Here at the MARSOC compound, even something as simple as taking weapons out of the armory is a bit different. McCall delegates specific jobs for each member of his team in order to prepare for the day's training. One Marine draws ammunition, another checks out vehicles, and another oversees the preparation of explosives. For the Marine who draws the team's weapons from the armory, McCall has very specific directions.

"Go get all of the guns out of the armory. When I say *all the guns*, I don't mean all the guns you think we need. I mean all of our weapons out of the armory."

McCall feels the need to specify what he means when he says, "all the guns," because a slack-man—usually the junior CSO in his team—might overthink the broad directions. Slack-man is a Recon term leftover from MARSOC's early days, when it was virtually indistinguishable from Force Reconnaissance.

When Special Operations Command

(SOCOM) was established in the 1980s, every branch was invited to the table to contribute something to the new command. The Army, Navy, and Air Force all volunteered their most elite troops. The Marine Corps was the only holdout.

"The attitude was, 'We're already special. So no, we don't need a seat at your 'special operations' table,' " said Trial, who used his experience as a Recon Marine to help establish MARSOC.

**"The attitude was,
'We're already special.
So no, we don't need a
seat at your 'special
operations' table.' "**

—Clint Trial

It was the same attitude Holcomb voiced when Roosevelt asked for Marine commandos in 1941—all Marines are elite and creating a specialized unit is redundant. But by remaining unaffiliated with SOCOM, the Corps' most elite troops—Recon Marines—missed out on SOCOM missions and SOCOM funding for the next two decades.

This left the responsibility to remain a highly capable force up to Recon Marines themselves. With little financial support, Recon continued to produce some of the

most disciplined, lethal and versatile warfighters in the entire U.S. military.

Rather than becoming a crippling blow to the Reconnaissance community, that lack of access to SOCOM funds and high-profile missions ended up fueling them to work harder. It put a chip on the shoulders of Recon Marines, driving them to continuously and consistently do more with less.

"We took it upon ourselves to maintain the same high standards that a Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) shooter would," said Trial. "We might be poor, but we're going to do way more with way less."

By refusing to allow a lack of funding and real-world missions to dilute the quality of Marine Recon, the Corps' best troops were ready to step-up following the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

In the wake of 9/11, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld asked Lieutenant General Dell Dailey, then the commander of JSOC, to create a contingent of Marines to bolster JSOC's capabilities. The result was the creation of an experimental unit known as Marine Detachment One.

The detachment—known as MARDET and more often as DET One—was created on June 19, 2003. The bulk of DET One consisted of hand-picked Force Recon Marines, most of whom were also school-trained scout snipers. The rest of the 86-man unit was composed of Navy corpsmen and Marines with intel, signal, fires,

Multi-purpose canine handlers practice fast-roping with canines aboard Stone Bay, N.C., Oct. 1, 2014, to prepare themselves and their canines for new areas of operation and unexpected situations. (Photo by Cpl Steven Fox, USMC)

and communications backgrounds. In September 2004, after completing pre-deployment training alongside Naval Special Warfare Group One, DET One deployed to Iraq. It was there, among the dusty urban corridors that defined Operation Iraqi Freedom, that the experimental Marines made a name for themselves.

Relying on their deep bench of experienced scout snipers, DET One dominated the battlefield while conducting combat operations near Al Najaf, Iraq. Then, in November, DET One advanced north to fight in the notoriously deadly Operation Phantom Fury. It was there, in the dusty blood-soaked streets of Fallujah that DET One caught the attention of the entire special operations community.

“It was pretty apparent to everyone across the branches—special forces, Rangers, SEALs, PJs, and combat controllers—that there’s a new kid on the block and he’s not f---ing around,” said Trial.

Following their victories in Iraq, DET One returned to the United States and immediately set to preparing for the next deployment. However, like their WW II Raider forefathers, DET One was disbanded after less than two years. The Corps’ needed to make room for their permanent contribution to SOCOM: Marine Special Operations Command (MARSOC).

MARSOC’s creation got off to a bumpy start. For one, the unit was stood up before there was an established pipeline or even a selection process. Candidates consisted primarily of qualified Recon Marines, yet MARSOC still lacked the necessary assessment and selection hurdle that ensures other branches’ special operations units remain of the highest order. It was a factor that irked Trial from MARSOC’s inception.

“I liken the creation of MARSOC to the most badass Corvette in the world, only it doesn’t have a paint job,” Trial said. “You take the ’vette onto the dragstrip, get it going 200 miles an hour and while it’s going 200 you try and give it a paint job. That’s what MARSOC felt like in the early stages.”

In spite of no selection process and a training course getting put together on the fly, MARSOC was generally viewed



A Marine Raider from MARSOC K-9 unit conducts over-the-beach-bag (OTB) training at Naval Air Station Key West, Nov. 29, 2018.

DANETTE B. SILVERS, USN

favorably within the Marine Corps. It brought much of the same skillset to the table as Marine Recon, yet it wasn't restricted by the Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU). In the early days of Operation Enduring Freedom, Recon Marines felt underutilized because they were tethered to the MEU commander. In 2006, as a new special operations entity, MARSOC was given more room to flex its muscles.

Since their creation, Marine Raiders have deployed around the globe where they've pushed the fight against a variety of enemies. Raiders have hunted the Taliban in Afghanistan, defeated ISIS in Iraq, and killed terrorists across Africa. In their short tenure as a modern special operations force, Marine Raiders have earned more than a dozen medals for valor and show no signs of slowing down.

"MARSOC is still growing and evolving. It's a new asset within SOCOM and within the American military," said Trial.

Being new to SOCOM is something McCall keeps in the back of his head while he oversees the day's training. Marine Raiders are aware of their status as the most junior members of SOCOM. Because of that, they're eager to show the community what Marines are capable of. But the desire to prove themselves is still rooted in a mastery of the basics. With that in mind, McCall has every member of his team prepare their own explosives for the day's training.

One member of his team previously attended the five-week Master Assaulter Course where Marines learn the art of blowing things up by hand. It's that Marine's responsibility to oversee the configuring of charges, but McCall tasks each Marine to do the work themselves.

"There's a slightly greater risk tolerance here," McCall said. "Safety remains paramount, but the nature of our job requires us to accept more risk than the units these Raiders came from before they were CSOs."

The Master Assaulter supervises as each Marine prepares 14-inch strip-charges meant to dismantle deadbolts and doorknobs. Other Marines build roller charges intended to blow doors completely off their hinges. When they

During an urban operations raid at Camp Lejeune, Nov. 17, 2016, Marines with 3rd Marine Raider Bn move a wounded Marine to safety. Marines attached to the 24th MEU from 3rd Bn, 6th Marines, 2ndMarDiv teamed with MARSOC for a joint raid to strengthen operability between two types of forces.

Marine Raiders are aware of their status as the most junior members of SOCOM. Because of that, they're eager to show the community what Marines are capable of. But the desire to prove themselves is still rooted in a mastery of the basics.

finish configuring their explosives, the team begins rehearsals.

"We probably do five or six dry runs before we load up and go live," McCall said. "That might sound like training wheels, but you lose valuable learning opportunities if you don't take advantage of rehearsals."

The MARSOC compound at Stone Bay has its own shoot house: a structure specifically designed for firing live ammunition without Marines having to worry about bullets ricocheting or punching through walls. The shoot house is also equipped with an overhead catwalk, where instructors and teammates can observe the teams as they work. Watching from overhead is akin to professional athletes critiquing game film. It allows



CPL CHRISTOPHER A. MENDOZA, USMC



Above: A Marine practices giving orders during a building clearing scenario at the Gulfport Combat Readiness Training Center, Oct. 27, 2016. (Photo by SSgt Michael Battles, USMC)

Left: During an urban operation raid at Camp Lejeune, a Marine Raider practices holding security. MARSOC continues to train Marine Raiders to execute complex missions and work independently from command as a cohesive team.

CPL CHRISTOPHER A. MENDOZA, USMC

Marines to see how things should and shouldn't be done, drastically reducing the learning curve.

After the Raiders finish dry runs and test the charges they built on various doors and barriers, they load their weapons and prepare to go live. They progress slowly, building on each aspect of their training from individual actions to fighting as a team. They clear rooms, practice communicating through the deafening gunfire, and simulate taking casualties.

The only time they pause to unload is when they take a "casualty." While McCall keeps the training as realistic as he can, the risk of a negligent discharge outweighs any benefit of forgoing a pause to unload weapons. Once the mock-casualty is cared for, the Raiders reload their weapons and finish clearing the shoot house.

They have the shoot house all to them-

selves, giving the Raiders every opportunity to perfect their CQB skills unimpeded by having to share training space with other units. It's a relatively easy day for the CSOs, whose days are often filled with more complex training. Some days they practice helocasting out of UH-53s into the Atlantic Ocean or teaching a partner force that doesn't speak English how to conduct counterterrorism operations. As Raiders, the elite Marines need to be prepared for any mission.

While McCall's team is sharpening its CQB skills, other Raiders are operating in the shadows around the world. Like all Marines, Raiders remain ready to deploy anywhere, tackle any mission, and win any fight. They're the Corps' most highly trained Marines and now part of America's special operations spear tip. But it's not a specific kind of training that

makes the Raiders such valuable assets to SOCOM. Ask any CSO what separates them from the rest of the pack, and you will get the same answer; it's the warrior foundation they're built upon.

"Raiders hold the highest standards of physical and mental fitness," Trial said. "But their success comes from that Marine Corps ethos. That same intangible thing that all Marines experience at some point in their careers; the idea that they are underdogs who can—and will—do more with less. And on top of that, they'll do it better."

Editor's note: For operational security, some names have been changed.

Author's bio: Mac Caltrider enlisted in the Marine Corps in 2009 and served with 2nd Battalion, 8th Marines until 2014. Caltrider has since written for various online and print publications, including Coffee or Die Magazine, Free Range American, and OAF Nation. He was the 2023 recipient of the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation's Master Sergeant Tom Bartlett Award. He is also the author of "Double Knot," a forthcoming memoir about his service in Afghanistan. Caltrider currently teaches history in Baltimore, Md. 🇺🇸

Marines at MCAGCC Test Emerging Technologies

Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC) has emerged as a critical center for innovation within the Marine Corps. The largest Marine Corps training facility of its kind, MCAGCC has become an essential testing ground for emerging technologies.

In concert with the Office of Naval Research (ONR), Marines with Tactical Training and Exercise Control Group (TTECG), Marine Air Ground Task Force

Training Command, MCAGCC tested a quadruped robotic platform referred to as the “robotic goat,” on Sept. 9, 2023. TTECG and ONR test fired an M72 Light Anti-tank Weapon rocket launcher from the robotic goat. The robotic goat can carry various sensors or weapon systems that would otherwise be carried by a Marine.

“Instead of having a Marine handle the weapon system, manipulate the safeties, we could put a remote trigger mechanism on it that allowed it to all be done

remotely,” said 1st Lieutenant Aaron Safadi, officer in charge of the emerging technology integration section, TTECG. “The Marine could be behind cover and concealment, the weapon system could go forward, and the Marine could manipulate the safeties from a safe place while allowing that weapon system to get closer to its target.”

MCAGCC is the largest Marine Corps base with an abundance of ranges that allows for robotic platforms, augmented reality and artificial intelligence systems to be tested. Additionally, MCAGCC hosts several large-scale exercises every year, bringing in an array of personnel to gain insight on how to utilize these robotics.

According to Safadi, MCAGCC’s suitability for testing emerging technology lies in its permissive live-fire environment and its wealth of knowledge resources. The presence of TTECG at MCAGCC, combined with the continuous influx of diverse training units each year, provides a unique opportunity to observe and study the standard operating procedures and tactics, techniques and procedures of much of the Marine Corps. This wealth of experience and knowledge makes MCAGCC the ideal location for testing and refining new military technology.

Large-scale exercises, such as Marine Air-Ground Task Force Warfighting Exercise (MWX), give Marines the opportunity to test emerging technology in an unscripted force-on-force exercise. This enables Marines to see how to implement new technology, and how to counter it as well. The robotic platforms being tested at MWX range from small, unmanned aircraft systems to the HDT Hunter Wolf, a 2,200-pound unmanned vehicle capable of carrying various sensors or heavy weaponry into the battlespace.

Marines at MCAGCC have also begun implementing virtual realities to assist in training. The Battle Simulation Center

Marines with Tactical Training and Exercise Control Group, Marine Air Ground Task Force Training Command, and scientists with the Office of Naval Research conduct a proof-of-concept range for a robotic goat at Marine Corps Air-Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, Calif., on Sept. 9, 2023. The goat can carry different payloads and, in this instance, was being tested for its ability to acquire and engage targets with the M72 Light Anti-Tank Weapon.



CPL ANDREW BRAY, USMC

Above: Marines with 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines, 1stMarDiv, and civilian contractors operating a HDT Hunter WOLF with a 30mm auto cannon monitor a valley for enemy movements during Marine Air Ground Task Force Warfighting Exercise 2-23 at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, Calif., on Feb. 23, 2023.



LCPL JUSTIN J. MARTY, USMC



SGT RACHAELANNE WOODWARD, USMC

Gen Eric M. Smith, right, then-Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, fits a 3D printed cast to the arm of LCpl Micah Mosley, a network administrator from 1st MLG, 1stMarDiv, at Camp Pendleton, Calif., on Aug. 17, 2023.

has developed virtual training technology in conjunction with ONR to train joint tactical air controllers and forward air controllers in a more safe, economic and realistic environment.

Force Design 2030 takes on an important role in the ongoing testing and integration of robotics at the MCAGCC. Testing emerging technologies, such as robotics, aligns with Force Design 2030's objectives by providing a platform for evaluating the practicality and effectiveness of these robotics systems for use in the battlefields of the future.

Cpl Andrew Bray, USMC

Editor's note: To learn more about ONR, read "Office of Naval Research: Preparing the Marine Corps for Battlefields of the Future," in the July 2023 magazine in the Leatherneck archives.

Advanced Manufacturing is Revolutionizing Corps' Logistics

As the Marine Corps continues to execute its strategic shift toward the Indo-Pacific, the importance of overcoming the logistical challenges of the modern battlefield is becoming increasingly evident. At the vanguard of this transformative landscape, Marine Corps Systems Command's Advanced Manufacturing Systems team, or AMS team, is innovating to overcome the logistical challenges of the modern battlefield. The AMS team is leading the charge to field cutting-edge solutions to ensure the warfighter has

access to mission-critical equipment and replacement parts without having to rely on traditional supply lines.

According to Matt Audette, AMS program analyst, having the ability to essentially 3D print key components on the battlefield could revolutionize how the Corps thinks about logistics.

"In a nutshell, additive manufacturing is a game-changer for the Marine Corps. It allows us to repair equipment and innovate solutions right on the frontline. With its smaller footprint and easy-to-use technology, we can construct essential components right on the battlefield, making us nimbler and more responsive in any combat scenario," he noted.

When speaking to the AMS team, there appears to be consensus that this innovative approach to manufacturing enables rapid delivery of mission-critical components to the front lines, with multiple subject matter experts underscoring the significance of augmenting the traditional supply chain.

"Parts break—that's the reality of the battlefield," said Robert Davies, AMS team lead. "You used to have two simple choices: bring the parts or order the parts. Our advanced manufacturing solutions rewrite that playbook. Now, we can actually manufacture essential components right in the combat zone."

While it might be tempting to view advanced manufacturing as a futuristic endeavor still on the horizon, recent successes suggest otherwise. Marines are now

empowered to create stand-alone items such as hand tools, jigs, table models, training aids and even vehicle parts.

In June 2023, Navy and Marine engineers demonstrated the technology's real-world potential by successfully 3D-printing a medical cast aboard a Marine Corps Osprey in mid-flight. Similar successes to those achieved with the medical cast are seen in the creation of vehicle parts, with the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV) serving as a prime example.

We're taking what our guiding documents say about modern-day battlefield foraging and creating "a real capability to do so with repair parts," said Audette. "With our 3D printers and CNC mills, we can now craft these parts right where the fight is happening. What's more, our allies possess the same industrial capabilities as we find here in the U.S. This also means that whether we're in Darwin, the Philippines, or Japan, we can harness local expertise and resources to ensure our equipment remains mission-ready without relying on traditional supply chains."

Dr. Kristin Holzworth, chief scientist on the AMS team, explains that this capability becomes increasingly vital as the Corps continues its strategic shift toward the Indo-Pacific.

"Large-scale advanced manufacturing offers a solution to complement our limited assets. What makes it truly advantageous is its adaptability. Unlike traditional manufacturing, where we conform to one build, with 3D printing, we tailor



CPL MEGAN OZAKI, USMC

LtCol Jonathan Landers, battalion commander of 2nd Battalion, 8th Marines, 2ndMarDiv, awards a Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal to HM3 Clay Campbell, a field medical technician with 2/8, at Camp Lejeune, N.C., on Sept. 15, 2023. Campbell was recognized for providing life-saving medical care to a young woman who was having a seizure.

each print to the specific mission’s requirements,” she noted.

Citing “major end items” such as aircraft engines and propellers, General Eric M. Smith, Commandant of the Marine Corps, recently told the Senate Armed Services Committee, “We have to do some very creative work to do additive manufacturing and 3D printing forward,” stressing the importance of taking pressure off the lines that come from the United States through contested logistics areas.

According to Audette, “The advantage of additive manufacturing is its accessibility and rapid training. Unlike traditional machining, which requires months of training and involves large equipment, additive manufacturing’s smaller machines have a lower learning curve. Many junior Marines already have experience with 3D printers, enabling us to quickly train them in a matter of days, enhancing readiness and problem-solving capabilities.”

It is important to understand, however, that this capability is not meant to replace industry partnerships; rather, it serves as a crucial alternative for the warfighter in the heat of battle who cannot afford to wait for traditional resupply channels to fill a request.

“Advanced manufacturing isn’t about replacing traditional production lines; it’s about supplementing them,” said

Davies. “We’re not here to mass-produce hundreds of components in an hour—that’s for dedicated facilities. What we offer is the ability to produce a limited number of key components on-site when they’re urgently needed, all while respecting intellectual property laws. This shortens the supply chain and enables rapid response, whether that means getting Marines into the fight quicker or extracting them more safely.”

As the Marine Corps intensifies its focus on global littorals, particularly within the intricate geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific, advanced manufacturing emerges as a crucial enabler for sustaining combat effectiveness. This technological leap is more than a contingency; it’s a strategic imperative. By melding innovation with real-world application, the Corps isn’t just gearing up for future conflicts—they’re actively shaping the battle space of tomorrow.

Johannes Schmidt, Marine Corps Systems Command

Navy Corpsman Saves a Life While on Liberty

On Sept. 15, 2023, hospital corpsman 3rd class Clay Campbell, a Navy corpsman with 2nd Battalion, 8th Marines, 2nd Marine Division, was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal for his outstanding bravery while on liberty.

Campbell was out with friends at Wrightsville Beach, N.C., during Independence Day weekend when he noticed something unusual.

“We were out in the water when I noticed a woman behaving strangely,” Campbell explained. “She began fluttering and lifting her arm as if pumping her fist.”

Campbell quickly recognized the woman was having a seizure and rushed her to shore, where he immediately began to perform life-saving procedures.

“I wasn’t thinking, I was just reacting,” said Campbell. “I put her in the recovery position and did a modified jaw thrust maneuver.”

After what felt like a lifetime, emergency services arrived to take the woman to a local hospital. Campbell was thankful for his training as a corpsman, which allowed him to maintain his composure and provide aid to the young woman, ultimately saving her life.

“I’m grateful for the skills that I have learned,” said Campbell. “You never know when they will come in handy.”

Campbell’s dedication and strength of service is exemplified by his heroic actions on that summer day. His quick response and professionalism go above and beyond the call of duty, demonstrating his initiative and expertise as a corpsman.

LCpl Joshua Kumakaw, USMC



LEATHERNECK

MAGAZINE OF THE MARINES

WRITING CONTEST OPEN TO ALL MARINES

PRIZES:

1st Place: \$1,000 + an engraved plaque

2nd Place: \$750 + an engraved plaque

3rd Place: \$500 + an engraved plaque

TOPIC:

Leadership – The history of the Corps is filled with legendary examples of outstanding leaders and today's Marines maintain that tradition of excellence. Drawing from our storied history, or from your own experience:

Describe the single most important thing you have learned about leading Marines, or Describe an outstanding Marine Corps leader and what makes him or her successful

DETAILS:

- Maximum 2,000 words
- Must include contact information: grade, name, unit, SNCOIC/OIC, author's bio, mailing address, email and phone number.
- Submit electronically to leatherneck@mca-marines.org in Microsoft Word Format

SUBMISSIONS ACCEPTED: 1 Jan - 31 March 2024



Sponsored By Colonel Charles Michaels, USMC (Ret)



LtGen Robert R. Ruark, USMC (Ret), CEO of the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society (above), works to ensure that the organization continues to provide relief for Marines and Sailors when they need it most. After a devastating typhoon struck Guam in late May 2023 (top), the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society provided \$1.4 million in financial aid to military families in Guam. The relief fund included grants and interest-free loans for food, rent, utilities and other essential needs (right). (Photos courtesy of NMCRS)



Support Without a Stigma

NMCRS Helps Marines, Sailors Get Back on Their Feet

By Jacqueline Jedrych

The island territory of Guam was rocked by a devastating storm in late May 2023. Typhoon Mawar was the strongest in over 20 years. The storm caught the population off-guard—it intensified unusually fast, leaving inhabitants of the island little chance to stock up on supplies or reinforce structures.

“There are no words. I’ve never seen anything like it ... for shelter in place, we can’t go anywhere. So the hope is that wherever you’re at is a safe location,” said Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society Director Karen Fahland.

Naval Base Guam hosts more than 21,000 military servicemembers and their families. Virtually all living on the

island were touched by Typhoon Mawar. As the storm raged for over two weeks, houses and offices flooded, homes were destroyed, and nearly the entire island lost power. Even after the storm subsided, thousands of Navy and Marine families lacked access to food, water, internet, power, or even safe shelter.

As soon as their offices were cleaned and power was restored, the NMCRS got to work distributing automatic \$700 immediate aid grants to victims of the storm. Though this covered expenses for many families, the organization continued to distribute aid in the forms of grants, clothing donations, and childcare. Throughout June and July 2023, the NMCRS distributed over \$1.4 million in financial assistance to military families on Guam.

“I can’t applaud my team any more than I have for making do with what we have, and that’s basically what the community did,” said Fahland. “It’s unfortunate, yes, it’s uncomfortable, yes, it’s inconvenient, yes, but no one was seriously injured that I know of, no one was killed, and that’s a blessing.”

Though no one was seriously injured, families were still devastated by the storm, so NMCRS Guam is working to find creative ways to meet their needs.

“There are people who have lost everything. So in my thrift shop I might not be able to help everyone in a monetary fashion, but we are trying to donate excess inventory from our thrift shop to local homeless shelters or the shelters that supported the people through the storm.”



COURTESY OF NMCRS

Marine and Navy servicemembers and their families gather to receive NMCRS assistance in Guam after Typhoon Mawar hit the island in May 2023.

History and Mission of the NMCRS

Founded in 1904, the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society impacts the lives of millions of Marine and Navy families every year. The funds needed to create the NMCRS came from the proceeds of an Army-Navy football game. At the beginning, the society existed to support Marine and Navy widows, but as it evolved, it grew to address a variety of needs of active-duty and retired servicemembers. The NMCRS now has more than 80 locations across the globe.

Current needs for Sailors, Marines, and their families are acute: rising inflation and increases in costs for housing, gas, and moving expenses all exacerbate any hardships that they encounter. The guiding principles of NMCRS strive to address these needs in a compassionate, nonjudgmental manner that upholds dignity.

“Our mission today is to provide financial relief directly to Sailors and Marines when they need it most,” said Lieutenant General Robert R. Ruark, USMC (Ret), CEO of NMCRS.

The NMCRS provides interest-free loans and grants for essential needs including food, rent, utilities, vehicle repairs, disaster relief and any other miscellaneous expenses. They also offer scholarships to increase access to edu-

cational opportunities. In addition to financial assistance, NMCRS provides free budget classes, a visiting nurse program for families with newborn babies, and on-base thrift stores. He hopes that these programs help destigmatize asking for help in the military.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, many young servicemembers who had limited financial knowledge resorted to payday lender programs that had high interest rates. Though it got them the immediate money they needed, they lost more money in the long run.

“A few years ago, we had all these payday lenders as soon as you go outside the

In addition to financial assistance, NMCRS provides free budget classes, a visiting nurse program for families with newborn babies, and on-base thrift stores. He [Ruark] hopes that these programs help destigmatize asking for help in the military.

Thousands of Navy and Marine families lacked access to food, water, internet, power and safe shelter after Typhoon Mawar hit Guam.



COURTESY OF NMCRS



NAVY-MARINE CORPS RELIEF SOCIETY

“Sometimes bad things just happen to good people and we want to make sure that the clients that come through the doors at the NMCRS office know that what they say and what they do in our spaces is confidential.”

—Lauren Tella, Branch Director, Quantico, Va.

[base] gate,” explained Ruark. “Before payday hits, they get all these Marines and Sailors in there, and they would give them money right on the spot, and then they would charge anywhere from 35% to 195% interest, which is ridiculous. That’s one of the reasons we came up with the quick assist loans. Just come to us, we’ll get you an interest-free loan, you won’t have to worry about these astronomical interest rates.”

The quick assist loans have become one of the most popular services provided by NMCRS.

“Any Sailor or Marine can come in up to five times and receive a quick assist loan of up to \$1,000, normally within an hour, to provide whatever support that they need,” explained Ruark.

As a retired Marine, LtGen Ruark knows firsthand about the needs of servicemembers. He is a relatively new addition to the NMCRS team, beginning his tenure as 25th president

Around 90% of the NMCRS workforce consists of volunteers. Many of the organization’s current employees began their work as volunteers. In 2022, 179,000 clients were provided with assistance, with the majority of requested relief going toward basic living expenses.

and CEO in late October 2022. During Ruark’s 36-year Marine Corps career, he worked in command, staff and joint positions. He became a leader and developed a passion for helping other Marines. After his retirement, he turned to the nonprofit sector. He served as CEO of the Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation, the nation’s oldest and largest provider of need-based scholarships to military children. Ruark and his team grew the client base, scholarship students, average award amounts, outreach, and endowment, allowing them to reach a wider group of students. His experience in supporting Marines is an asset to his role in the organization, and he hopes to apply similar growth principles to the NMCRS as well.

According to LtGen Ruark, NMCRS’ visiting nurse program is very popular—

trained nurses work with new and expectant mothers to address common questions including prenatal, infant, pediatric concerns, chronic disease education, and general health and wellness. Expectant mothers are also encouraged to attend the Budget4Baby classes, where they can learn about how to meet their financial goals while supporting their families. They also receive a baby blanket and \$50 gift card.

The NMCRS also runs thrift stores on bases across the world. Marine and Navy families can purchase gently used baby and child items, clothing for all ages, housewares, accessories, books and media, sports gear, linens, toys and games, seasonal items, and even Navy and Marine Corps uniforms and accessories for a low price.

Additionally, the NMCRS recognizes the financial burden that attending school can be for some families. To address this, they offer no-interest loans and scholarships to servicemembers and their families. The scholarship applications open every spring.

In order to keep all this running, at the heart of the organization are the volunteers. They have about 3,000 volunteers, who comprise over 90% of the workforce. Most of the current full-time staff members started as volunteers. Many are military spouses and frequently continue working with the organization in different locations as their family moves stations.

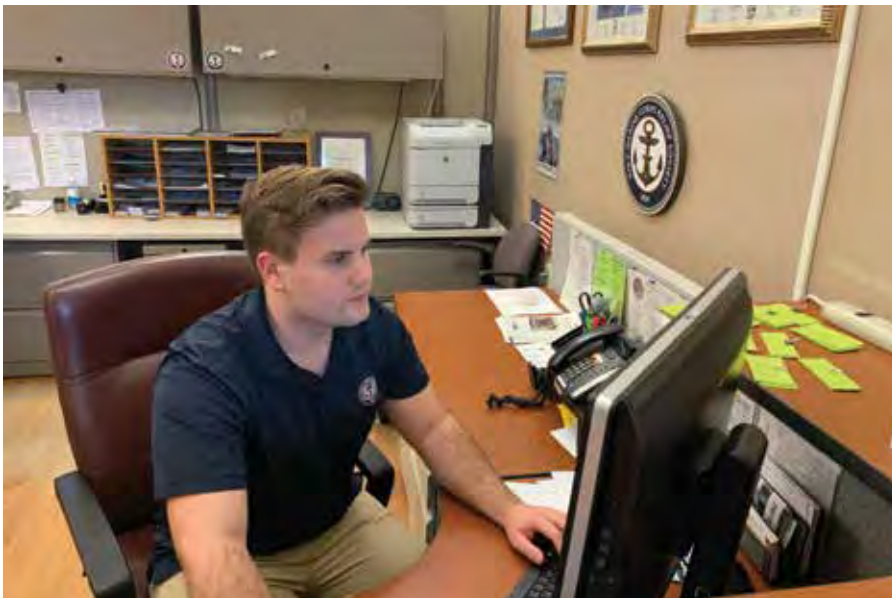
“Because of the volunteers, we are efficient and effective,” said Ruark.

In 2022, the NMCRS provided 179,000 clients with assistance—including \$45.9 million in loans and grants. The \$1.4 million to those affected by Typhoon Mawar is only a small portion of the \$19.6 million distributed in the first half of 2023.

The majority of assistance goes to provide for basic living expenses such as rent, mortgage payments, groceries, and utilities. This support is especially critical for young servicemembers and their families: in 2023, Sailors and Marines at levels E-5 and below received 86% of the total support. Over 95% of servicemembers who received support are active duty.



COURTESY OF NMCRS



COURTESY OF NMCRS



PFC DRAKE NICKELS, USMC

The NMCRS thrift shop at MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., is available to all active-duty or retired Sailors and Marines who need items for themselves or their families.

Stories from NMCRS

Quantico, Va., branch director Lauren Tella said that the NMCRS process of distributing aid is unique. They strive to make every step confidential, in order to allow clients to share what they want to without fear of repercussion.

“There’s a lot of stigma around finances and financial emergencies,” Tella said. “Sometimes bad things just happen to good people and we want to make sure that the clients that come through the doors at the NMCRS office know that what they say and what they do in our spaces is confidential.”

Tella said she believes that her role in the process is to listen. It takes a lot of confidence to ask for help, and she strives to offer aid without judgment. She recognizes that people only come to the NMCRS when they need help or have a problem, so it is crucial to understand why the problem happened and work through solutions. For example, if the root of the problem is a lack of fiscal confidence, she will help them budget and provide resources for banking. This addresses the root of the problem, not just the symptoms.

Clients that the NMCRS help face a

large range of problems. In addition to helping in extreme cases such as house fires, they help servicemembers with everyday challenges as well.

Guam Office Director Fahland said that clients are often shocked at how easy the process of getting aid is. She described a retired Marine living on the island who came to their office. He had trouble walking down the stairs in their building, so a NMCRS volunteer came outside to help him fill out the form. When they distributed his check, which helped to address the majority of his financial burdens, he started crying from relief.

“He looked at me and said, ‘That’s all I have to do?’,” said Fahland.

The Future of NMCRS

LtGen Ruark said that in the future, the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society hopes to expand the reach of their aid. He is actively working on recruiting more volunteers to support the mission and work in the office, as well as holding events to increase donation numbers. Additionally, he hopes to break down barriers and stigmas that Sailors and Marines face when asking for help.

The organization also seeks to increase

outreach. For many servicemembers, the only time they hear about NMCRS is during boot camp, so they aim to work with more organizations to continue presenting themselves as an option throughout the career of every Sailor and Marine. Tella mentioned the central locations of their offices as a key aspect to remind servicemembers of their options with NMCRS.

“One of the benefits we have with 52 locations on the naval bases that include the Marine Corps is that we are there,” explained Ruark.

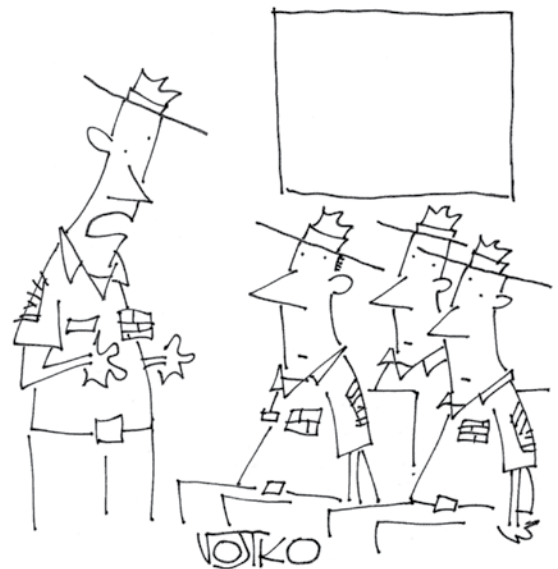
Throughout their more than a century of existence, the NMCRS has been dedicated to meeting Sailors and Marines when they are in need. To volunteer or receive aid from NMCRS, find your nearest office at www.nmcrcs.org/find-a-location-index.

Author’s bio: Jacqueline Jedrych is a law student at American University Washington College of Law. She formerly served as intern for Leatherneck and editor-in-chief of The Tower. Her work has also appeared in publications by The Council on Foreign Relations and The Stimson Center. 🇺🇸

Leatherneck Laffs



"I named him Rifle since he's my best friend."

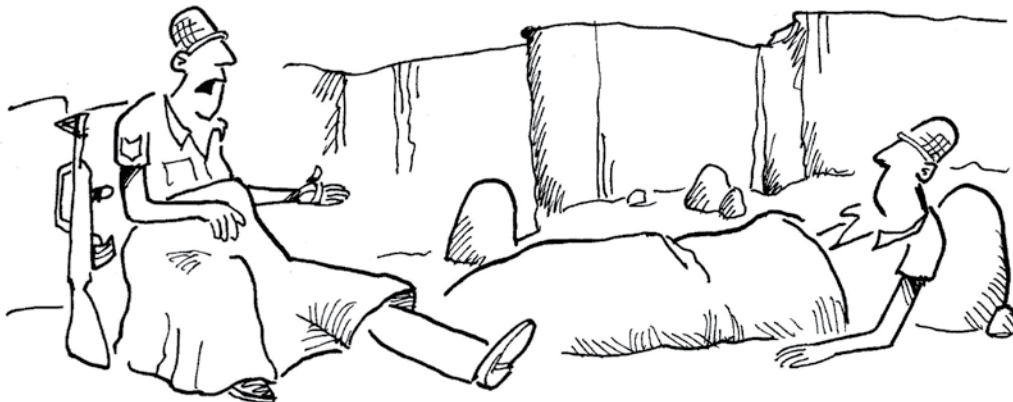




"Sir, I just realized that I still have my dad's car keys!"



"Yes, sir, of course I can come up with a few volunteers."



"How can I get any sleep with all your snoring?"

Capt Ted Williams, left, and then-Maj John Glenn, right, on the K-3 runway circa 1953. The two Marines were stationed at the same air base during the Korean War.



COURTESY OF SKIP ROTHROCK

THE WINGMEN

By Adam Lazarus

Editor's note: This story was adapted from the new book "The Wingmen," by Adam Lazarus. The book, published by Kensington Books, shares the story of the 50-year friendship between John Glenn, a pioneer in space exploration, and baseball legend Ted Williams. The two Marine Corps fighter pilots met during the Korean War. "The Wingmen" is available for purchase at Amazon: <https://amzn.to/3MrkNe4>. To hear our interview with the book's author, tune in to the MCA podcast, Scuttlebutt, <https://www.mca-marines.org/scuttlebutt/>

By way of California, Boston Red Sox outfielder Ted Williams landed at Oahu in Hawaii on Jan. 29, 1953. He checked into the Bachelor Officer Quarters "B" at Barbers Point Naval Air Station, signed autographs and took photos with fans around the island, then relaxed at one of Honolulu's many gorgeous beaches. The following day he and a few dozen fellow Marine and Navy personnel boarded a Martin JRM Mars

flying boat. The transport stopped briefly for fuel at the naval air station in Guam, then at the naval air station in Atsugi, Japan, and again at the naval air station in Itami. On Feb. 3, one last transport finally brought Williams to Korea.

As part of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, Williams was attached to Marine Aircraft Group-33, stationed at Yongil-Man Airfield in the lower half of the south Korean city, Pohang. Imperial Japan had

built the airstrip during its occupation of the region prior to World War II.

One senior officer impressed Williams during his first few weeks in Korea.

"So I get into K-3, which was our base over there, and we're having a big squadron meeting, you know," Williams remembered 45 years later. "And there's two guys standing over there, maybe 60 to 70 feet. And I look and say, 'That looks like the right stuff to me.' ... One of them was John Glenn."

Major Glenn arrived at K-3 one day after Williams. Given his yearning to serve and an impressive résumé including two Distinguished Flying Crosses, Glenn became a valuable asset to the squadron. Immediately assigned to the post of assistant operations officer, he soon



COURTESY OF PATRICK CANAN

Then-Maj John Glenn sits among his fellow officers in the K-3 officers' club in 1953. Before becoming a history-making astronaut, Glenn was regarded as one of the greatest flight instructors by many of the young lieutenants he taught.



COURTESY OF JOHN H. GLENN ARCHIVES AT THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Then-Maj John Glenn poses next to his bullet-riddled Panther jet. Glenn was an accomplished Marine aviator, having been awarded two Distinguished Flying Crosses during World War II.



COURTESY OF MARVIN KONER ARCHIVE

Pictured here in Korea in the spring of 1953, Marine Corps Reserve pilot and star Boston Red Sox outfielder Capt Ted Williams rarely talked baseball in the squadron.

took over as operations officer, a vital job that he had previously performed with the “Hellions” in Guam and the “Death Rattlers” at El Toro.

By the middle of February, the reluctant, fatalistic reservist and the eager, optimistic active-duty regular Marine had each settled into the same spot for the foreseeable future. And from the outset neither knew what to make of the other.

“When Glenn joined the squadron I

didn’t know who he was,” Williams remembered. “None of us knew much about him.”

“I didn’t know what to expect from him,” Glenn said. “I didn’t know whether he would be a guy who only talked about baseball.”

Both men’s initial assessments were wrong: Williams avoided the topic of baseball, and several members of Marine Fighter Squadron (VMF) 311

The reluctant, fatalistic reservist and the eager, optimistic active-duty regular Marine ... from the outset neither knew what to make of the other.



Ted Williams, left, and John Glenn, right, share a laugh at the Wang Theatre in Boston, Mass., 1988, decades after their military service.

JIM BOURG FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES; COURTESY OF "THE WINGMEN"

Several officers playfully chided Williams when he arrived. Every pilot, including John Glenn, took to calling the lifetime .347 hitter “Bush,” short for “bush leaguer” or well below acceptable standards.

him in China after World War II. And Major Julian Craigmiles, a pilot in the photo squadron, had served with Glenn in the Marshall Islands as part of Marine Observation Squadron 155. While at K-3, Craigmiles told others of Glenn’s leadership and abilities in the cockpit, but also his subtle humor.

“When we were going overseas on an aircraft carrier, we were sunbathing on the deck,” Craigmiles remembered about their time together in World War II. “Glenn remarked that the voyage reminded him of the fellow who fell off the Empire State Building; and as he was passing each window, called out ‘Everything is all right so far!’”

Not everyone knew Glenn’s reputation when he first arrived. Many of the Reserve pilots at K-3, like Ted Williams, had been inactive for several years before war broke out. Aside from brief refresher courses and retraining stops, they had not been near a Navy or Marine air base since WW II.

To Marine Corps Reserve pilot Robert “Woody” Woodbury Jr., a first lieutenant in VMF-115, Glenn “was just a nonentity; just another Marine pilot.”

No one would say the same about Captain Williams. The tall baseball star and national pitcher for Chesterfield cigarettes, Thom McAn dress shoes and Johnson’s Car-Plate Auto Wax stood out like a sore thumb.

Several officers playfully chided Williams when he arrived. Every pilot, including John Glenn, took to calling the lifetime .347 hitter “Bush,” short for “bush leaguer” or well below acceptable standards.

“Let’s see now, Bush, in 1948 you batted .269, didn’t you?” one might say.

“No, no, you’re cheating ole Bush,” another might add. “He hit .270 that year.”

Williams would laugh, and reply, “Look it up, fellows, it’s in the book.”



John Glenn, left, and Ted Williams chat in the officers’ mess during the Korean War, building a friendship that would last 50 years.

COURTESY OF MARVIN KONER ARCHIVE

knew quite a bit about Glenn. Upon hearing of Glenn’s arrival to K-3, a pair of second lieutenants approached Lieutenant Colonel Art Moran. They urged the squadron’s executive officer to ensure that Glenn was assigned to 311, not 115. Moran asked why.

“He is the greatest guy and the best instructor ever to have been seen in

the Navy’s flight school,” replied one of the two young lieutenants who had likely earned their wings at the naval air station in Corpus Christi, where Glenn instructed pilots from 1949 to 1951.

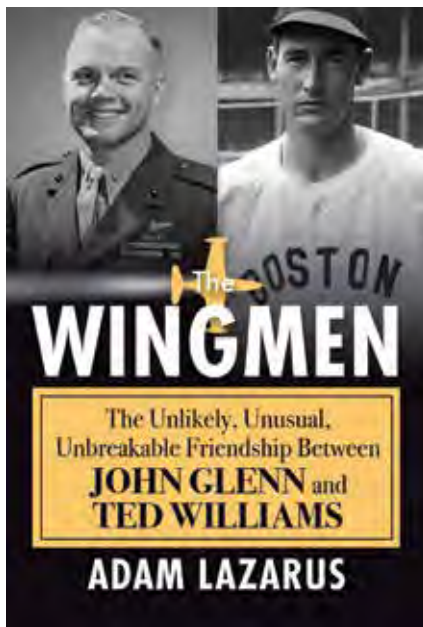
A few of the more seasoned officers already flying missions for 311 knew Glenn as well. Majors James G. Fox and Robert Sabot had served alongside

Even Lieutenant Colonel Moran teased him, saying Williams was safer flying jets over Communist North Korea than he was “dodging all those pop-bottles” at Fenway Park.

And a fake memo that circulated among 311 pilots, written in response to the CO’s real memo, joked about whether or not Williams “could get to first base with Marilyn Monroe. ... DiMaggio didn’t.” The starlet had recently told a Hollywood reporter that she and Joltin’ Joe were “just good friends.”

Still, there was no denying that K-3’s newest resident was a bona fide national celebrity. Marines who wrote home to their wives and children mentioned just seeing Williams around the base. On the day he joined 311, Glenn wrote a letter to his wife, Annie. Among the many details about the base, his quarters, and familiar officers, Glenn told her, “Ted Williams is in [my] outfit. Lives in next hut. Met him—seems OK.”

Over the next few months, Glenn and Williams would develop a bond that ultimately transcended time, distance and vastly different worldviews. Their respect and admiration for one another, however, never wavered.



“As far as I’m concerned, Ted only batted .406 for the Red Sox [in 1941],” Glenn said about Williams at an event 45 years later. “He batted 1,000 for the Marine Corps and the United States.”

“That man right there, I’m telling ya,” Williams said, that same night, pointing to Glenn. “Nobody admires you more

than I do, John. Nobody ... so when he made his trip around the Earth, boy, I was proud to know you, John, I can tell you that.”

“And I wish you all the luck in the world,” he continued. “My greatest regret is that you are not a Republican.”

Author’s bio: Adam Lazarus is the author of nonfiction books featuring iconic and compelling figures in American history. His previous titles include “Chasing Greatness: Johnny Miller, Arnold Palmer, and the Miracle at Oakmont”; “Super Bowl Monday: The New York Giants, The Buffalo Bills, and Super Bowl XXV”; “Best of Rivals: Joe Montana, Steve Young, and the Inside Story Behind The NFL’s Greatest Quarterback Controversy”; and “Hail to the Redskins: Gibbs, the Diesel, the Hogs, and the Glory Days of D.C.’s Football Dynasty.” He received a bachelor’s degree in English from Kenyon College in 2004 and a master’s degree in professional writing from Carnegie Mellon University in 2006, specializing in journalism. 🐼

THANK YOU

The Marine Corps Association would like to extend our sincere appreciation to the following companies for sponsoring awards that we present at Marine Corps Recruit Depots Parris Island and San Diego throughout the year.



Sponsor of the High Shooter Awards



Sponsor of the Chesty Puller Honor Graduate Awards at Parris Island



Sponsor of the High PFT Awards at San Diego



Sponsor of the Chesty Puller Honor Graduate Awards at San Diego and the High PFT Awards at Parris Island

Thank you to these companies for their ongoing support and to all of our supporters for helping us recognize Marines!

To find out how your company can support our award programs, please call 703-640-0169 or email l.mitchell@mca-marines.org



SEA STORY OF THE MONTH

A Cookie-less Christmas

As a recruit at Parris Island, with Platoon 395, "Quebec" Company from Nov. 19, 1963, to Feb. 6, 1964, we, celebrated Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's on "the island."

Christmas Eve in 1963 was on a Tuesday, and our senior drill instructor, Staff Sergeant Gregor, had duty. He gave us his "Scrooge" speech about us not being invited to his island, and that he didn't want to see any tears or hear any sobs and to consider this another evening and day tomorrow. He then ordered us to hang a sock at the end of our racks. Thinking this was just another bout of DI humor, I grabbed the closest sock available from my laundry bag.

In the morning when we stood at the end of our racks, we were told Merry Christmas, and instructed to check our socks. Someone had placed pieces of candy, "Pogey Bait," in our socks. I received a couple pieces of jelly orange slices. No coal!

One of the recruits received a tin of cookies from home. The DIs told him he would get it on graduation day. As a house mouse, his responsibility was to clean the DI hut, so he had to look at the tin every day. Oh, the agony! When he finally received the tin, someone, maybe "the Grinch," had already opened it, and, surprise, surprise, the tin was now empty!

Sgt Tony Costa
USMC, 1963-1967
Pennsville, N.J.

Hand Over the Candy, Private

To be clear, we were not cowardly Marines, we were Platoon 3002, the honor platoon of our series. The first three days of boot camp we had two tough drill instructors who picked on us and were really physical. God or someone intervened on our behalf, and the fourth day we got new DIs and became a new series including 3001, 3002 and 3003.

Staff Sergeant Leland Keist and Sergeant Joe Thurmond took over on the fourth day and were tough but civil, and by the end of our training, we learned to love these men for what they were trying to do and did for us. They made us Marines. But they were slick operators. Maybe a month into our training when we needed our second haircut, they marched us to get our first payment in cash. Then we marched to the barber shop. On arrival they told us to form a line and go into the barber shop, get a haircut, and fall behind the shop in formation, and then they added that they would go run an errand or two and be back to pick us up.

Man, for the first time in weeks, it seemed like we had become "trusted recruits." It made us feel pretty good. One day, as we entered the shop, we saw there were four candy machines in the hallway. We had cash and no one was looking. About 50 of the 75 future Marines emptied those four machines. The last 25 did not get any. I had maybe a dozen of my favorites in my pockets that I dreamed of stashing in my footlocker as did about 49 others.

After our haircuts, we exited the shop to await the return of our DIs and were shocked to find that they were waiting for us with a big green blanket spread out on the ground. They instructed us that we had been told that candy was bad for Marines, and to empty our pockets of the contraband candy. It was quite a pile of candy as you can imagine. They said, "OK Marines, since candy is bad for you, should we just take this home to our children?"

We all agreed in unison that this would be a great idea.

The 50 Marines were disappointed, and the other 25 were glad they still had all their money.

That was 66 years ago. I'm now a life member of the Marine Corps Leage in Naples, Fla., where I now spend every winter. We meet for a great luncheon each Tuesday at noon. And on one of those fine days, a large table in the back of the room was stacked high with, you guessed it, candy bars. That was the day I got my candy back.

I cherish those two short years of Marine life. The Marine Corps was good to me and for me. I've been back twice for a 50- and 60-year reunions with members of Plt 3002. On organizing the 50-year reunion, I tried hard to get both our DIs to attend but ended up locating and talking to both of their wives and family members. They both had died of Agent Orange-related issues. It would have been so great if I could have met with them. They were both great men and great Marines.

Cpl Jack Lahrman
Monticello, Ind.

Sew What?

It was June 1957 at MCRD Parris Island, and on the first day of training immediately after the physical, our senior drill instructor, Technical Sergeant Bowman, called his 86 recruits together.

"Men your pants are too long. You have to hem pants so that the bottoms just brush the top of your boots."

He directed a man to stand on a footlocker and used him to show us how to turn the bottoms of our trouser under to create the proper length.

"Get your sewing kit, take a needle and thread it with the dark green thread. Then sew one spot on either side, and another at the front and rear of the pant leg. Do that on each pant leg, then use those pants to set the length on the other pair. Sew the second pair, and you are through. You have two hours. Turn to!"

Bowman stepped back and stood with his three junior DIs to watch. Causy, my fire team leader, looked at me and said, "Sewing kit, needle, thread, sew? What the hell! Do you know how to do what he just told you?"

I did. Reared by a single mother, I learned how to darn worn socks and replace buttons among other small sewing chores. I located my sewing kit and held it up so the others would know what they were looking for. I removed the needle and held it up, then selected the proper thread. The others who watched me followed suit. Those who could not see me followed the ones who could. The DIs watched with great interest, and I have often wondered if they would

have had to draft one of their wives if I had not been there to show the men how to sew their pants.

The first snag was threading the needle. I am nearsighted so I had to remove my glasses and see the eye of the needle easily. After I threaded my needle, Causy pushed his needle at me, and I threaded his. Needles were everywhere, but I couldn't thread all 86, so I stopped and retrieved the threader that came with the kit and demonstrated threading a needle with the device and the men followed suit. Then they watched as I did what Bowman ordered. When I finished, I helped the others.

The two hours were not quite up when Bowman observed that we were finished. He ordered us to attention at the foot of the bunks, then walked the length of the squad bay, checking everyone's pants.

"Well done, men! Now if

Private Whitten's quilting bee is finished, we can take a 10-minute head break then fall out for chow. Turn to!"

Causy punched my shoulder, "What the hell is a quilting bee?"

"It's when women gather around a large blanket and sew patches of cloth onto it, making a quilt. You do know what a quilt is, right?"

"Yes, but I didn't know how they were made. Man! What a surprise!"

I laughed, amazed that Bowman had any notion of what a quilting bee might be.

Cpl David O. Whitten
USMCR, 1957-1963
Sullivan's Island, S.C.

To Report, or Not Report

In the spring of 1958, I was a barely 18-year-old two stripe corporal (before the days of the crossed rifles) at Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, standing my first duty noncommissioned officer watch. All went

well; liberty call, chow, "Taps," etc. After midnight, I was stretched out on the cot in the office when two MPs arrived with a rather drunken Marine. They asked if he belonged to our company, and I replied yes. He was the Marine who slept next to me in the squad bay. He worked in the company supply and replaced my 782 gear for inspection with nice, clean gear. I got him up to the second deck and in his rack and returned to the duty NCO office. That was when my big problem started.

I knew it should be logged in the duty NCO logbook, but that meant that Corporal Nord would be standing in front of the first sergeant tomorrow morning, which was not good. If I didn't log in and the MPs sent in a report and I hadn't, I would be the one standing in front of the first sergeant. It was now about 1 a.m., and I had until

reveille before I would log anything else, barring something important. For me it was the most important decision I had to make in my life. I didn't sleep at all the rest of the night as I tried to make a decision. Well, I didn't log it in and neither did the MPs and all ended well. I like to think of it as Marines taking care of their own.

Rich Basile
USMC, 1957-1960
Belvidere, N.J.

Do you have any interesting stories from your time in the Corps that will give our readers a good chuckle? We would love to hear them. Write them down (500 words or less) and send them to: Briesa Koch, *Leatherneck* Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134, or email them to Leatherneck@mca-marines.org. We offer \$25 or a one-year MCA membership for the "Sea Story of the Month." 🦁

Are You Ready?



Mike & Kay Ross

Albert E. Shockey Detachment #960
Kokomo, Indiana



Tribe@MCLeague.org
www.mclnational.org

Toys For Tots • Color Guard • Young Marines
Funeral Honors • Preserve Traditions



PFC SAM J. BUSHEMI, USMC

Four Marines strum a tune on Japanese “shamisens” picked up on Okinawa, April 1945. From the left: Sgt Lansing E. Williams, PFC Oscar Torres, PFC Charles C. Rogal and Cpl John E. Polis.



SGT GEORGE B. KRESS, USMC

PFC Lloyd E. Ryan wears the uniform of a Japanese Sailor who was captured at Namur in the Marshall Islands.



USMC

Not even wounded and bandaged hands could dampen this Marine rifleman’s excitement at finding a “real Samurai saber” while fighting on Betio.



SGT LARRY PORTER, USMC

Sgt Lee B. Powell, a movie actor who starred in “The Lone Ranger” and was assigned to the 18th Marines during WW II, shows off a souvenir sign he found on Saipan.



SGT JAMES L. BURNS, USMC

Sgt David E. Hudson, assigned to Company B, 18th Marines, displays an impressive collection of Japanese weapons and flags that were collected during the Battle of Tarawa.



CPL HARVEY WILLIAMS, USMC

An exhausted Marine holds up a rack of appropriated Japanese medals found on Eniwetok.

Keepsakes From Hell

Marine Mementos from the Pacific War

By Geoffrey W. Roecker

Americans in World War II have been described as “fighting tourists”—armed with personal cameras and journals to record their experiences, often defying regulations. Collecting battlefield “souvenirs” was, on the surface, an extension of this behavior: young people far from home for the first time in their lives could be expected to pick up strange objects out of curiosity or to show the folks back home. Others collected items as personal trophies: symbols of individual prowess in battle, strength over adversaries, or perseverance under impossible circumstances. And there were those whose collections served to dehumanize the enemy—as with the documented cases of teeth taken from dead Japanese soldiers or decorated skulls for sale. While most of the Marines in the following photos seem quite pleased with their finds, it was not universally accepted; Eugene Sledge was famously vocal in his disapproval. “The men gloated over, compared, and often swapped their prizes,” he wrote in his memoir. “It was a brutal, ghastly ritual the likes of which have occurred since

ancient times on battlefields where antagonists have possessed a profound mutual hatred.”

Some souvenirs turned out to have military or monetary value, but most were treasured for the story behind the acquisition. For this reason, battlefield trophies are some of the most emotionally charged artifacts of the Pacific War. The passage of time adds layers of meaning: these are not mere curios but intensely personal items representing a connection between victors and vanquished.

Author’s note: Those interested in returning war trophies are encouraged to contact the Obon Society. <https://obon.society.org/eng/>

Editor’s note: All photos are courtesy of the National Archives Still Picture Branch.

Author’s bio: Geoffrey W. Roecker, a frequent contributor to Leatherneck, is the author of “Leaving Mac Behind: The Lost Marines of Guadalcanal.” His research into missing WW II-era personnel is available at www.missingmarines.com.





Left: After an all-night watch, two Marines rest under Japanese umbrellas and use a Japanese alarm clock to wake up on time.

Below: Sgt Ferman H. Dixon, a photographer with 2nd Marine Division, rescues a mannequin, already marked USMC, from the ruins of Garapan, Saipan.

SGT BOB COOKE, USMC



CPL EARL C. WILBERT, USMC

Right: The American appetite for souvenirs was a running joke, even during battle. This sign was put up in Garapan, Saipan, before the town was cleared of Japanese resistance, making it clear that collecting souvenirs was not allowed this time around.



CPL ARTHUR P. NELSON, USMC



CPL GEORGE A. MATTON, USMC

Two young Marines pose with children's toys found on Tinian, July 1944.



CPL GEORGE A. MATTON, USMC

While searching through the remains of a destroyed building in Tinian, these two Marines find baseball equipment underneath the debris.



PVT LAWRENCE M. ASHMAN, USMC

The remnants of a Japanese bomber shot down by the "O'Halloran Battery" at Henderson Field, Guadalcanal.



CPL ANGUS ROBERTSON, USMC

A Marine sets captured Japanese flags out to dry during "washing day" on Saipan.



SGT HARVEY WILLIAMS, USMC

Above: Cpl Charles J. Edwards found and fixed a Japanese-owned sidecar motorcycle during the Battle for Saipan.

Right: CDR James D. Mabry, left, the medical officer at U.S. Fleet Hospital 107, Noumea, New Caledonia, inspects the saber that wounded Pvt James H. Spiers, second from the right, during a fight with a Japanese officer on Saipan.



SGT VIRGIL M. HANKS, USMC



SGT ANDREW ZURICK, USMC

Above: A Marshallese civilian on Roi-Namur collects souvenirs in a handbag to “award presents” to the Marines who offered him sanctuary.

Right: While on Tinian, Pvt Ignacio L. Hernandez, assigned to Company K, 2nd Marines, found a working phonograph with records containing native Japanese music. (Photo by SSgt Robert E. Olund, USMC)



SSGT ALBERT J. MOREJOHN, USMC

From their front-line fighting position on Iwo Jima, these 4th Marine Division machine-gunners examine two “yosegaki hinomaru” and a Type 14 Nambu pistol. 🇺🇸



Pvt Jack R. Stambaugh, USMC

Funeral Held for Marine Killed During Battle of Tarawa

Navy Cross recipient **Private Jack R. Stambaugh**, 20, of Bowie, Texas, was buried Nov. 8, 2023, at Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Va., 80 years after he was killed during the Battle of Tarawa. Buried on the battlefield shortly after the fighting ended, his remains were unable to be recovered at the conclusion of World War II and were only recently located and identified.

In November 1943, Pvt Stambaugh was assigned to Company B, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands in an attempt to secure the island. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and Sailors were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded.

Pvt Stambaugh posthumously received the Navy Cross for his actions on Nov. 22, 1943, the third day of battle, when he came to the aid of a wounded Marine who was being attacked by four enemy soldiers in an isolated position during the height of a fierce enemy nighttime counterattack. According to the Navy Cross citation, Pvt Stambaugh raced "to the aid of his helpless comrade and, closing in for a brief, savage encounter, killed all four of the enemy with his rifle and bayonet before succumbing to a neck wound inflicted by a saber-wielding Japanese officer."

At the conclusion of the battle, Stambaugh was reported to have been buried in Row D of the East Division Cemetery, later renamed Cemetery 33. Naval Construction Battalions reorganized the cemeteries on Betio later in the war, complicating post-war disinterment efforts. Pvt Stambaugh and many

other Marines buried in Cemetery 33 could not be located or identified after the war.

In 2009, History Flight, a nonprofit MIA recovery organization, located Cemetery 33 on Betio and in 2019, they discovered a burial trench that was believed to be Row D where they recovered remains that they turned over to DPAA for analysis.

"The return of Pvt Jack Stambaugh represents all that is still right and good about America today," said Sergeant Major Justin LeHew, USMC (Ret) the chief operating officer for History Flight. "It fulfills a promise that anyone who has ever served in the military understands ... that we don't leave a fallen comrade behind and dead or alive, someone is coming to get you to bring you home," he added. SgtMaj Carlos Ruiz, the 20th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, was on hand to present a flag to Stambaugh's family. It was fitting that Stambaugh's funeral, which included full military honors and an aircraft flyover was such a dignified event, said History Flight founder Mark Noah, who had visited the site of Row D several times during the recovery of remains.

Stambaugh's name was recorded on the Courts of the Missing at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific along with the others still missing from World War II. A rosette will be placed next to his name to indicate that he has been accounted for.

"Everything about this [funeral] is all anyone around the world needs to know about the extent that Americans are willing to go to for each other," said LeHew.

Leatherneck

Col Martin Anderson, 99, of Palo Alto, Calif. He enlisted in the Marine Corps during WW II and later served in the Korean War at Inchon and the Chosin Reservoir. He retired after 33 combined years of service in the Marine Corps and the Marine Corps Reserve.

Wilfred J. Erieanu, 94, of Green Bay, Wis. He served in the Marine Corps and later worked at Procter & Gamble as a manufacturer before retiring in 1990.

Capt Guy J. Hefner, 91, of Hamilton, Ohio. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in art and history from Concord University in Mercer County, W.Va., he

was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps, where he served 15 years in both active duty and in the Marine Corps Reserve. He later had a career as an insurance agent.

MSgt Joseph Holden, 53, in Barstow, Calif. He enlisted in the Marine Corps after graduating from high school. Among his many duty stations and assignments, he served as a drill instructor from 1979 to 1982 for Mike Company, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, and was later assigned as senior drill instructor for four different recruit platoons. He retired from the Corps in 1998 after completing his final assignment at the Marine Corps Logistics Base in Barstow, Calif.

John M. Kelly, 81, in Leesburg, Va. He attended the United States Naval Academy and earned a degree in engineering before joining the Marine Corps upon graduation in 1966. He served as a CH-46 helicopter pilot and was stationed at MCAS Yuma. He also completed a tour in Vietnam. After his return to civilian life, he earned his master's degree in international finance from George Washington University and an MBA from Marymount University.

Darrell A. Kolb, 91, of Fox Lake, Wis. He enlisted in the Marine Corps after graduating from high school in 1950 and served until 1952. He later had a 37-year-long career with the Department of Corrections.

Jack S. McClure, 91, of Santa Ana, Calif. He was a Marine who enlisted after graduating from high school and served during the Korean War. He later worked as the owner of Flag Trucking/Flag Express for over 65 years.

John F. Meyer, 83, in Green Bay, Wis. He was a Marine who served from 1958 to 1964. After his enlistment, he worked as a papermaker for 35 years, retiring in 2000.

Sgt Daniel A. Murphy, 91, of Albuquerque, N.M. He was a Marine who served from 1952 to 1956. He later had a 35-year career as a weapons development program manager at Sandia National Laboratories.

Cpl Gerald Peterson, 72, of Spokane, Wash. He enlisted in the Marine Corps at the age of 17 and completed two tours in Vietnam as a reconnaissance Marine. He later served as a drill instructor at Camp Lejeune.

Leonard Radecki, 93, of Howard,

Wis. He was a Marine who served during the Korean War. He later had a career at the Wisconsin Optical Service before retiring in 1992.

Cpl Gerald “Jerry” J. Ravet, 92, of Green Bay Wis. After graduating from Michigan State University with a bachelor’s and a master’s degree in accounting, he enlisted in the Marine Corps and served during the Korean War from 1952 to 1954. He later worked as the secretary treasurer and vice president for Green Bay Structural Steel Inc., from 1961 to 2001.

Col Ronal “Ron” Patrick Rook, 77, of Brandon, Fla. After graduating from high school, he enlisted in the Marine Corps in August 1964. He served in the infantry from 1964 to 1967 and completed a tour in Vietnam with Alpha Co, 1st Bn, 5th Marines from 1966 to 1967. During his career he held multiple assignments including various law enforcement and security related assignments to include corrections officer, U.S. Disciplinary Barracks, Fort Leavenworth, Kan. He later was assigned a command tour as the commanding officer of Security Bn, MCB Quantico and a tour as the chief of staff, MCB Quantico, Va., before retiring in 2001. His awards include the Bronze Star.

George N. Saitta, 87, of Huntington Beach, Calif. He enlisted in the Marine Corps after graduating from high school and served with 1st Force Reconnaissance Company. After his enlistment, he attended the New York Institute of Technology and graduated with a bachelor’s degree in electrical engineering. He later had a career as an engineer at Douglas Aircraft where he worked on the Saturn V and Apollo space programs.


Julian “Sam” Samora, 80, of Chino, Calif. He enlisted in the Marine Corps in August 1962 and completed a tour in Vietnam. Following his enlistment, he began a career at the Santa Ana Police Department and retired after 29 years of service.

Rudolph “Rudy” N. Ward, 75, of Green Bay, Wis. He was a Marine who served during the Vietnam War.

MajGen H.L. Wilkerson, 101, of Greensboro, N.C. He was a combat veteran of three wars. He enlisted in the Marine Corps after graduating from college and served in the Pacific theater on Guadalcanal during WW II with 1st Bn, 7th Marines. After the war, he attended OCS and during the Korean War, he saw action at the Chosin Reservoir. He completed tours in Vietnam with the 1st Marine Division. He was the com-

manding officer of the 3rd Marine Division before he retired from the Corps in 1978 after 37 years of service. He later served on the board of trustees of Erskine College from 1985 until 1987 and was on the North Carolina Governor’s Commission for Military Affairs from 1982 until 1991. One of his sons is also a Marine, MajGen Thomas L. Wilkerson, USMC (Ret).

Burt Young, 83, in Los Angeles, Calif. He was a Marine who served from 1957 to 1959 and later had a prolific acting career. He had roles in multiple films and TV shows including “Chinatown” and “M*A*S*H,” but he is perhaps best known for the “Rocky” films. His portrayal of the character “Paulie” earned him an Academy Awards supporting actor nomination in 1977.

In Memoriam is run on a space-available basis. Those wishing to submit items should include full name, age, location at time of death (city and state), last grade held, dates of service, units served in, and, if possible, a published obituary. Allow at least four months for the notice to appear. Submissions may be sent to *Leatherneck Magazine*, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, Va., 22134, or emailed to leatherneck@mca-marines.org. 

THE SAMUEL NICHOLAS SOCIETY

– ALWAYS FAITHFUL –

Make a lasting gift for Marines by leaving a bequest to the Marine Corps Association Foundation in your will or other estate plan. Your generosity will ensure Marines are always prepared to serve and fight, no matter the challenges they face.

By giving to MCAF through your will or estate plan, you will become a part of our Samuel Nicholas Society. If you have already included MCAF in your will or estate plan, please let us know. We want to thank you for your commitment of remaining always faithful to our Marines.

For more information, visit



www.mca-marines.org/legacy-gift-planning/samuel-nicholas-society

If you have already included MCAF in your will or estate plan, please let us know. We want to thank you for your commitment of remaining always faithful to our Marines.

 MARINE CORPS
ASSOCIATION
FOUNDATION



Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen H. Hicks conducts a press briefing at the Pentagon on the DOD's AI Adoption Strategy, Nov. 2, 2023.

DOD Releases AI Adoption Strategy

In November 2023, the Department of Defense (DOD) released its strategy to accelerate the adoption of advanced artificial intelligence capabilities to ensure U.S. warfighters maintain decision superiority on the battlefield for years to come.

The Pentagon's 2023 Data, Analytics and Artificial Intelligence Adoption Strategy builds upon years of DOD leadership in the development of AI and further solidifies the United States' competitive advantage in fielding the emerging technology, defense officials said.

"As we focused on integrating AI into our operations responsibly and at speed, our main reason for doing so has been straightforward: because it improves our decision advantage," Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen Hicks said while unveiling the strategy at the Pentagon.

"From the standpoint of deterring and defending against aggression, AI-enabled systems can help accelerate the speed of commanders' decisions and improve the quality and accuracy of those decisions, which can be decisive in deterring a fight and winning in a fight," she said.

The latest blueprint, which was developed by the Chief Digital and AI Office, builds upon and supersedes the 2018 DOD AI Strategy and revised DOD Data Strategy, published in 2020, which

laid the groundwork for the department's approach to fielding AI-enabled capabilities. The new document aims to provide a foundation from which the DOD can continue to leverage emerging AI capabilities well into the future.

"Technologies evolve. Things are going to change next week, next year, next decade. And what wins today might not win tomorrow," said DOD Chief Digital and AI Officer Craig Martell.

"Rather than identify a handful of AI-enabled warfighting capabilities that will beat our adversaries, our strategy outlines the approach to strengthening the organizational environment within which our people can continuously deploy data analytics and AI capabilities for enduring decision advantage."

The strategy prescribes an agile approach to AI development and application, emphasizing speed of delivery and adoption at scale, leading to the advantages of superior battlespace awareness and understanding, adaptive force planning and application, resilient sustainment support and efficient enterprise business operations.

In unveiling the strategy, Hicks emphasized the Pentagon's commitment to safety and responsibility while forging the AI frontier.

"We've worked tirelessly for over a decade to be a global leader in the fast and responsible development and use of

AI technologies in the military sphere, creating policies appropriate for their specific use," Hicks said. "Safety is critical because unsafe systems are ineffective systems."

In January, the Defense Department updated its 2012 directive that governs the responsible development of autonomous weapon systems to the standards aligned with the advances in artificial intelligence.

The U.S. has also introduced a political declaration on the responsible military use of artificial intelligence, which further seeks to codify norms for the responsible use of the technology.

Hicks said the U.S. will continue to lead in the responsible and ethical use of AI, while remaining mindful of the potential dangers associated with the technology.

"By putting our values first and playing to our strengths, the greatest of which is our people, we've taken a responsible approach to AI that will ensure America continues to come out ahead," she said. "Meanwhile, as commercial tech companies and others continue to push forward the frontiers of AI, we're making sure we stay at the cutting edge with foresight, responsibility and a deep understanding of the broader implications for our nation."

Joseph Clark, DOD

VA Unveils Immersive Healthcare Technology to Veterans

In September 2023, Gulf Coast Veterans Affairs (VA) in Biloxi, Miss., partnered with VA's Office of Healthcare Innovation and Learning's immersive team to host a "Veteran eXpeRience" (VXR).

VA is defining a new reality in health care delivery and experience through immersive technology, Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR), collectively called extended reality (XR).

Immersive technology leverages the senses of sight, sound and touch to bring a new level of engagement and sense of presence to each Veteran's health care experience.

Gulf Coast VA is currently one of five VA facilities nationwide to host a VXR. The biggest champions of this technology are those who experience it firsthand. More than 200 people attended the event.

Veterans, caregivers and employees navigated through multiple hands-on



Immersive programs include creative art therapies like art, music, and writing, practical applications like firearms safety training, chronic pain management through virtual physical therapy, and PTSD treatments.

VA



VA

experiences during the VXR. Gulf Coast VA highlighted the wide variety of immersive technology currently available across multiple services. Attendees learned and experienced how these new technologies can impact physical, emotional, and mental health, as well as benefits for employee education.

Gulf Coast VA Safety Services used VR simulation to educate employees regarding a variety of safety training in both clinical and non-clinical settings. Fifty-seven percent of attendees stated they had never experienced virtual reality prior to VXR. Additional feedback re-

vealed that 88% of those who attended the event would like to start or continue using VR in their personal care.

“Amazing experience ... wasn’t aware of the extent in which VR can be used to improve overall health,” said one Army veteran.

VA Immersive has currently deployed over 1,450 VR headsets across more than 172 VA facilities and outpatient clinics in all 50 U.S. states, Puerto Rico, Guam and American Samoa. VA is leveraging immersive technology to offer a non-pharmaceutical approach to help veterans address the day-to-day challenges of

physical, emotional and mental health. Immersive programs include creative art therapies like art, music, and writing, practical applications like firearms safety training, chronic pain management through virtual physical therapy, and PTSD treatments, including different virtual “worlds” of combat scenarios created to allow veterans to confront traumatic experiences in a highly controlled, clinical environment.

To learn more about VA Immersive, please visit innovation.va.gov.

Sheena Strong, VA



SOUND OFF
[continued from page 9]

that woman said to me. Many Americans don't think about this, because they have never lost their freedom like those in Vietnam did.

My war continues and to all of you men and women in the service and civilians who guard our freedoms and strive for the freedom of humans in other parts of the world, I say thank you and may your war find meaning someday.

Col Wilburn R. Bowers, USMC (Ret)
Friendsville, Tenn.

Col Bowers, thank you for writing about your war. Like you, so many veterans of Vietnam and our most recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan who don't talk about their experiences and wonder why, and was it worth the cost, often find answers in unexpected places.

These answers are personal and unique as we mature and come to understand more about the world. Most important is sharing these perspectives with other veterans fighting their own individual wars.

Thanks again and Semper Fidelis.
—Publisher

Reader Shares Photos of Medal of Honor Recipient, John Basilone

I wanted to share a few photos that I have of Sergeant John Basilone. These photos were sent to me by Basilone's good buddy Sgt Rea, who was a Marine paratrooper and platoon sergeant in C/1/27. Sgt Rea passed away several years



COURTESY OF JOHN BUTLER

Sgt John Basilone photographed with two of Sgt Rea's nieces. Rea and Basilone served together in WW II.

ago. The girls pictured with Basilone holding the rabbits were Rea's nieces. The photo was taken while they were still at Camp Pendleton.

I also want to mention that John's brother, Don Basilone, attended the FMDA reunion as a special guest when I hosted the reunion in Tampa, Fla., in 2014. Don was the youngest of 10 in the Basilone family. He was only 11 years old when his brother was KIA. Don passed away last year. He was a Marine and served in Korea.

John Butler
USMC
Tampa, Fla.

Thank you for sharing these rare photos of one of the Corps' greatest heroes. Semper Fi! —Publisher

Feel like sounding off? Address your letter to: Sound Off, *Leatherneck Magazine*, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134, or send an email to: leatherneck@mca-marines.org. Due to the heavy volume, we cannot answer every letter received. Do not send original photographs, as we cannot guarantee their return. All letters must be signed, and emails must contain complete names and postal mailing addresses. Anonymous letters will not be published.

—Editor 🐾



COURTESY OF JOHN BUTLER

A group photo of C/1/27 machine-gunners, including Medal of Honor recipient Sgt John Basilone, far right.

Reunions

• **Embassy Guard Association**, May 16-19, San Antonio, Texas. Contact Bob Lighty, (717) 433-1105, bob.lighty@embassymarine.org.

• **Marine Corps Weather Service**, June 16-21, Billings, Mont. Contact Kathy Donham, (252) 342-8459, kathy.donham@hotmail.com, or Dave Englert, (812) 630-2099, englertd@psci.net.

• **USMC A-4 Skyhawkers**, Nov. 11-13, Pensacola Beach, Fla. All drivers, maintainers, and aficionados welcome. Contact Mark Williams, (702) 778-5010, rogerwilco14@gmail.com.

• **1st Bn, 5th Marines, 1985-1992**, Sept 5-8, Macomb, Ill. Contact Scott Hainline, (309) 351-2050, ptimfi@yahoo.com.

Mail Call

• Louis "Monday" Monoscalco, (312) 439-5253, is looking to hear from LtGen Robert B. Johnston, former platoon commander of Co M, 3rd Bn, 9th Marines, Vietnam 1967.

Wanted

• Mark Pacey, markp@mstn.govt.nz, is looking for **photographs, interviews, letters, and any other information on Americans stationed in New Zealand during WW II.**

• Louis "Monday" Monoscalco, (312) 439-5253, is looking for a **Marine Corps Security Guard Bn, HQMC, graduating class photo, 1970, class number unknown.**

• *Leatherneck*, leatherneck@mca-marines.org, is looking to hear from **Marines who served at Marine Barracks Washington from 1961 to 1964 and Marines who served security detail at Camp David or had any special assignments related to President Kennedy or the Cuban Missile Crisis.**

• Gary Livingston, (607) 435-2272, caissonpress@yahoo.com, is looking for **any information on Marines who were at the Battle of Khasham Syria, Feb. 7, 2018.**

• Chenin Gonzales, (925) 997-3706, cheningonzales@gmail.com, is looking

to hear from **Vietnam veterans who served with his father, Paul Gonzales, from 1963 to 1968.**

Sales, Trades, and Giveaways

• SSgt Gary Niehans, glniehans@aol.com, has a **recruit graduation book from Plt 1031, MCRD San Diego, June to August 1966.** Free to any member of the platoon.

Entries for "Reader Assistance," which include "Reunions," "Mail Call," "Wanted" and "Sales, Trades and Giveaways," are free and printed on a space-available basis. *Leatherneck* reserves the right to edit or reject any submission. Allow two to three months for publication. Send your email to leatherneck@mca-marines.org, or write to Reader Assistance Editor, *Leatherneck* Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134. 📧

STAY WARM THIS WINTER

"First to Fight"
Hoodie
(Green/Black)
\$34.95



Woolly Pully
Sweater
(Green/Blue)
\$59.95



OUTLAST THE COLD IN MARINE CORPS
APPAREL FROM THE MARINE SHOP.



Cuffed Beanie (Black/Red)
\$24.99



All Purpose Duty Gloves
(Olive Drab/Black/Coyote)
\$22.99



USMC Vintage
Block Hoodie
\$39.95



Shop today at Marineshop.net
or call us at (703) 640-7195



FOLLOW US ON
SOCIAL MEDIA!



@themarineshoponline



@TheMarineShop1

Saved Round

By Kipp Hanley



COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE MARINE CORPS

The National Museum of the Marine Corps acquired the M198 Howitzer (above) called “Damn Yankees” in 2017. It was restored to its 1991 color and configuration by Marine Depot Maintenance Command Barstow and will be a part of a future exhibit on the Marines’ role in Operation Desert Storm.



COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE MARINE CORPS

PACKING A POWERFUL PUNCH—This month marks the 33rd anniversary of the beginning of Operation Desert Storm. The National Museum of the Marine Corps in Triangle, Va., boasts an intimidating piece of artillery that was used by the Marines during that campaign: the M198 Howitzer, nicknamed by its crew as “Damn Yankees.” Employed by Battery F of 2nd Battalion, 12th Marines, the “Damn Yankees” was one of eight howitzers that blitzed strategic Iraqi Army outposts in Kuwait starting on Jan. 21, 1991. After firing between 10 and 15 rounds, the Marines moved the howitzers quickly to another location to prevent the Iraqis from a successful artillery counterattack.

The gun’s nickname was a tribute to the early 1990’s musical super group Damn Yankees. Each of the 35-foot howitzers weighed more than 15,000 pounds and packed quite a punch, softening the Iraqi defense for the successful ground invasion in February 1991.

“The fuse was timed to go off, ideally, once the round was right over the target,” said Corporal Chris Boyer, a Marine veteran who served as one of the ammunitions specialists the first time the howitzers were employed during Desert Storm. “... And out of each round, 88 grenade bomblets [would] go off and cause a lot of damage. It sounded like popcorn. Explosion after explosion.”

After a brief time on display after the war, the gun went back

into service before being phased out in 2009. Currently, “Damn Yankees” can be seen from the museum’s overlook area and will eventually be part of a future exhibit.

“The legacy of ‘Damn Yankees’ is significant because we want to reinforce that the early part of Operation Desert Storm was not solely an air campaign,” said Kater Miller, an outreach curator for the museum. “The Marines used their resources and ingenuity to orchestrate effective raids against Iraqi military targets in occupied Kuwait to help reduce their effectiveness when the Marines punched through the defensive berms in late February.”



NEW YEAR, NEW GEAR

Celebrate the **New Year** with **New Items** from



The MARINE Shop

SERVING MARINES AROUND THE WORLD



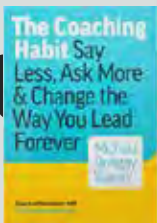
USMC Double Collar
Retro Jacket
\$54.99



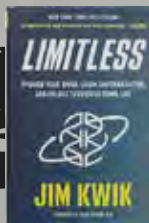
USMC Full Zip Two
Tone Hoodie
\$54.99



USMC Breathable
Golf Shirt
\$39.99



The Coaching Habit by
Michael Bungay Stanier
\$16.95



Limitless by Jim Kwik
\$26.00



Performance Conversations
by Christopher D. Lee
\$29.99






Marine Corps Emblem Bottom
Engraved Rocks Glass
\$17.99

Shop today at Marineshop.net
or call us at (703) 640-7195



Follow us on
social media!


 @themarineshoponline
 @TheMarineShop1

A close-up photograph of a man in a military camouflage uniform, smiling broadly and looking upwards and to the right. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting.

Membership that's anything but basic.

Join USAA today

usaa.com/join

or call

800-531-8521



Use of the term "member" or "membership" refers to membership in USAA Membership Services and does not convey any legal or ownership rights in USAA. Restrictions apply and are subject to change. USAA means United Services Automobile Association and its affiliates. No Department of Defense or government agency endorsement. © 2023 USAA. 285330-0323