

JULY 2023

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MAGAZINE OF THE MARINES

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From the Editor's Desk

One of the greatest honors of my life has been serving as editor of this magazine. In April 2014, I arrived at *Leatherneck*, nervous, excited and thrilled to take the helm of the Magazine of the Marines. My goal was to continue *Leatherneck*'s long and storied legacy of recounting the Corps' history through the eyes of those who wore the uniform while also telling the story of the Marines of today. So, as I edited this, my last issue of the magazine, I have been on a roller coaster of emotions.

Telling the story of Marines of all ages has been fascinating, educational, motivating, and even heartbreaking—sometimes all at once. It was the exceptional week when I didn't get teary eyed at least once while working on the magazine. There have been tears of joy reading stories about reunions of Marines who hadn't seen each other in decades and tears of sadness reading the accounts of teenage Marines who were finally brought home decades after falling in the Pacific. There have been moments of pride reading a *Leatherneck* essay contest entry written by a lance corporal discussing the future Marine Corps and even more moments of incredulity reading about the courage exhibited by Marines in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan fighting for their country, their Corps and their fellow Marines.

While much has changed with magazines in the last 20 years, the respect given *Leatherneck* continues to grow. I've lost track of the number of times I've met a Marine and told them what I do and had the same reaction. Their eyes inevitably light up often followed by "*Leatherneck*? I love *Leatherneck*." They usually go on to tell me how as soon as they are done with each issue of the magazine, they take them down to the local VA hospital or American Legion post and leave them there for others to enjoy. On numerous other occasions a senior retired Marine has told me that he has become a loyal *Leatherneck* reader in retirement and greatly enjoys the magazine and its variety of stories. They have all served as a wonderful reminder of what a privilege it has been to be a part of such an iconic part of the Corps.

And as much as I'll miss the magazine itself, I'll also miss the wonderful staff of *Leatherneck* and the Marine Corps Association. From Jason Monroe, who has spent *decades* laying out each and every issue of the magazine, to veteran Marine and award-winning staff writer Kyle



Watts, to our newest member, Briesa Koch, I'll be forever grateful for their dedication and devotion to the magazine and to Marines. I'm also especially thankful for our deputy editor and our other award-winning author, Nancy Lichtman, who has spent the last 16 years working in a variety of billets supporting the magazine and who will be the executive editor of *Leatherneck*. Between Nancy, and Colonel Christopher "Woody" Woodbridge, the new editor in chief and publisher, the magazine will be in more than capable hands.

Fair Winds and Following Seas to all who have supported *Leatherneck* over the last 108 years and thank you for your service both in and out of uniform.

Semper Fidelis,

Mary H. Reinwald
Colonel, USMC (Ret)
Editor, *Leatherneck*



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COVER: A Joint Light Tactical Vehicle with 2nd Assault Amphibian Battalion, 2ndMarDiv repositions during a demonstration at Camp Lejeune, N.C., Sept. 10, 2021. Marines from 2ndMarDiv partnered with the Office of Naval Research (ONR) to demonstrate a remote live fire using a 30 mm system attached to a Joint Light Tactical Vehicle. ONR works with the Marine Corps and industry partners to research and evaluate capabilities that may ultimately support the needs of the Marine Corps. Read more about ONR on page 26. Photo by LCpl Reine Whitaker, USMC. Copies of the cover may be obtained by sending \$2 (for mailing costs) to *Leatherneck* Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134-0775.

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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 must add what I believe to be a humorous vignette to Sam Lichtman's fine article in the April 2023 *Leatherneck* detailing the 1977-1985 history of the Army acquiring the Beretta M9 pistol.

From 1978 until 1982 I headed the five-year Procurement Marine Corps (PMC) budget in the Installation and Logistics (I&L) Department. After receiving the approved procurement guidance from the Resources and Programs (R&P) Division, I&L's Weapons Section would send me the Corps' five-year plan to procure the 9 mm pistol. While this acquisition was U.S. Army R&D [Research & Development] dependent, we Marines would have to inform both the House Authorization and House Appropriations Committees of the Corps' current and out-year acquisition plans.

At least twice a year, my boss, the highly respected and bemedaled World War II Lieutenant General Harold Hatch, and I would drive to Capitol Hill in a Marine Corps green sedan to visit the Authorization Committee's staff director a day in advance of one of the committees' formal sessions—the type seen on TV. We would informally exchange information about the 9 mm pistol and other items to preclude either side being surprised at the next day's hearing with the congressmen. It sounded like these sessions with the committees' staff directors would be most serious. Yet when the three of us were in the director's office, the conversations were very light, supportive, and most informative. And so it was in 1981, the day before the Authorization Committee would formally review our Corps' plan to procure the pistol.

Midway through the next day's hearing with LtGen Hatch and I sitting at the center table, the subject of the pistol procurement was discussed. One of the representatives had a Beretta M9, and another representative had a competing

weapon manufactured abroad. I haven't a clue how they acquired the weapons. Each of the two congressmen began touting the high qualities of the empty pistol they held. Before long a make-believe "gunfight at the O.K. Corral" was taking place complete with a "Bang, bang, I got you."

Both representatives had bent below their desks during the mock firefight. Everyone at the hearing was laughing heartily at the exchange for a minute until the committee's chair hammered his gavel a few times. I doubt this type of tomfoolery could ever happen today.

Dave Brown
USMC, 1960-1982
Swansboro, N.C.

Regarding the April 2023 Article About the Beretta M9

I first shot the M9 at the Far East Division in Okinawa in the spring of 1987 where we had a warrant officer who tried to teach us all to shoot with both eyes open. I had previously qualified expert with a revolver in June 1982 at

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G. Chiarotti,
USMC (Ret)
President and
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Artillery in the Cold War"



KACY TELLESSE
Eugene Sledge Award
"Freaks of a Feather"



DAVID C. KNISS, JR.
Major Norman Hatch Award
"The Gift"



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MSG school and qualified expert with the M9 in 1987. I thought I was pretty good until I saw the scores on the leaderboards. My only experience with a .45-caliber pistol was doing a familiarization fire in boot camp and then in the Marine Corps Reserve in 1990. We took a whole rack of .45-calibers to the range that shook like a box of rocks because they were so worn out.

Wasn't this the main reason for the change from a .45-caliber pistol? As a police officer, I was issued and qualified with a Smith & Wesson 4506, and we carried that for years.

Thomas Sandford
USMC, 1981-1989, USMCR, 1989-1996
Columbus, Ohio

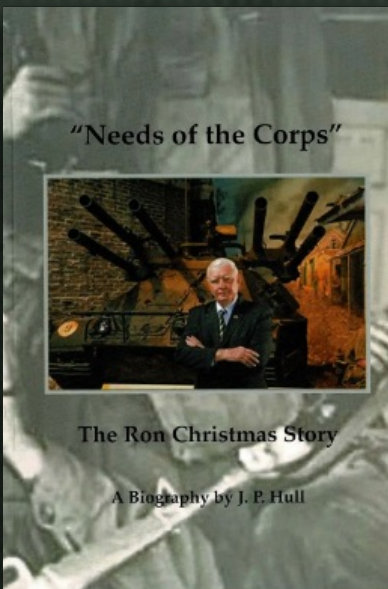
I just finished reading Sam Lichtman's outstanding piece in the April issue of *Leatherneck*. It was extremely well-written and painstakingly researched. Every reader learned a great deal about military handguns. I was very impressed with Sam's ability to take a complex (and potentially boring) subject and present it in such a clear and concise way. Kudos to him for a job well-done.

Mike Hoeflerlin
Colombia, Mo.

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Old Newspaper Clipping Catches Reader's Attention

I was going through my files recently and came upon a clipping from the *Henderson Hall News* printed in October 2002 about Lieutenant General Michael W. Hagee attending confirmation hearings for assignment as the next Commandant of the Marine Corps. I thought I would pass it on to you folks down there at the *Leatherneck* office at the Marine Corps Association building in Quantico, Va. I started working at Henderson Hall in late July 2002 when I was 41 years old. There was a lot of hustle and bustle going on at that time and the Global War on Terror was in full swing.

In attendance during the confirmation hearings was General James L. Jones, 32nd Commandant of the Marine Corps, and Senator John Warner of Virginia. Jones graduated from the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in 1966. Bill Clinton was two years behind him in the class of 1968. Warner went to Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Va., in the late 1940s. His classmates included Roger Mudd and Pat Robertson. Warner was a Marine officer in the Korean War. He went to UVA Law School and later was the Secretary of the Navy in the early 1970s.

LtGen Hagee graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., in the class of 1968. His classmates included Jim Webb, Oliver North and Admiral Mike Mullen, who was Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff from 2007 to 2011.

Greg Paspatis
Alexandria, Va.

My Worst Day in Vietnam

I had several bad days that I remember well, but if I was asked what my worst day in Vietnam was, my response would be June 11, 1966.

I was 18 at the time and assigned to an infantry unit, Co F, 2nd Bn, 9th Marines, which was operating in the Da Nang area. A Marine infantry company normally had 200 men but because of casualties, men rotating back to the States had no replacements, so we had about 35 men available for field operations and patrols. When not on major operations or out conducting patrols, we were on alert to assist other units that needed help or to attack the enemy if they were found.

When some enemy troops were spotted near the La Thos River, my company was airlifted to the area where they were spotted. We landed in a dried-up rice paddy near the edge of the jungle and started moving in the direction where the enemy troops had been reported.

We ran into a minefield and within 20

minutes, we had three killed in action and 21 wounded. Over 75 percent of our company were casualties, and the rice paddy was littered with dead and wounded Marines. It is my opinion that the Viet Cong knew how we operated, so they put a minefield in the rice paddy and set up an ambush. They placed the minefield in an area that was suitable for helicopters to land in, then allowed themselves to be seen knowing we would come after them.

Our company commander, Captain Reckewell, was one of the seriously wounded, and after he was medevacked, we never saw him again.

Our other casualties were also medevacked, and we were extracted back to the rear to get replacements. The battalion had a shortage of officers, so Capt Reckewell was replaced by Second Lieutenant Wecht. Men were transferred from other companies within the battalion to our company. This was done so we would have enough men for ambushes, patrolling, and to be available to assist other units as needed. We were fighting a war and my unit was on the frontline, so there was no pause or recovery time.

Lieutenant Colonel W.F. Donahue was our battalion commander when this incident took place, and considering our personnel shortages, we thought he did a great job utilizing what he had available.

SgtMaj Jimmy R. Thorne
Williamstown, Ky.

"The Gift" Article is the Best Article I've Read About Cpl Dunham

I just read "The Gift," the article on Cpl Jason Dunham, in the May issue of *Leatherneck*, and I have to say, it's the best article I've ever read since the day it happened! My ex-wife Becky says the same thing.

Kyle Watts, the author, was spot on with all the information in the article, and we loved it!

Thank you for your attention to detail and for pouring your passion of writing into this article. Incredible job!

Mark Dean
Owasso, Okla.

Mark Dean served alongside Jason Dunham in 3rd Bn, 7th Marines, and is featured prominently in the documentary. His story of battling PTSD offers a compelling and relatable example for Marines enduring similar struggles. Kyle Watts, who wrote the article about "The Gift" had this message for Mark Dean: "Thank you for your service, sharing your experience in the film, and taking the time to read this story. Your feedback means a lot."—Editor

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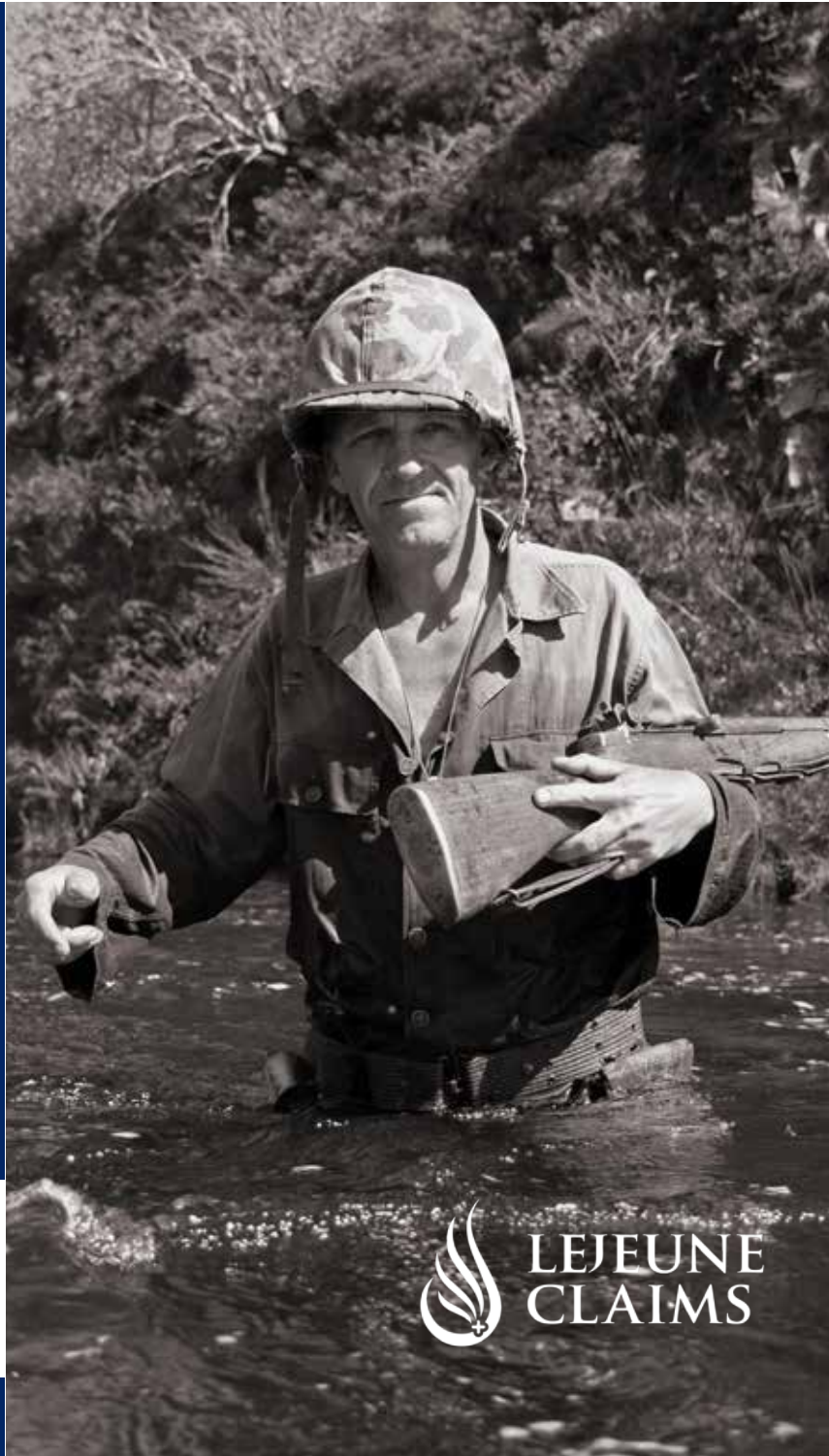
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Reader Has Ideas for Future Spending

The "Passing the Word" section in the May 2023 issue of *Leatherneck* issue was very informative on the Fiscal Year 2024 budget.

My only hope is that in future budgets, there is an increase in burial expenses from \$250 to \$1,500 or more for veterans and their spouses. In today's world of high inflation, \$250 does not cover a lot.

Regarding veteran homelessness, a

Work Project Administration type set up could be started to get veterans to build camps to house, feed, and provide everything needed at the work project sites for the workers and families. The workers could help keep America clean, rebuild and maintain roads and parks, and build freshwater delivery systems to replenish Lake Powell, Lake Mead and other water systems.

The state of California has two concrete rivers that flow from north to

south. The canal on the west side of the Sierra Mountain range traverses over the Tehachapi Mountains into Lancaster, the Palmdale area into San Bernardino County. The other concrete river starts at the delta area next to Sacramento and runs along the I-5 highway to Bakersfield and over the Tehachapi Mountains into Southern California.

We could also have military engineers and construction units included. In the San Diego area, Pacific Ocean pumping stations could pump saltwater over the hills into the Salton Sea area to make it a vacation and boating area.

I can imagine gainful employment for workers who went to boot camp, served proudly, and want a piece of the American dream. We can spend billions helping others, so let us help military folks who can be trained in construction.

As I traveled to Yosemite Valley, I was in awe at what the Civilian Conservation Corps built up in the mountains in the 1930s during the Depression. With today's heavy equipment we can build anything! Let us hope that Congress and the President can create a nation of workers to benefit America!

John Sanchez
USN, 1961-1966
Hanford, Calif.

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Daily Life at Gio Linh

I was wondering if it is possible for *Leatherneck* to publish an article on daily life at Gio Linh. While in Vietnam from May 1967 to May 1968, I remember reading an article about Gio Linh published by either *Time* or *Newsweek*, but I do not recall reading about Gio Linh in the *Leatherneck*.

I did stay a full month in August 1967 at the Gio Linh forward operating base (FOB) and would like to share one memory of my time on that base. I was wounded in July 1967 during a mortar attack and ended up spending several weeks recovering at Cam Ram Bai, a big naval base that had extensive medical facilities. While heading back up north toward the DMZ after my release from the hospital, I stopped at "Fox" Co, 2/9 headquarters and was directed to FOB Gio Linh. My first stop was at the armory for a rifle. To my surprise, my M16 was still there. I recognized it by the shrapnel hole in the plastic surrounding the barrel of the rifle.

My next stop was to look for my helmet at the Fox Co storage area.

While looking for it, I came across several helmets. Inside the liners, they contained letters, family pictures, girlfriend pictures, etc. Looking at all those

helmets, I realized that these personal items belonged to wounded or dead Marines.

During that day, when I picked up my rifle and my helmet, another Marine was turning in his rifle and other equipment. He thought I was just joining Fox Co. He started telling me not to load the M16 rifle magazine with 20 rounds because it weakens the springs and this and that. I could see he was happy to be leaving Vietnam in one piece, so I just let him talk.

Cpl Peter Oberding
Cherokee Village, Ariz.

Regarding the Deactivation of 3/3

I noted with regret your report on the deactivation of 3/3 on page 12 in the June issue of *Leatherneck*. I was disappointed that 3/3's Vietnam service was not mentioned.

The battalion was heavily engaged in Operation Starlite in August 1965, the first major operation of the Vietnam War. Corporal Robert E. O'Malley was the first living Marine to receive the Medal of Honor in Vietnam for that operation. Captain Charles C. Krulak, who later became our 31st Commandant, commanded "Lima" Co, 3/3 and the Marsh Center at Quantico is named after

Lieutenant Colonel James W. Marsh, who was the battalion commander in 1968.

LtCol Otto Lehrack
Asheville, N.C.

Contributor Corrects Incorrect Rank

In the April 2023 issue on page 62 in the author's note, I was incorrect in stating the rank of Jack Parsons, USMC (Ret). It should read GySgt, not SgtMaj as I indicated. My apologies, Jack, for the error, and for any inconvenience.

Sgt David Jensen
Golden, Colo.

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.

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In Every Clime and Place

Compiled by Kyle Watts

Camp Lejeune, N.C. 2ndMarDiv Concludes

2023 Super Squad Competition

Marines with 1st Bn, 8th Marines, were awarded the Annual Rifle Squad Competition badge for winning 2nd Marine Division's Super Squad Competition on April 13. The Division's battalions competed to prove who among them had the most proficient and lethal squad.

The Marines of 1/8 were not the only ones in 2ndMarDiv to distinguish themselves in the Super Squad Competitions this year. Leathernecks with 1st Bn, 2nd Marines also brought home a win while competing in 3rdMarDiv's squad competition in Okinawa, Japan, while on their Unit Deployment Program in January 2023.

The Super Squad competition is an annual event that has become integral to the Marine Corps' training program. The competition is designed to enhance the Marines' readiness and effectiveness in combat situations while reinforcing the importance of teamwork and communication. Each year the Marine Corps Divisions host a Super Squad Competition in their respective area of operations.

The Annual Rifle Squad Competition badge awarded to each member of the winning squads represents the hard work, focus, determination, and technical and tactical proficiency that the squads have exemplified. "Winning the Super Squad Competition is something every infantry Marine strives to do," said Staff Sergeant Edward Robertson, the squad leader of 1st Bn, 2nd Marine's winning squad. "The amount of honor we were able to bring back to our unit after winning, especially while doing it under 3rdMarDiv, was amazing."

The winning squads of every Division's Super Squad Competition will compete against each other in the Marine Corps Squad Competition.

Cpl Timothy Fowler, USMC

Above right: Marines with 2nd Bn, 2nd Marines, run through an obstacle course during the 2023 Super Squad competition on MCB Camp Lejeune, N.C., held March 7-10. (Photo by LCpl Brian Stippey, USMC)

Right: The leathernecks of 2ndMarDiv participate in the marksmanship portion of the 2023 Super Squad competition on MCB Camp Lejeune, N.C.



CPL ONEG PLUSNER, USMC



LCPL RYAN RAMSAMMY, USMC

Above: The Annual Rifle Squad Competition badge was presented to Marines from 1st Bn, 8th Marines at an award ceremony on MCB Camp Lejeune, N.C., April 13. The Super Squad competition tests infantry squads in a variety of combat-related skills and determines the most effective squad in the Division.



CPL TIMOTHY FOWLER, USMC

Above: MajGen Calvert Worth Jr., CG, 2ndMarDiv, awards a Marine with 1st Bn, 2nd Marines an Annual Rifle Squad Competition badge on April 12.



LCPL RYAN RAMSAMMY, USMC

Marines with 1st Bn, 8th Marines following the Annual Rifle Squad Competition awards ceremony on MCB Camp Lejeune, N.C., April 13.



GYSGT DONELL BRYANT, USMC

Servicemembers prepare for the presentation of the colors and the National Anthem during the Joint Services Drill Exhibition in Washington, D.C., April 14. The exhibition was developed as a competition of elite precision and discipline between services. Teams from the Marine Corps, Air Force, Army, Navy and Coast Guard participated in this year's competition.



GYSGT DONELL BRYANT, USMC

Capt Kelsey Hastings, platoon commander, Marine Barracks Washington, marches the platoon onto the parade deck during the Joint Services Drill Exhibition in Washington, D.C.



Cpl William Buffington, rifle inspector, Marine Barracks Washington, accepts the first place trophy from one of the competition judges following the Joint Services Drill Exhibition in Washington, D.C. (Photo by GySgt Donell Bryant, USMC)



GYSGT DONELL BRYANT, USMC

Marines with the Silent Drill Platoon, Marine Barracks Washington, compete in the Joint Services Drill Exhibition at the Washington Monument in Washington, D.C., in April.



2ND LT BRANDON DEBLANC, USAF

Members of the Silent Drill Platoon cheer after being awarded first place in the Joint Services Drill Exhibition on April 14 in Washington, D.C.



CPL DEAN GURULE, USMC

Above: Cpl Malcom Patterson, a squad leader with 1st Bn, 1st Marines, scouts for enemy positions while conducting an urban assault during Exercise Garnet Rattler at Saylor Creek Range in Grasmere, Idaho, April 19. Garnet Rattler is a joint exercise between Marines and airmen to train joint terminal attack controllers to be more efficient and lethal and was held April 11-29.

Below: An AH-1Z Viper with HMLA-369, MAG-39, 3rd MAW, flies next to a UH-1Y Venom during Exercise Garnet Rattler at Saylor Creek Range in Grasmere, Idaho, April 20.



LCPL JUAN TORRES, USMC



CPL DEAN GURULE, USMC

Above: Joint Terminal Attack Controllers, a joint fires observer, and a rifleman with 1stMarDiv coordinate simulated close air support on urban terrain during Exercise Garnet Rattler, April 17.

Right: Capt Carolyn Schaeffer, an air officer with 1st Bn, 5th Marines, coordinates close air support while conducting an urban assault during Exercise Garnet Rattler, April 19.



CPL DEAN GURULE, USMC



LCPL JACKSON RUSH, USMC

Above: A group of Marines stationed on MCAS Miramar became certified wildland firefighters on March 24. These 29 Marines became the first hand crew composed primarily of Marines.

San Diego, Calif.

MCAS Miramar Boasts Corps' First Wildland Firefighting Crew

Twenty-nine Marines stationed at Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Miramar received certification to form the Corps' first team of wildland firefighters on March 24.

According to Chief Brian Cato, the assistant chief of training and safety with MCAS Miramar Fire Department, there has never been a crew of wildland firefighters made up primarily of active-duty Marines.

The Marines became certified as wildland firefighters after completing S-130 Firefighter Training through the MCAS Miramar Fire Department. They are now certified through the California Incident Command Certification System, the system used by California to deploy firefighting resources, and are qualified to respond to wildland fires on the air station, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, and the state of California during times of crisis.

The Marines are preparing to support Californians, who are no strangers to drought, dry weather and wildfires. California has experienced raging wildfires that have taken lives and destroyed hundreds of thousands of acres of land in recent years. In 2021, the Dixie Fire spanned over 963,069 acres, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, becoming the

second-largest fire in California history. A year prior, the August Complex fire spanned over 1,032,648 acres as the largest fire in the state's history. In 2018, the Camp Fire spanned 153,336 acres and took 85 lives, becoming the deadliest wildfire in California.

This year, Californians experienced relief from wildfires as the rainy season, which began last October, continued at an abnormal pace. According to the California Department of Water Resources, precipitation was at 151 percent of the historical average by March 31, snowpack was at 237 percent, and the reservoirs were at 107 percent. However, Captain Paul Jacobs, the crew boss for the Marine wildland crew, said the same conditions will lead to larger future fires. He explained that high precipitation produces more vegetation, which becomes tinder during a drought.

"I feel very fortunate and proud to be in this position to help start the first wildland hand crew that the Marine Corps has put together," said Jacobs. "With the amount of vegetation that's grown this past winter and spring, it's definitely created a threat to the high value target items on this base. So, to have some extra help and to have some Marines that are deployable that way, we can go out and suppress some of these wildland fires. It's going to be a great asset for this base."

Lance Corporal James Baker, an administrative law clerk with Headquar-

ters and Headquarters Squadron, MCAS Miramar, is one of the 29 Marines who volunteered. "Since we're in peacetime, if there's an opportunity that I can do something to benefit somewhere else, then I'm all for it," said Baker, who also volunteers at local youth centers as a coach and youth mentor. "That's why I volunteered to do firefighting. It's imperative that we go above and beyond ... If there is any opportunity to make a difference, you should!"

Colonel Thomas M. Bedell, the commanding officer of MCAS Miramar, addressed the graduates during the March 24 ceremony.

"I've seen exactly what happens when you have a crew who can cut a [fire] line, and can save property, and can save lives," said Bedell, himself a former wildland firefighter. "Tied for first with being a Marine was being on a fire crew. I have now done both, and now you all will have that experience too."

The Miramar Hand Crew furthered their training in June by attending Fire School on Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton. They will meet with Jacobs and the air station fire department on a quarterly basis to continue their training and build on their experience. Jacobs said he hopes to hold training even more frequently as the program progresses.

LCpl Jackson Rush, USMC



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Underdogs: Marines Earn Bronze in First All-Service Esports Tournament

GySgt Mathew D. Springer, USMC

Editor's note: This article is the second-place winner of the 2023 Leatherneck Magazine Writing Contest. Major Richard A. "Rick" Stewart, USMC (Ret) sponsored the contest through the Marine Corps Association Foundation. Upcoming issues of Leatherneck will feature the third-place winner and honorable mention entries.

Marines are made to compete. They feel the call deep within their warrior spirits to test themselves against peers, sister services, and allied forces as a measuring stick for future success against their adversaries. This conviction goes beyond competitions-in-arms, such as marksmanship, martial arts, or more mainstream events like the Army's "Best Ranger" Challenge; it is the core concept of why there are All-Marine teams in basketball, golf and eight other athletic events. Yet as the Marine Corps strives to evolve for an information-driven age, there grows a need for competitions that challenge the mind. A growing number of Marines believe video games are that challenge. This is the story of a small team of Marines that attended the first ever all-service electronic sports (or esports)

competition hosted and recognized by the U.S. government. It is a story of ingenuity, defying the odds, and victory at an event that has paved the way for military gaming well into the future.

In May 2022, the Air Force hosted the inaugural FORCECON event at the Boeing Techport Center in San Antonio, Texas. The first-of-its-kind convention focused on three pillars: innovation, technology and gaming. While military modernization is no stranger to innovation and technology, this would be the federal government's first foray into the world of tournament-level esports. The idea was simple yet ambitious: gather a team from each branch for a particular game, pair them with a professional coach for a week of training and hold a double elimination bracket at the end of the week.

FORCECON coordinators chose Halo

Infinite, the most recent iteration of an iconic game franchise, as the tournament game of choice. Halo was the perfect game for the inaugural event. It did not come with the potential baggage of seeming to glorify modern-day wars as it was set in a futuristic sci-fi setting where all of humanity is united against a common foe. Its game types were self-explanatory to the average tactical mind, including King-of-the-Hill (secure key terrain and hold for a target amount of time) and Team Slayer (earn 50 kills before the opposing team). Most importantly, Halo's medium-speed gunplay and "first-person shooter" perspective were easily digestible to both die-hard franchise fans and non-Halo players alike. It would be easy for servicemembers who had never before watched professional Halo to tune in and root for their branch's team. The stage was set for an all-service competition fit for the 21st century.

There was only one problem: the Marines were the only branch that had no such team ready for this event.

The Air Force and the Space Force both had longstanding support for their gaming communities. With programs of record, budgetary spending, and top-level recognition within their respective branches, the Air Force and Space Force jointly hosted regional tournaments with a systematic process for finding their most qualified players. Their final roster included semi-professional gamers who regularly streamed online for audiences as a way to showcase their gaming prowess. The Army esports team, who faced significant hurdles early on in their public-facing engagements, nonetheless had years of experience fielding competitive teams for such an event. The Navy had already established their esports team, named "Goats and Glory," as a part of their recruiting command, equipped with their own gaming facility, recruitment communication skills training, and an expectation that their team members stream on a regular basis to build a viewership audience. Even the Coast Guard, a branch with fewer total servicemembers than Marines stationed at Camp Pendleton alone, had a gaming com-



Under the guidance of Coach Emanuel "Hoaxer" Lovejoy, left, Marine Corps Gaming member LCpl Jairath "Raine" Lomeli, right, practices with his teammates to prepare for the esports tournament.



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TEAM NAME
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GAMING**

WAFFLES
 CPL HOUSTON BURNS

EZULON
 LCPL SEAN TOBER

ЯΛΙΠΣ
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The starting lineup for the All-Marine team at FORCECON 2022. Players go by their call signs during gaming events, allowing for in-game roles to supersede military rank and formalities.

Top: At FORCECON, 2022 held in Techport Arena in San Antonio, Texas, audience members watch as Marine Corps Gaming (MCG) plays against Coast Guard Gaming (CGG) on stage. The 2022 Armed Forces esports championship was the first esports tournament held exclusively for servicemembers of all branches. (Photo courtesy of FORCECON Media Production)

munity officially endorsed by their service's morale, well-being and recreation (MWR) organization.

Nonetheless, FORCECON reached out to Staff Sergeant Ian Mills, the Director of Marine Corps Gaming (MCG), a grass-roots organization for active-duty Marines to socialize and network over a common interest in gaming. Despite having no staff support or budget for such an event, SSgt Mills quickly went to work, determined to have the Marine Corps represented at the event. Leveraging his experience as a member of the All-Marine wrestling team, he reached out to Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS) sports in search of funding and support.

MCCS representatives were already aware of the growing esports phenomenon. They recognized that esports would quickly become a popular program that Marines may want to compete in and were already in talks for future participation. Unfortunately, those changes could only come in 2023 at the earliest, and MCCS had no funds available for a short-notice 2022 event. Adding to the headache, Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC) informed SSgt Mills via the Trademark Licensing Office that MCG could not utilize the iconic eagle, globe

and anchor in any of its engagements at FORCECON due to the ambiguity surrounding MCG's unofficial status with the Marine Corps. SSgt Mills needed to figure out a no-cost solution, or else his team would need to fund their own trip and buy their own equipment, all the way down to their yet-to-be-purchased jerseys.

Mills had a creative solution. He approached Air Force Gaming representatives and discussed his current situation with HQMC, MCCS, and the quandary he was in with funding. Emphasizing the need for all branches to have representation at the inaugural event, he asked his Air Force counterparts if there was any way their branch could help. As the hosting entity with a fully funded program, they concurred with SSgt Mills' rationale and agreed to pay for his team's lodging, per diem, and flights. They even agreed to design and purchase MCG's jerseys. Within two weeks, Mills assembled a team of eight Halo players from across the Marine Corps. Airline tickets were purchased, hotels were booked, and official orders were signed. The Marines were going to FORCECON.

On May 24, 2022, the team arrived in San Antonio, Texas, and began their week of tournament preparation. They took

part in media interviews and even had green screen recordings for tournament-day animations. Most importantly, they met their coach, Emanuel "Hoaxer" Lovejoy. Hoaxer was the Halo Championship Series' reigning Best Coach award recipient in 2021. For five days, he ran the All-Marine team through drills, discussed strategy and installed a playbook all while assessing his talent pool for the final roster. His leadership would be instrumental to MCG's performance, and he would be on stage with them come gameday. He selected a lineup that consisted of SSgt Jeremias "Hero" Tovar-Rosa, Corporal Houston "Waffles" Burns, Lance Corporal Sean "Ezulon" Tober, and LCpl Jariath "Raine" Lomeli. Like in the aviation community, these players would go by their call signs for the duration of the event, allowing for in-game roles to supersede military rank and formalities.

"This was my introduction to the Marine Corps," said Coach Hoaxer. "What I knew about Marines is they are the ones doing the dirty work, really getting in there ... grit, boots on the ground, they're those type of dudes. Jarheads of the scene."

When asked what it was like to coach amateur servicemembers as opposed to top-level talent, he went on to say, "The difference between coaching a pro team versus MCG is, the Marines were very keen on responding. You would think pro players are already very astute to the game and the peak of communications, but pro players already have their convictions and their idea of how things need to go. It was refreshing to have a group of players who were like 'I hear you' or 'got it' immediately, looking for those directives."

On May 29, MCG opened the tournament against Coast Guard Gaming (CGG) in a King-of-the-Hill match, and their resilience was immediately put to the test. In a best-of-7 scoring format, CGG immediately jumped to a 3-1 lead. The Marines were taking disadvantageous gunfights, losing key terrain, and playing more like four individuals. Just as they began to gain momentum toward another score, a hardware malfunction disconnected a member of CGG. While event staff replaced the equipment, MCG took advantage of the free timeout.

"Hoaxer pointed out that I was often off on my own, and not being a good objective player," said Raine. "We made some adjustments, and I told myself I needed to jump in the objective whenever I could. He did that kind of coaching for all of us."

The adjustments worked. MCG secured



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LCpl Jariath "Raine" Lomeli poses for green screen media images taken during pre-event week prior to the tournament.

Right: GySgt Mathew D. Springer, the author of this article, scrimmages against other FORCECON players during pre-event week as an alternate.

Below: Marine Corps Gaming while onstage at FORCECON 2022. Eight Halo players from across the Marine Corps were brought in to represent the Corps during the championship tournament. (Photo courtesy of FORCECON Media Production)



Marine Corps Gaming's All-Marine starting roster poses for promotional media during pre-event week. From the left: SSgt Jeremias "Hero" Tovar-Rosa, Cpl Houston "Waffles" Burns, Coach Emanuel "Hoaxer" Lovejoy, LCpl Jariath "Raine" Lomeli, and LCpl Sean "Ezulon" Tober.

the final three hills and took round one. They followed it with a commanding win in Team Slayer, earning the requisite 50 kills for victory while the enemy trailed at 33. MCG was moving on to the next round, but now they faced one of the tournament's titans. If CGG was viewed as an even match, it was time to be the underdogs.

Space Force Gaming (SFG) was the second seed in the pre-tournament rankings, and many expected nothing less from them than an appearance in the championship round. As the first round

progressed, MCG once again found themselves behind 1-3 on King of the Hill. Yet once again, MCG made midgame adjustments and elevated their level of play to win the game 4-3. The match culminated in late-game theatrics by Hero, who singlehandedly fought for his life in a gunfight against three opponents on the final hill. His determination disrupted the enemy's tempo so thoroughly that his fallen teammates respawned, regrouped, and stormed the hill to secure the victory.

The second round was a back-and-



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Director of Marine Corps Gaming, SSgt Ian Mills, cheers as the All-Marine team competes on stage.

forth Team Slayer format which drew arguably the loudest crowd up to this point. MCG found themselves down almost 10 points by midgame but stuck to their teamwork fundamentals until they were soon pressing the advantage. The Marines held a 44-40 lead in the waning minutes of the game, but SFG refused to blink. SFG suddenly slowed the game to a snail's crawl, held their positions with zero aggression in their body, and waited for the first sign of an MCG player to rapidly strike with all four players at once. This strategy caught MCG off-guard and led to a high-tension 49-49 moment of sudden death. But SFG's hopes for a comeback were dashed when Hero took an unorthodox sprint through the middle of the map during the last gunfight, completely exposed on all



Marine Corps Gaming placed third overall after defeating the teams from the Navy, Coast Guard and Space Force in previous games as seen in the tournament bracket results for FORCECON 2022, (above) earning them the title of underdogs. The All-Marine starting roster and their coach celebrate their bronze-medal win (right) during the awards ceremony. (Photo courtesy of Air Force Gaming)



COURTESY OF FORCECON MEDIA PRODUCTION

sides, and through the front door of the structure that SFG neglected to defend, assuming it was unlikely anyone would approach it so recklessly. He rounded a corner and shot a burst from his rifle into the back of a wounded SFG member who was trying to heal, scoring the final point and ending the entire series. SFG members stormed off the stage, one of whom screamed expletives backstage as they grappled with the reality of being victims of the night's largest upset.

The Marines made it to the semi-finals and secured a podium placement, but their "lightning in a bottle" had run out. MCG was summarily outclassed by Air Force Gaming in a best-of-five series, where they failed to stay competitive for any meaningful period of time. Knocked into the elimination bracket, they ran headlong into a red-hot Army esports team that had just eliminated Coast Guard and Space Force in their crawl back to contention. Whether it was competition fatigue, demoralization, or simply the Army's cohesion as the longest-tenured team in the tournament, MCG was eliminated after back-to-back losses. Air Force Gaming would take

gold, followed by Army claiming silver and the Marines earning bronze.

The first All-Marine esports team will never garner a modicum of reverence in the long, illustrious history of Marine Corps lore; too serious and too sacred are true heroics in the profession-of-arms. But Marines of today can enjoy a sense of pride knowing that this team represented their service admirably. They left zero questions of their competitive spirit and prohibited anyone from labeling competitions of the mind too complex for Marines.

As for the future of military gaming, FORCECON 2022 was a massive success and FORCECON 2023 planning is already underway. Next time, the competitors wearing scarlet and gold will have the added pressure of knowing that being the underdogs is a Marine Corps gaming tradition.

Author's bio: GySgt Mathew D. Springer is a Chinese Mandarin linguist with Company B, Marine Cryptologic Support Battalion aboard Fort Meade, Md. He currently serves as the senior enlisted leader of the Office of Expeditionary Direct Support, and has deployed to Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan. He is a proud member of the first All-Marine esports team and was in attendance at FORCECON 2022.

Editor's note: The recent Modern Day Marine 2023 hosted the first ever Objective 1 Wargaming Convention which provided a focused venue for demonstrations, game-play and networking among military wargaming practitioners, designers and industry. Both computer-based games and table-top board games were included over all three days of the expo.



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MAGAZINE OF THE MARINES

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Congratulations to the winners of the 2023 Leatherneck Magazine Writing Contest!



Leatherneck would like to thank Major Richard A. "Rick" Stewart, USMC (Ret) for his sponsorship of the Leatherneck Writing Contest since its inception in 2016. Maj Stewart's generous support has allowed us to recognize dozens of deserving Marines over the last seven years; he has truly embodied the spirit of "Semper Fidelis." Thank you, Maj Stewart!

Leatherneck Laffs

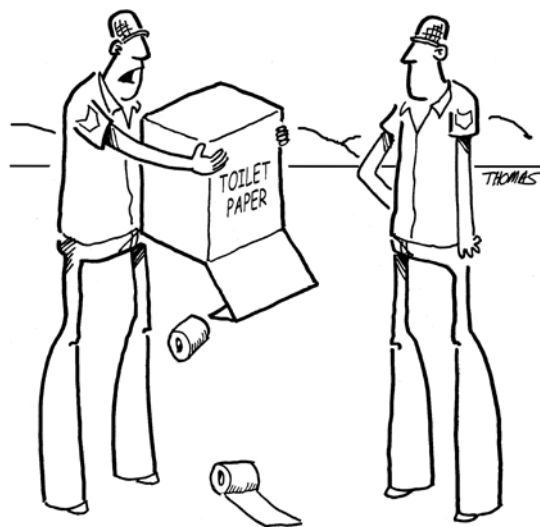


"Sir, we got the cyber warfare casualty list. Three servers went down and also a very frustrated computer technician."

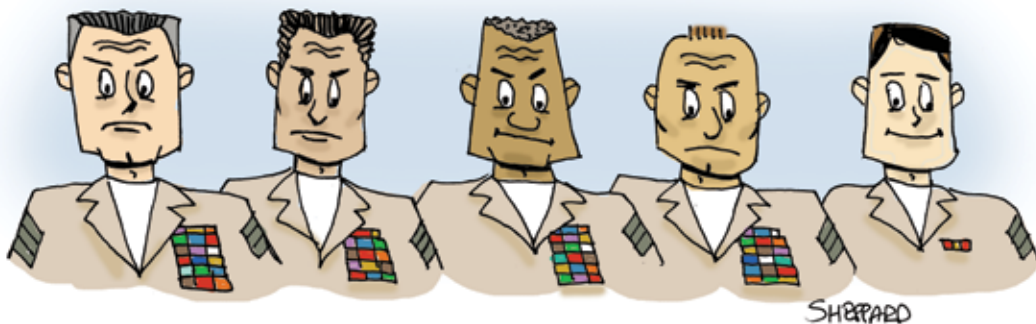


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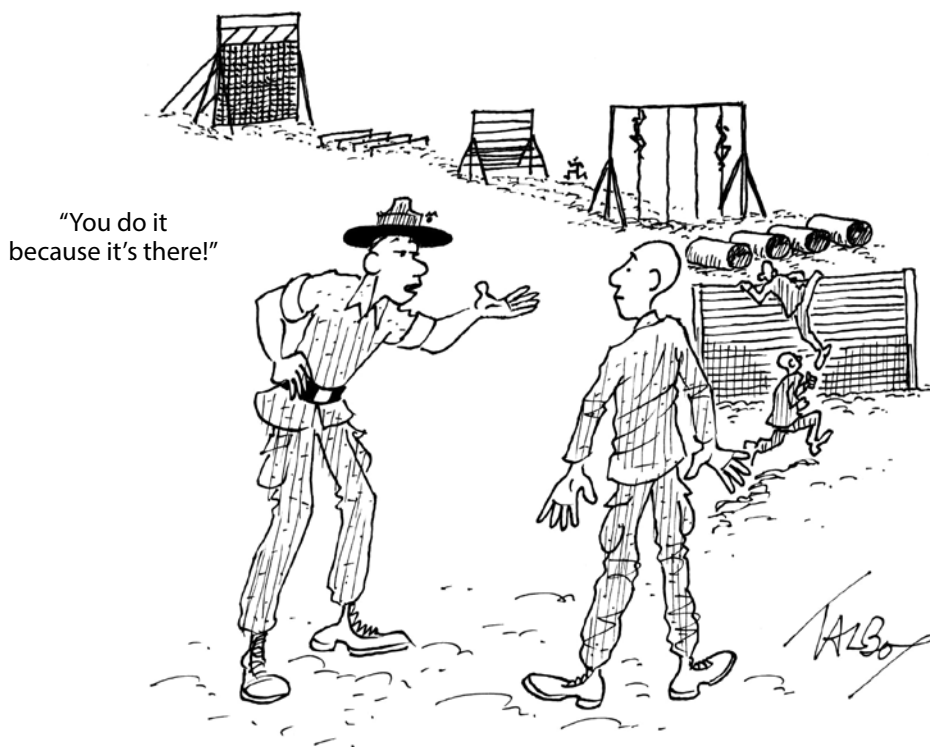
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Office of Naval Research: Preparing the Marine Corps for Battlefields of the Future

By Sam Lichtman

“My predecessor told me ... ‘we don’t have lightsabers and hover tanks in the basement here, but it’s right down the road.’ ”

—Colonel Frederick Lance Lewis Jr.,
USMC, Assistant Vice Chief of
Naval Research (AVCNR)

The United States military is the most technologically sophisticated fighting force the world has ever seen. Its dominance comes not from its immense size, but from its ability to rapidly project force on a global scale, powered by an ever-improving arsenal of hardware and software the likes of which only a science-fiction writer could predict. The Marine Corps has always organized itself to be as flexible as possible, and with Force Design 2030 refocusing the Corps around that principle, it will need to modernize more rapidly than ever before. Force Design 2030 asserts that it is imperative to “transform the Marine Corps into a more agile, efficient, and technologically advanced force to meet the challenges of the future.” Proudly leading that charge are the devoted men and women of the Office of Naval Research (ONR).

The Office of Naval Research traces its roots back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a time of rapid change. For the denizens of Europe and North America, industrialization changed every facet of life; how we ate, how we worked, how we traveled, and especially, how we fought. The First World War proved to the world’s generals and admirals that a military even a few years out of date would be hopelessly outmatched on the modern battlefield, a fact of which American leaders were especially aware. Exactly 100 years ago this month, on July 2, 1923, the Naval Research Laboratory (NRL) was established to lead technological research and development programs throughout the Department of the Navy, including the Marine Corps. Throughout the interwar period and during World War II, NRL completed early pioneering



Above: One of the Varjo MR-3 mixed reality headsets that was used during 1st ANGLICO Certification Exercise 2-23 at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., Jan. 11. The Office of Naval Research works to bring technology like this to a sufficient level of reliability for use in the field. (Photo by LCpl Joseph Helms, USMC)

Right: CWO-2 Jeff Wright uses the ONR TechSolutions-sponsored KILSWITCH Surface Danger Zone tool to plan live-fire training for a Cobra Gold military exercise at Ban Chan Khrem Royal Thai Naval Base in Thailand, Aug. 10, 2017. (Photo courtesy of Office of Naval Research)



work on many of the technologies we take for granted today: remotely piloted aircraft, sonar, and radar, just to name a few.

Coming out of World War II, American geopolitical strategists recognized that the U.S. had the opportunity to become the dominant military power in the world but could only do so by maintaining a technological edge over foreign adversaries. To that end, on Aug. 1, 1946, President Truman signed Public Law 588, establishing the Office of Naval Research to “plan, foster and encourage scientific

research in recognition of its paramount importance as related to the maintenance of future naval power, and the preservation of national security.” Since then, ONR has overseen all U.S. naval science and technology programs, coordinating NRL’s work with that of other laboratories across the country and around the world.

For new technologies to meet warfighters’ needs, the people developing those technologies need perspective on how their work actually makes a difference to the end user. To that end, ONR draws its manpower from the operational mil-

Right: 1stLt Kolby Wickman, an assault amphibious vehicle officer with 2nd Assault Amphibian Bn, 2ndMarDiv, prepares to reload an XM914 System during a demonstration at Camp Lejeune, Sept. 10, 2021. Marines from 2ndMarDiv partnered with ONR to demonstrate a remote live fire using a 30 mm system attached to a Joint Light Tactical Vehicle.

Below: Technicians with ONR fire an XM914 System mounted to a JLTV during a demonstration at MCB Camp Lejeune, Sept. 10, 2021.



LCPL REINE WHITAKER, USMC



LCPL REINE WHITAKER, USMC



CPL ERIC RAMIREZ, USMC

Marines and Sailors assigned to II MEF inspect the Autonomous Casualty Evacuation system during Technology Operation Experimental Exercise (TOEE) 22 on Camp Lejeune, Aug. 4, 2022. The ACE system is an experimental technology that enables Marines and Sailors to autonomously transport a casualty to a higher echelon of care. TOEE 22 is an exercise, in partnership with ONR, where Marines and Sailors leverage key technologies in realistic, operational conditions.

“How are we going to get from where we are now to Force Design 2030?” My job as the assistant vice chief of naval research is to ensure that Marine Corps’ equities are being met in science and technology development.”

itary. Its senior leadership consists of actual warfighters who have already served on air, land, and sea; several have combat experience. Even many of the civilian employees are veterans now in their second careers. Because the Marine Corps is an integral part of the Department of the Navy, the positions of vice chief of naval research (VCNR) and assistant vice chief of naval research (AVCNR) are always staffed by Marines so they can advocate for the Corps’ future needs.

Pushing the Marine Corps into the future is a huge responsibility. As the VCNR, Brigadier General Kyle B. Ellison also serves as the Commanding General of the Marine Corps Warfighting Lab (MCWL), the Futures Directorate, and the Wargaming Center. “He’s a very, very busy individual,” confirms Colonel Frederick Lance Lewis Jr., the AVCNR. “What he has put out is a campaign plan for, ‘How are we going to get from where we are now to Force Design 2030?’ My job as the assistant vice chief of naval research is to ensure that Marine Corps’ equities are being met in science and technology development.” Col Lewis came to ONR last summer after three years as the commanding officer of Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni.

As a pilot with more than 3,900 total flying hours, including more than 400 in combat, Lewis is intimately familiar with the importance of the work ONR does. Throughout his 27-year career, he has observed and directly benefited from a slew of new technologies developed at least in part by the organization he now helps lead.

“It’s interesting because you don’t think about it in real time. I’m an F-18 pilot by trade. When I started flying the F-18 in ’99, there was no GPS in the aircraft! There were no GPS weapons. Laser-guided weapons were ... something



A Portable Fluid Analyzer Plus is shown during Technology Operation Experimentation Exercises 2022 on Camp Lejeune, July 26, 2022. (Photo by LCpl Jessica J. Mazzamuto, USMC)

that was talked about in hushed tones. Targeting pods were in their infancy,” Lewis said. “And now go to today ... what I’ve seen is total immersion in GPS. GPS weapons and laser-guided weapons, that’s the norm. If you’re dropping a ‘dumb’ bomb, that’s the rare, exciting exception.”

Beyond precision-guided munitions, Lewis has seen new technologies pervade every aspect of warfighting. “Helmet-mounted queueing system, Link 16, improvements in radar, targeting pods—holy cow, we could talk forever about advances in targeting pods—downlink video, SATCOM, all kinds of things that have been incorporated now into aircraft,” Lewis said. “On the ground side, never did I think when I was doing my first FAC [forward air controller] tour, when I was on my ground tour in Iraq, ’04-’05, that you would be able to livestream video down to a battalion COP [common operational picture], and now it’s normal,” he added.

“Some of the up-armor capability, MRAP [Mine Resistance Ambush Protected vehicles], QuikClot, all of these things, you just think about ... holy smokes, none of that stuff was thought of, invented, and it all started in a place like this,” Lewis said. “For me, I’ve seen that arc of technology and just how valuable technology is, and what does it take to deliver it to the fleet, having been on the user end of it.”

Each of ONR’s five departments, called Codes, directly manages programs within a specific area; the Warfighter Performance department, officially designated



BGen Kyle B. Ellison



Col Frederick Lance Lewis Jr.



John Tucker, a research physicist with the Office of Naval Research laboratory, right, and Peter DeSalva, a support contractor with ONR, teach Marines with Combat Logistics Battalion 8, Combat Logistics Regiment 2, 2nd Marine Logistics Group, about Portable Fluid Analyzer Plus during TOEE 2022 on Camp Lejeune, N.C., July 26, 2022. (Photo by LCpl Jessica J. Mazzamuto, USMC)

Code 34, does a great deal of work that directly benefits Marines on the ground. From its headquarters in downtown Arlington, Va., ONR coordinates each department's work at various research centers throughout the U.S. and abroad, such as NRL, MCWL, and the many Naval Surface Warfare Centers (NSWCs). Secure networks allow scientists and engineers there to collaborate in real time with their counterparts in other services of the U.S. military, allied militaries, research universities, and the private sector. Reporting to Col Lewis are five Marine officers, one in each Code, who leverage their scientific education and Marine Corps experience to direct the program officers' research.

To equip Sailors and Marines for the battlefield of the future, ONR must first be able to predict that future. As the expeditionary portfolio director, veteran Marine Billy J. Short Jr. tries to do just that. In the absence of a crystal ball, he and his associates use a three-part time-scale to analyze the future based on the levels of maturity of various new technologies. "The close, deep, and deeper fight is what we call it," he says. "I need to make sure that we have a spectrum of technologies that the Marine Corps can

adopt over that timeline." In this context, "close" refers to programs which should conclude within the next three to five years, yielding results that will likely benefit many of the Marines reading this article today.

One example of a technology nearing maturity is a device known as the Portable Fluid Analyzer Plus (PFA+), which promises to significantly streamline the workflow for any Marine whose MOS involves vehicle maintenance. An important but underappreciated part of keeping vehicles running is checking lubricants, fuels, and hydraulic fluid for contaminants

or debris that could indicate or even directly cause a vehicle to break down at the worst possible moment.

Currently, fluid testing requires the Marine to package a sample and ship it to an offsite laboratory that may be hundreds of miles away, then wait days for the lab to send back a detailed analysis. As its name suggests, PFA+ effectively packages all the capability of a fully equipped scientific laboratory into a man-portable Pelican case and completely automates the testing process. With minimal training, anyone can carry the device to wherever it is needed and quickly

TechSolutions is an Office of Naval Research rapid-response science and technology program focused on producing prototype solutions to problems submitted by Sailors and Marines. To learn more, visit <https://www.onr.navy.mil/techsolutions/>



test a fluid sample to determine its exact composition and determine what impurities it has. Once it arrives in the fleet within the next few years, PFA+ will reduce the processing time from several days to less than an hour, allowing maintenance technicians to keep more vehicles running with less work.

During field trials at Camp Lejeune, a PFA+ prototype proved its worth when a vehicle unexpectedly broke down in the field. Instead of canceling the trial and calling for motor transportation Marines to recover the vehicle, the quick-

thinking Marines in the field used the PFA+ unit to test its fuel. Determining that moisture in the fuel system had caused the breakdown, the Marines were able to quickly restore it to working order and continue the scheduled testing, saving untold manhours of work.

Several of ONR's current projects involve the use of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) to create more opportunities for training. Augmented

reality systems combine computer-generated imagery with the wearer's view of the real world, like an advanced heads-up display. Dr. Peter Squire, Ph.D., the program officer for human performance, training, and education works with VR and AR to improve how warfighters use those technologies. He has degrees in computer science and psychology, a rare combination which makes him uniquely suited to not just develop technology, but

Right: Dr. Peter Squire, program manager with ONR, briefs Gen Robert B. Neller, 37th Commandant of the Marine Corps, on the Augmented Immersive Team Trainer (AITT) during testing at Quantico, Va., in 2015. The AITT allows Marines to transform any location into a dynamic training ground by injecting virtual images, indirect fire effects, aircraft, vehicles, simulated people, etc. onto a real-world view of one's surroundings.

Below: Forward air controllers with Tactical Training and Exercise Control Group navigate a training scenario at the Battle Simulation Center (BSC), MCAGCC, Twentynine Palms, Nov. 8, 2022. The BSC has developed virtual training technology in conjunction with ONR.



JOHN F. WILLIAMS



CPL JONATHAN M. FORREST, USMC

understand how people use it. “I don’t do things directly in developing weapons; what I try to do is better understand how we will employ those,” he said.

“I try to help create training capabilities that will support that ‘anytime, anywhere’ training as part of their home station duties,” Squire continued. One of those new training systems is the JTAC Virtual Trainer (JVT), developed in collaboration with the private sector. As part of their MOS, joint terminal attack controllers (JTACs) and FACs require complicated training that can be difficult for a unit to arrange. The time and space requirements to set up a practice range, not to mention the fuel and munitions costs the Marine Corps incurs to dispatch aircraft to simulate close air support, are immense.

“For example, it is costly to do close air support training because you have to pay for pilots, the gasoline, the munitions, so if you can do that and still have the same level of proficiency using a simulated system to complement some live-fire activities, I think there’s a huge ability of going after that type of approach,” Squire said.

ONR’s JVT leverages virtual reality technology to turn any space into a virtual training environment, complete with virtual aircraft, so that Marines can practice crucial combat skills more often

Right: Sgt Mason Whatley, a radio operator with 1st ANGLICO, I Marine Expeditionary Force Information Group, uses a Varjo XR-3 mixed reality headset during 1st ANGLICO Certification Exercise 2-23 at Camp Pendleton, Jan. 11.

than is currently possible. JVT’s advantages in cost and convenience promise to make it a valuable addition to the Marine Corps’ toolbox.

“Some of what we do is early basic research that can take 10-30 years to fully develop,” said Short. Much of the fundamental technologies ONR is presently investigating at universities will not be mature and ready for deployment until many of today’s Marines have already left the military. It will be a very different Marine Corps and a new generation of Marines who field this new hardware. This foundational research can lead to breakthroughs that provide us a disproportionate advantage over other evolutionary developments.

Short, who earned graduate degrees in

chemistry and physics, retired from the Marine Corps having served as a combat engineer officer. His combination of a strong science background and experience as a Marine gives him a unique perspective into both the new technologies reaching maturity and how warfighters can use those technologies in their work. In discussing the way new technologies are promulgated throughout the fleet, he divides them into two categories based on what drives them: pull and push.

“Tech pull,” as Short calls it, is what happens when a program works to develop some capability requested by the fleet. These programs arise directly from the needs of warfighters, as identified from the results of exercises and war-games. “We see that when we take what



LCPL JOSEPH HELMS, USMC



CPL JONATHAN M. FORREST, USMC

Marines with Tactical Training and Exercise Control Group conduct training in a virtual battlespace at the Battle Simulation Center, MCAGCC, Twentynine Palms, Nov. 8, 2022.

**ONR’s JVT leverages
virtual reality technology
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currently possible.**



CPL JONATHAN M. FORREST, USMC

Above: Maj Michael Furr, left, and Capt Tyler Jacobsma, forward air controllers with Tactical Training and Exercise Control Group, conduct training in a virtual battlespace at the Battle Simulation Center, MCAGCC, Twentynine Palms, Nov. 8, 2022.

The ONR TechSolutions program allows Navy and Marine Corps servicemembers to submit their ideas for new technologies that could solve existing problems and enhance warfighter capabilities.



LCPL JOSEPH HELMS, USMC

Capt Reginald Walker, a UH-1Y pilot with 1st ANGLICO, I Marine Expeditionary Force Information Group, directs a virtual aircraft during 1st ANGLICO certification exercise 2-23 at Camp Pendleton, Jan. 11.

we currently have and mix it up with the adversary's capabilities, we've got a big gap here. That gap can then get translated into a technology need that then becomes a 'pull.' "

"Tech push," on the other hand, happens when ONR's program managers identify a new or emerging technology which could provide a benefit Sailors and Marines, then develop that technology into a usable form. ONR has an entire portfolio called the Innovative Naval Prototype Portfolio consisting of such programs. "For that portfolio, we don't need a requirement, we don't need resources, all we have are scientists and informed discussions with our warfighters to say, 'hey, we think this technology is ... a moonshot and can have game-changing aspects, and regardless of what feedback you're giving us right now, we're saying that from a

technical level, if this was fully and successfully developed, this is probably going to change the way you fight.' " In other words, with tech pushes, the scientists and engineers try to provide new hardware before the men and women in the fleet even know they need it.

Everyone at the Office of Naval Research is deeply invested in the work they do and how it affects the men and women in the fleet. When any individual Sailor or Marine identifies a problem that could be solved with new technology, ONR wants to know as soon as possible so their scientists and engineers can develop that technology. To that end, the ONR TechSolutions program allows Navy and Marine Corps servicemembers to submit their ideas for new technologies that could solve existing problems and enhance warfighter capabilities. ONR communicates with the applicant to fully understand the problem, and if the solution can be developed in a timely and cost-effective manner, devotes resources to the project.

"Our job here is to maintain our technological edge over any adversary out there, and ... if anybody's foolish enough to take a swing at the Navy and the Marine Corps, that that's an unfair fight in our advantage," said Lewis. "That idea is permeated from the top, from General Ellison, down to every single program officer that I've ever come across."

The researchers' high level of motivation is palpable. "There are some folks who are really, really hungry to make sure that it is an unfair fight out there, and it is truly, truly exceptional to be in their presence and to feel their energy," said Lewis. "I mean, you can just feel it coming off of them, you know? You get bogged down with budget and all that stuff, and then you go talk to the folks and they just could not be more excited about this new thing they came up with that's going to make it unfair for our adversaries," he added.

Any team succeeds or fails based on the contributions of each of its members, and ONR exemplifies this principle perfectly. From the command leadership to the program officers, the whole organization is pervaded by a strong culture of enthusiasm for the work they do, an understanding of its value, and a sense of responsibility toward the Sailors and Marines they support.

Author's bio: Sam Lichtman is a freelance writer who specializes in small arms technology and military history. He has a weekly segment on Gun Owners Radio. He is a licensed pilot who lives in Virginia. 🦋

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Alexandria, Va.



SGT RACHAELANNE WOODWARD, USMC

MCA Recognizes Marines at Information Awards Dinner

On April 20, the Marine Corps Association hosted its 4th annual Information Awards Dinner. Fifteen individual and four unit awards were given out to information communities including Intelligence; Command, Control, Communications and Computers (C4); and Cyber.

Co-hosted by the Deputy Commandant for Information, the event recognized Marines, civilians, and units from around the Corps for their superior performance in making an impact in the information environment. Notably, Marine Wing Communications Squadron 38 received the LtCol Kevin M. Shea Memorial Unit of the Year Award. Several Marines from the squadron attended the event to accept the award.

General David H. Berger, Commandant of the Marine Corps, attended the event as the guest of honor. Also in attendance was First Lieutenant Gerald F. Merna, USMC (Ret). Merna, at left in the photo with Gen Berger, is a staple of the Northern Virginia-based veteran community, and was honored as the oldest Marine at the Commandant's Marine Corps Birthday Ball last November. At the age of 93, Merna is still an active member of the Marine Corps Association. He enlisted at the age of 17 in 1947 and progressed through the enlisted ranks to master gunnery sergeant. He was commissioned in 1966 and achieved the rank of first lieutenant before retiring after more than 22 years of service. Merna served in combat with the 5th Marines during the Korean War and returned to war a final time in Vietnam, where he spent 13 months with 3rd Marine Division.

Leatherneck



SGT RACHAELANNE WOODWARD, USMC

Alexandria, Va.

General Berger Speaks at the 78th Anniversary of the Battle for Iwo Jima Commemoration Banquet

The Commemoration Banquet of the 78th Anniversary of the Battle for Iwo Jima was held in Arlington, Va., on Feb. 18, and served as both the culmination of a three-day reunion of Iwo Jima veterans and as a historical symposium. Sponsored by the Iwo Jima Association of America (IJAA), the Hershel "Woody" Williams Spirit Award was presented during the banquet to the 29th Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Alfred M. Gray, USMC (Ret) and also to The Potomac Institute for Policy Studies. In 2022, the IJAA created this award to honor the service of Medal of Honor recipient Hershel "Woody" Williams.

The Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen David H. Berger, right, spoke during the event saying, "We don't call them the greatest generation for nothing—they've earned it. And they did so much more after they fought against a determined foe. They inspired us. They inspired generations of Marines, Sailors, soldiers and airmen. They helped forge the spirit of a nation today, and I think they embody the American spirit. I think it's time we recognize



MAJ FRED C. LASH, USMC (RET)

that these men are not just defined by their heroism, but by the example they set for the rest of us ... and we will make it our mission to make sure that their legacy doesn't stop here."

Submitted by Maj Fred C. Lash, USMC (Ret)

Washington, D.C.

Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society Ball Raises Money for Sea Service Families in Need

After a three-year hiatus due to the pandemic, the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRS) hosted their fundraising ball on March 25 and raised more than \$500,000. Senior military leaders, NMCRS supporters, corporate executives and military families gathered in support of the organization's mission of providing financial, educational, and other assistance to active-duty and retired members of the sea services, their family members, and survivors. With the theme of "Together Again," the event included a reception, dinner, silent auction and dancing. In attendance was General Eric M. Smith, Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, right, who thanked NMCRS volunteers and employees for extending the special kind of care and compassion that assists clients when they need it most.

"The Society is proud to play an important role in the financial, personal and family readiness of those who wear the cloth of our nation," said retired Lieutenant General



Gen Eric M. Smith

Robert R. Ruark, president and CEO of NMCRS, during his speech. "Long deployments, family separations, frequent relocations and other unique environmental factors create exceptional hardships for those who serve and their families. NMCRS exists to be a helpful resource when needed."

Since the ball was last held in 2019, NMCRS has provided over \$141 million in financial aid and served over 230,000 clients. This event demonstrates the organization's commitment to providing Servicemembers with urgent financial assistance, financial education, scholarships and much more.

"Our goal at NMCRS is to make it as easy as possible for Marines and Sailors to ask for help," continued Ruark. "In everything we do, we are preparing clients for a solid financial future."

Submitted by NMCRS

"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. 📷

Celebrating America's Music: The 225th Anniversary of *"The President's Own"*



Right: MGySgt Duane King, the drum major of The President's Own, leads the band down Center Walk during the Friends and Family Friday Evening Parade, Marine Barracks Washington, D.C., April 26, 2019.

Below: On Wednesday, July 20, 2022, the Marine Band performed at a gala concert at the Zofin Palace in Prague, Czech Republic. (Photo by GySgt Rachel Ghadiali, USMC)



LCPL JAMES BOURGEOIS, USMC

By Kyle Watts

This year marks several significant milestones in the legacy of “The President’s Own” United States Marine Band. July 11 marks the band’s 225th anniversary, and although the organization looks nothing like it did in 1798, its enduring fame and popularity has changed little as the band remains the oldest professional band in the nation.

Less than three years after President John Adams signed an act of Congress establishing the United States Marine Band, the nation’s third president, Thomas Jefferson, claimed the band as his own following his inauguration, bestowing upon the organization their prized nickname and their musical duties have evolved over the years, extending far beyond the White House and Washington, D.C.

It proved to be a struggle to find and enlist the original 32 drummers and fifers in 1798. The band procured financing only through the Commandant’s “suggestion” that the officers in his young Corps of Marines donate roughly 50 percent of a month’s paycheck. Today, the organization operates with stunning sophistication and organic support, consisting of well over 100 musicians and full-time staff.

The band has performed through some of the most significant events in American history. On Independence Day in 1848, the band celebrated the laying of the cornerstone of the Washington Monument. Members stood alongside President Abraham Lincoln in 1863 as he delivered his immortal Gettysburg Address. A century later, in 1963, the world witnessed “The President’s Own” on TV as they led the funeral procession for President John F. Kennedy. On Sept. 11, 2002, the band helped Americans honor our fallen at Ground Zero on the one-year anniversary of the World Trade Center terrorist attacks.

The organization’s high profile and highly public role requires the very best musicians America can offer. As early as 1840, the band officially “separated” from the rest of the Corps. The Marine Corps Manual of that year made the first known distinction between enlistees in the band and enlistees





Col Jason Fettig, the director of The President's Own, directs the band at the Yamaguchi Prefectural Culture Hall Sinfonia Iwakuni in Iwakuni City, Japan, on May 19, 2019.

"firsts" to come in the years following his departure. The year 1922 saw the music of the band enter homes across the nation as the Marine Band radio program was broadcast for the first time, building upon Sousa's efforts to have their music recorded. His vision for the national concert tour expanded further in 1985 as the band performed its first international concert in Rotterdam, Netherlands. Since this first overseas tour, the band has also performed in countries such as Switzerland, Czech Republic, Singapore, Japan, and most notably, in 1990, the Marine Band became the only American military band to tour the former Soviet Union before it dissolved into independent states.

March of this year marked another significant milestone in the band's history as it celebrated 50 years since the first woman enlisted in The President's Own. In 1943, then-director Captain William F. Santlemann supervised the formation of the Marine Corps Women's Reserve (MCWR) Band, a separate entity trained by and operated in conjunction with The President's Own. Santlemann cast a wide net for his auditions, drawing everything from professional players at Juilliard to exceptionally talented female Marines serving in the motor pool. Though it lasted only two years during World War

CPL ANDREW JONES, USMC

in any other occupational specialty, and 40 years later, in October of 1880, The President's Own entered its most transformative period under the leadership of legendary director John Philip Sousa. Only 25 years old, Sousa had already been performing with the band for over a decade. He initiated their first national concert tour, taking the band outside of Washington, D.C., to share their music around the nation. Sousa intro-

duced many of his own marches during this time, many of which endure today with their popularity. He also inspired the first phonograph recordings of the band during his tenure. In 12 years as director of The President's Own, Sousa modernized and expanded the band's repertoire of musicians and events in an unprecedented fashion.

Sousa's legacy and enduring vision for the organization enabled many other



SSgt Alexander Garde
(Photo courtesy of the Marine Band)



Percussionist SSgt Alexander Garde performs with the Marine Band at Wallenstein Palace Garden, Prague, Czech Republic, on July 21, 2022.

COURTESY OF THE MARINE BAND



COURTESY OF THE MARINE BAND

John Philip Sousa, front row, center, with the Marine Band in 1891. The photo was used to publicize the 1892 National Concert Tour.



USMC

Above: The Marine Corps Women's Reserve Band operated under "The President's Own" for two years during WW II and set the stage for women to enlist directly into the Marine Band.



LEATHERNECK

Above: *Leatherneck* featured a classic shot of the Marine Band on the cover of the August 1953 issue, celebrating the band's 155th anniversary.



Silver-Plated Gloves Pay Tribute to Legendary Marine Band Leader

As the most famous director of the United States Marine Band, known for compositions such as “Stars and Stripes Forever,” the official march of the United States Marine Corps, and “Semper Fidelis,” John Philip Sousa maintained an unprecedented level of excellence in his musicians: a standard that has been upheld by every Marine Band director since. Born on Nov. 6, 1854, in Washington, D.C., Sousa grew up near the Marine Barracks where his father, John Antonio Sousa, was a musician in the band.

Sousa served under five presidents during his 12 years as the director of “The President’s Own” before forming his own band, the Sousa Band, which he would lead for nearly 40 years. His presence as a public figure prompted him to pay great attention to his appearance. His uniforms were tailored, and he had a personal valet while on tour with the band. Perhaps one of the most well-known aspects of his public appearance was his use of a new pair of white kid gloves for almost every performance he conducted.

Photos of John Philip Sousa taken while on tour with the Sousa Band in Spokane, Wash., show him wearing these iconic gloves, which he would only use if they were spotless. During one of his tours, he “breezed into a glove shop and ordered 1,200 pairs of white kid gloves at \$5 a pair.”

Sousa insisted on a “fresh pair [of gloves] every concert.”

This event, later dubbed Sousa’s “glove mania” in the *Boston Post*, confirmed the conductor’s unique dressing habit, which would go on to become a part of his public persona.

Now housed at the National Museum of the Marine Corps, these gloves are believed to have been given by Sousa to Earle Poling, owner of the Earle Poling Music Company, who arranged for musical artists like Sousa and his band to perform in Akron, Ohio, on Oct. 11, 1924.

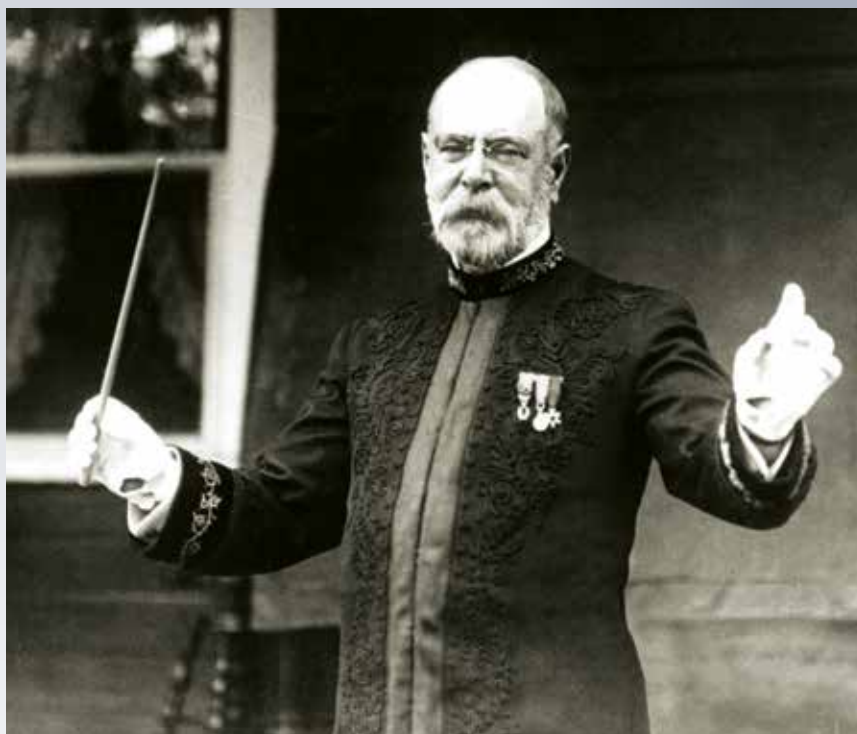
After receiving the gloves, Poling had them dipped in silver as a lasting tribute to the famous conductor.

Jennifer Castro and Briesa Koch



Above: Former Marine Band euphonium player, 1st Class Musician Ole May, created this caricature of John Philip Sousa. It was published in the newspaper *Cleveland Leader*, on Oct. 6, 1913.

Below: John Philip Sousa while on tour with the Sousa Band, Spokane, Wash., 1915.



COLLECTION OF JOHN PHILIP SOUSA, U.S. MARINE BAND LIBRARY

II, the MCWR Band toured the U.S., played live on The President's Own national radio broadcast, and helped the nation celebrate victory in the war and welcome our troops home.

With the MCWR Band paving her way, a 21-year-old French horn player named Ruth Johnson won her audition and became the first female to enlist in the Marine Band in March 1973. Women's roles expanded greatly in the following years with more than 40 women now serving in various playing or administrative capacities.

Major Michelle A. Rakers made history with the band, becoming both the first female assistant director and the first female commissioned officer to serve in The President's Own. Rakers enlisted as a trumpeter/cornetist in 1998 and received her commission and appointment as assistant director in 2004. Rakers progressed in rank over her career, eventually achieving her position as the band's executive officer. She held the position for four years prior to retiring after 20 years of service.

"The MCWR Band was an important part of our history," said Maj Rakers. "Had it not been for them, the paradigm could have taken longer to shift and I may not have had the opportunity to be in [my] position ... We owe them an enormous debt of gratitude."

Like Maj Rakers, the majority of The President's Own spend their entire career with the band. New positions arise only when current members decide to leave because the unit is restricted in its number of authorized positions. Playing in the organization is a coveted role as vacancies are infrequent and limited. Larger sections with numerous Marines playing the same instrument might see one audition per year for new members. Smaller sections, however, can go a decade or more without vacancies. As a result, auditioning for The President's Own becomes a nerve-wracking event for the participants.

"Auditions are run in a similar fashion to a civilian orchestra," said Colonel Jason K. Fettig, the Marine Band's current director. "The standard expected is exceptionally high due to our high profile and public mission. We invite all to come to our auditions at their own expense. We can have up to 150 individuals competing for a single position. Most of our members hold advanced degrees in music, and although that is not a requirement, we have found that this level of education and experience is needed to be competitive."

Staff Sergeant Alexander Garde earned his spot as one of the band's newest



GYSGT RACHEL GHADIALI, USMC

On Sunday, July 24, 2022, the Marine Band performed at Promenadenhof Innsbruck, Kaiserliche Hofburg in Innsbruck, Austria.

percussionists in March 2022. He completed his bachelor's of music in 2020 from the New England Conservatory in Boston and also studied at the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University in Houston.

"Prior to my position with the band, I took other auditions for professional orchestras and military bands around the country," Garde said. "The talent and quality of musicianship in this band rivals any musical group out there. Once I was offered a position, I further understood that I was not just joining a world-class performing group, but a historical institution. All of the musicians in the band today, and those who came before me, have shaped American musical tradition throughout the history of our nation. Being able to observe those practices evolving in real-time is incredible."

Despite his short tenure with the band, Garde dived headfirst into the

concert schedule. In July 2022, just four months after enlisting, he traveled to Europe with the band for a concert tour through the Czech Republic, Austria and the Netherlands.

"Seeing what our performances meant to the audiences in Europe was unbelievable and showed me just how global the reach of The President's Own really is," Garde recalled. "Performing John Philip Sousa's 'The Stars and Stripes Forever' at a palace in Prague to a sold-out, standing, cheering crowd will forever be a highlight of my career, and, truthfully, of my life."

Garde plays alongside many Marines with more than 20 years of experience. Master Gunnery Sergeant Alan Prather, the band's lone guitarist, has 24 years of service, and MGySgt Susan Rider, a trumpet and cornet player, recently celebrated an anniversary with The President's Own, reaching 26 years with the band. In September of this

year, MGySgt Christian Ferrari will achieve an impressive milestone in his career as another trumpet and cornet player, seeing a full 30 years of service with the Marine Band.

New and experienced members alike carry out their role as Marines with the utmost dedication to the band's mission, providing music at the request of the President. This strictly musical function enables band members to enter service with a rank commensurate to pay structures of professional civilian orchestras and supersedes the requirement of recruit training for all others who seek to earn the eagle, globe and anchor.

Other bands around the Marine Corps exist to meet the musical requirements of their individual commands. These Marine musicians complete boot camp and Marine Combat Training prior to attending the Naval School of Music in Virginia Beach, Va. This category of musician includes "The Commandant's Own" Drum and Bugle Corps. Though seemingly similar in dress, mission, and high profile, The Commandant's Own is completely separate from The President's Own in function, organization, and chain of command.

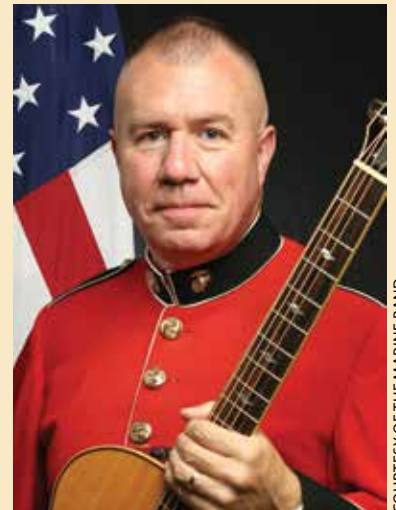
To carry out their mission, Marine Band members live anything but the "9 to 5" life. They must be prepared to perform on short notice and on any occasion. Groups of varying sizes perform over 200 times per year at the White House, nearly 20 times per month. Almost every day, members take part in funerals at Arlington National Cemetery. Evening Parades at Marine Barracks, Washington, fill every Friday night through the summer months. Various other ceremonies keep the band busy in Washington, D.C., but they still manage to execute an impressive travel schedule. Members play in schools across the nation, mentoring high school students, and performing numerous other public concerts. Most notably, each October, around 65 Marines depart on the national concert tour, continuing the tradition Sousa originated in 1891.

Executing a performance schedule of this magnitude would seem to leave no time for practicing their craft, but Marine Band musicians create the time.

"Practicing is the constant that always remains, no matter what our schedule is," said SSgt Garde. "As musicians, we think of playing our instruments like eating food: a neces-



Above: MGySgt Alan Prather, the Marine Band's lone guitarist, playing at the White House on July 4, 2021. (Photo courtesy of the Marine Band)



MGySgt Alan Prather

COURTESY OF THE MARINE BAND



MGySgt Susan Rider
(Photo courtesy of the Marine Band)



Above: MGySgt Susan Rider, a 26-year veteran of the band, performing funeral honors at Arlington National Cemetery on Oct. 18, 2019. (Photo courtesy of the Marine Band)

COURTESY OF THE MARINE BAND



Above: MGySgt Christian Ferrari, center, is the most tenured trumpet and cornet player with the President's Own. September will mark his 30-year anniversary with the band. (Photo courtesy of the Marine Band)



MGySgt Christian Ferrari

COURTESY OF THE MARINE BAND



GYSGT BRIAN RUST, USMC

Above: On Sept. 11, 2022, the Marine Band supported a 9/11 memorial ceremony at the Pentagon.

Right: Col Jason Fettig directed an ensemble from the Marine Band on Sept. 11, 2022, at the Pentagon.

Torrential rain presented a challenge for the band members but did not stop their support of the ceremony.



GYSGT BRIAN RUST, USMC



USMC

The President's Own United States Marine Band in their official portrait, taken on the South Portico of the White House.

sity that we need to do, but also something that we love.”

Many members play multiple instruments in order to meet the musical requirements of the pieces they perform. In the end, the Marine Band does whatever is needed to produce a song in the way its composer intended.

“We’ve had basically the same instrumentation in the band for over 100 years, but several instruments make an occasional appearance that aren’t in our normal set up,” said GySgt Charles Paul, the Marine Band’s chief librarian and historian. “For example, the alto flute, bass flute, soprano saxophone, bass saxophone, flugelhorn, etc. The percussion section is where you’ll really see some interesting things like bowed vibraphones, water glasses, and whistles. Based on the music, you could see percussion instruments like a Turkish crescent, a typewriter, a donkey jawbone, a trash can, or rustling leaves. There was even a piece by John Corigliano that called for a shotgun blast.”

On a stage as visible as these Marines

occupy, a superior level of preparation is required to overcome challenges when they arise. Inclement weather proves a constant worry for all outside performances. In September 2022, the band performed in a torrential downpour at the Pentagon on the anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attack. Music sheets disintegrated in the rain and several instruments stopped working. Somehow, the music carried on.

“Even when the weather is fine, we often encounter situations where the plan must be thrown out the window, and we improvise on the spot,” said Col Fettig. “When you have a unit with the capabilities and experience at the level of The President’s Own, as a leader, it gives me the confidence that we can rise to meet any challenge, no matter how unexpected.”

For over two centuries, The United States Marine Band has overcome the unexpected brought about by the ebb and flow of national events. No matter the occasion, no matter the size of the ensemble, no matter the genre of song, The President’s Own continually dem-

onstrates their ability to bear their cherished nickname and preserve America’s music.

“I could not be more proud to acknowledge that it is the Marines that have the oldest professional band in the country, and that this organization has been in continuous existence serving our Presidents and our Marine Corps for 225 years,” reflected Col Fettig. “I think that says something very important about the power of music and the arts to bring people, and bring nations, together. No country in the world does that better than the United States of America, and it is the honor of every member of ‘The President’s Own’ to continue to serve in that special way.” 🇺🇸

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Cruiser Marines

Marine Detachments in the New Georgia Campaign, July 1943



By Jonathan Bernstein

Throughout Marine Corps history, the seagoing Marines were the elite of the Corps. They were the forward deployed face of U.S. diplomacy and the first responders to threats to U.S. interests. Leaders like Presley O'Bannon, MacLane Tilton and Julius Turrill were indelibly etched into Marine Corps lore for their exploits as seagoing Marines.

The interwar years brought significant debate and upheaval on the roles and missions of the Marine Corps, calling into question whether the Marines were to be an advanced base force or continue as a primarily seagoing organization. Through the 1930s, the Marine Corps was tasked with garrison duty on U.S. protectorates across the Pacific, while the Corps prepared to become a truly amphibious assault-focused organization. However, the role and need for the shipboard force did not disappear.

As the Navy and Marine Corps expanded exponentially during the lead up and U.S. entry into World War II, there was still a significant role for seagoing Marines to play. The Marine Corps was focused on building up the Marine Divisions and separate battalions of all types (defense, tank, parachute, Raider, etc.), and manning shipboard detachments was a lower priority, but capital ships retained a Marine Detachment requirement that would enhance the vessel's lethality.

Considering the three main roles of a shipboard Marine Detachment—provide security, act as an impromptu landing force, and provide gunnery crews for the ship's offensive and defensive combat missions—it would stand to reason that those Marines would come from infantry and artillery backgrounds. With naval gunfire as an increasingly more complex science, one might

Steaming through "The Slot." This shot was taken from the aft superstructure of USS *Honolulu*, likely on July 3 or 4, 1943. Moving in close on the starboard is USS *Strong* (DD-467), which would be sunk by a Japanese torpedo fired at extreme range from the Japanese destroyer *Niizuki* on the night of July 4-5, 1943. USS *St. Louis* is following in column, and USS *Helena* would be following line astern just behind *St. Louis*. (USN photo)



Honolulu's aft superstructure with *St. Louis* visible to the rear. Of note is the quadruple 1.1-inch anti-aircraft gun at the lower left. Immediately above and to the right is the Mk44 gun director which controlled the elevation and train rates of the 1.1-inch guns below. *Honolulu's* MarDet senior enlisted Marine, GySgt Linier Brown, was the NCOIC on one of *Honolulu's* four Mk44 directors. (Photo courtesy of Jonathan Bernstein)



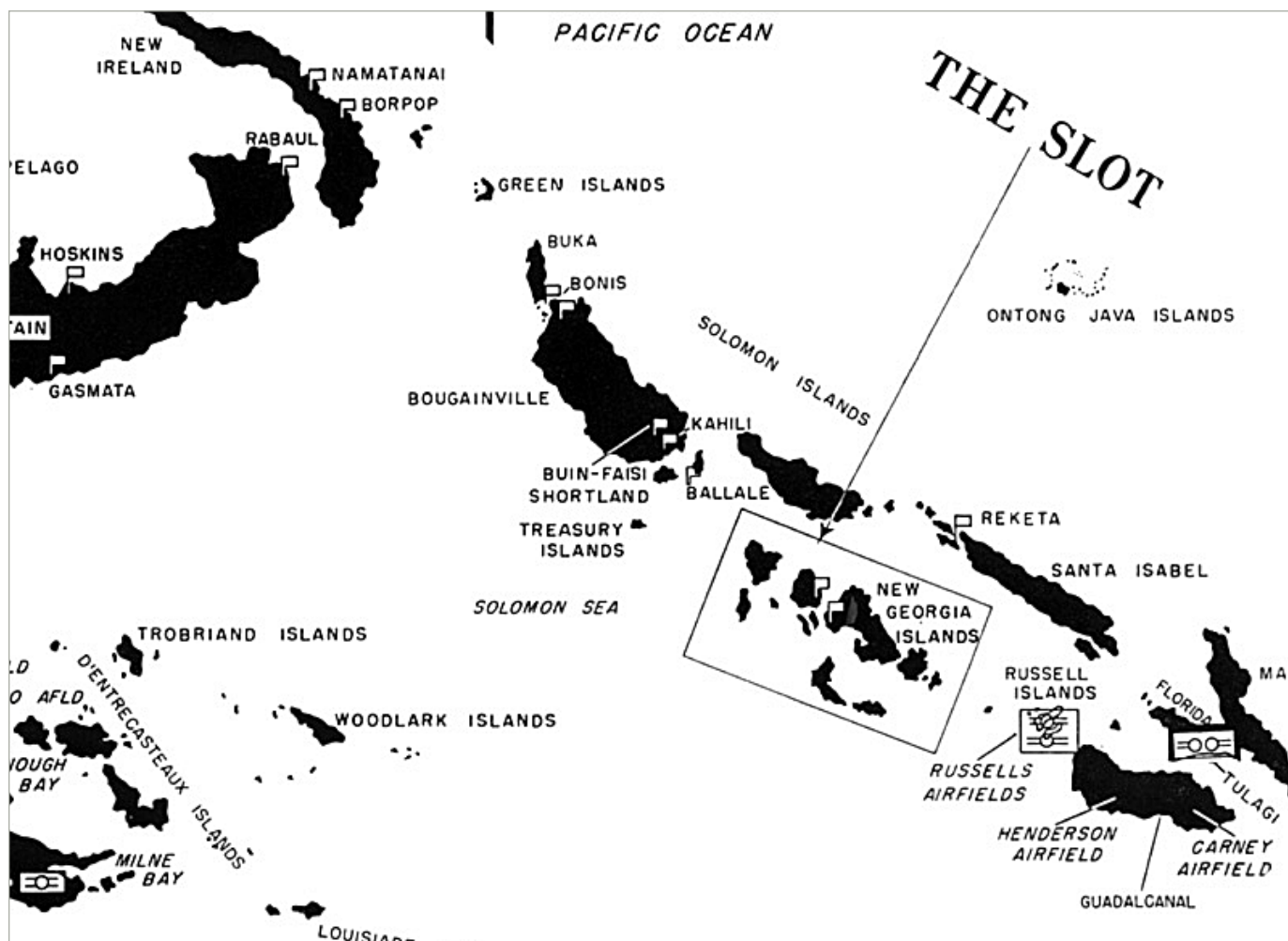
expect an increased presence of Defense Battalion Marines with experience shooting heavy guns at targets moving on the ocean or in the air. Yet it appears that Marine infantry officers like Captain Donald Sherman served capably as main battery turret officers, ultimately proving their training background was secondary to the ship's needs and its on-the-job training regimen. Shipboard Marines served on gun crews, from 20 mm anti-aircraft mounts up to the big main battery cruiser and battleship guns and every gun type in between. The Marines were an integral part of the Navy's capital ship offensive and defensive capabilities.

Because the Marine detachments did not keep command chronologies like other Marine units, their World War II history is largely overlooked. Deciphering their histories often falls on close examination of Navy ship records and Navy gunnery manuals that detail shipboard Marine duties and the roles of each gun crew member and then cross referencing with the existing Marine Corps muster rolls for the ship's detachment for a given month. The muster rolls show that in July of 1943, 129 Marines took part in three major engagements in support of the New Georgia Campaign aboard the *Brooklyn* class light cruisers *Honolulu* (CL-48), *St. Louis* (CL-49) and *Helena* (CL-50).

Capt Donald Sherman, the executive officer of USS *Honolulu*'s Marine Detachment, was the officer in charge of the ship's No. 3 main battery turret and the only Marine officer in charge of one of *Honolulu*'s five 6-inch triple turrets. Aboard USS *Helena*, First Lieutenant Remmel Dudley, a trained artilleryman, served similarly as the turret officer for one of the ship's main battery turrets. The turret officer was the supervisor of all operations within his multi-level turret housing, directing the entire crew on loading, sighting and firing all three guns. He



Back at Tulagi anchorage in early July, *Honolulu*'s ammunition handlers are reloading thousands of main battery 6-inch ammunition. The 6-inch gun fired semi-fixed ammunition, consisting of a projectile and a separate brass propellant cartridge.



Brooklyn-Class Cruisers

The *Brooklyn*-class light cruiser was the last pre-war cruiser design built by the Navy and still had some restrictions placed on it by the Washington Naval Treaty of 1922 (under 10,000 tons and main battery under 8-inch caliber). However, with a main battery of 15 6-inch/47 caliber guns in five triple turrets, the *Brooklyn* cruisers were among the most heavily armed light cruisers in the world. Each ship had a crew of 868, which included a detachment of roughly 45 Marines.

Three *Brooklyn*-class cruisers, *St. Louis*, *Honolulu* and *Helena* were the core of Task Force 18 which had a dual mission in additional fire support for the landings on New Georgia, but also to intercept and destroy the Japanese naval convoys attempting to reinforce their forces on New Georgia.

The last two ships of the class, CL-49 and CL-50 (*St. Louis* and *Helena*, respectively) were effectively a sub-class of ship, as the secondary battery of eight 5"/25 caliber guns common to the *Brooklyn* ships was replaced with four more advanced twin 5"/38 caliber turrets. The two *St. Louis* ships also had refinements to the superstructure and an enlarged Combat Information Center for better fire control.

Jonathan Bernstein

was ultimately responsible for the organization and training of his crew, including powder and ammunition handlers, gun pointers, directors and talkers. The crew would not only have to be proficient under the turret officer's immediate command, but when the turret was placed in automatic mode, it fell under control of the ship's gunnery control officer for gun laying and firing. Efficiency in loading and clearing active guns was critical in a gun crew's performance.

By the summer of 1943, the U.S. was on the offensive in the Pacific. Victory on Guadalcanal had given the U.S. a jumping off point for continued island-hopping operations with the intent of retaking the Solomon Islands. The harbor at Tulagi had become a significant U.S. Navy repair and resupply anchorage, one that would play a significant role in repairing damaged ships in the months ahead.

Despite Guadalcanal and Tulagi being declared secure, the Japanese still controlled a significant portion of the northern Solomon Island chain. Japanese airfields and outposts throughout the rest of the Solomons depended on resupply by the Imperial Japanese Navy operating out of Rabaul under cover of darkness. Allied air power had made it increasingly difficult to operate during daylight hours and reinforcing those strategically important locations with new troops was critically important if Japan was to hold.

The fleet that was used to resupply those outposts came to be known as the "Tokyo Express" and usually consisted of a number of cruisers and destroyers bringing supplies and additional manpower to the increasingly strangled Japanese positions. Their secondary mission was to intercept the Allied amphibious forces attempting to land on Japanese-held islands as the campaign wore on. That next Allied operation began on June 30, with the landings on the west coast of New Georgia and capture of Rendova Island just to the south.

These landings put the Japanese on high alert and increased Tokyo Express sorties to reinforce garrisons on the islands of Kolombangara and New Georgia. With Allied troops on



the ground in need of reinforcements, a second landing was conducted on New Georgia's Kula Gulf shore on the morning of July 4. The primary naval gunfire support force for the landings was Task Force 18 consisting of three light cruisers and four destroyers under Rear Admiral Walden Ainsworth.

TF18 was tasked with suppressing Japanese positions on both Japanese-occupied Kolombangara Island to the west (effectively behind the landing force) and installations on the western coast of New Georgia in direct support of the landings. The cruisers' main 6-inch batteries were ideally suited to the task, and USS *Honolulu* commenced firing at 12:20 a.m., with *Helena* and *St. Louis* following roughly a minute behind the preceding ship as they steamed into Kula Gulf. *Honolulu's* initial target was the airfield at Vila on Kolombangara Island. Firing in automatic mode, *Honolulu's* main battery was directed by a single gunnery controller, with all five main battery turrets slaved to one firing solution. For the first five minutes of the



scheduled bombardment, *Honolulu*'s guns were set to fire at eight second intervals, finally switching to rapid fire mode by 12:32 a.m., ultimately checking fire by 12:35 a.m. as the formation shifted course and the main and secondary batteries of all three ships could be brought to bear on the invasion beaches.

TF18's first foray into Kula Gulf was not without loss, however, as the destroyer USS *Strong* was hit by a single torpedo launched from a Japanese destroyer sneaking down the far shoreline of Kula Gulf. Firing at an extreme range of over 11 miles, the torpedo was the only one of an entire spread that found its mark, hitting and sinking *Strong* just as the task group changed course and turned northwards into the less restrictive waters of "The Slot." They would retire for the safer waters around Guadalcanal during the day, returning to Kula Gulf the following night. The effective gunfire support from TF18 enabled the 2,600 Marine Raiders of Lieutenant Colonel Harry Liversedge's 1st Marine Raider Regiment to get to shore

USS *St. Louis* leaving Tulagi anchorage on July 12, 1943. By the next day *St. Louis* would return to Tulagi minus a significant portion of her bow. (USN photo)

safely and consolidate positions around Rice Anchorage. With the Army's 43rd Infantry Division to the southeast, the Allies had a significant force on the ground.

The previous night's mission was to suppress Japanese forces on New Georgia and Kolombangara that could negatively affect the invasion beaches, but on the night of July 5, TF18 was tasked with preventing the Japanese from reinforcing those positions on New Georgia via the Tokyo Express. On that night, the Tokyo Express consisted of 10 destroyers from the Japanese 3rd Destroyer Squadron, seven of which were transporting an additional 2,600 Japanese soldiers.

Japanese Admiral Akiyama Teruo's flagship, the IJN *Niizuki*, was the only one of his ships equipped with radar, and shortly



"FIRE!" *Honolulu's* number 4 turret (above) unleashes a salvo of 6-inch fury on the night of July 12-13. By this point, *Honolulu* had also run out of flashless ammunition and was firing smokeless ammunition which put her in danger of being spotted and hit. The first torpedo would hit moments later. Photographed from one of TF18's destroyers, the Japanese destroyer *Niizuki* (below) burns fiercely before breaking in two and sinking. (Photos courtesy of Jonathan Bernstein)

after midnight, it detected the U.S. Task Group heading toward Kula Gulf. It would be over an hour before *Honolulu's* SG radar acquired the Japanese ships. Admiral Akiyama's mission was to land the troops under his charge and not to engage the U.S. fleet and therefore he did not engage until it was clear that his ships had been detected.

At 1:57 a.m., the cruisers unleashed the full might of their main batteries under radar direction with all three unknowingly focusing their fire on *Niizuki*. By 2:03 a.m., *Niizuki* was a burning hulk that quickly slipped beneath the surface with all hands, but not before firing a full spread of Type 93 "Long Lance" along with her sister ships. While the Americans fired by radar, USS *Helena* had revealed her location inadvertently and the Japanese fired visually at the perfectly silhouetted cruiser behind her muzzle flashes.

Helena had expended nearly 1,000 rounds of 6-inch ammunition the night before and only held back 100 rounds of flashless powder canisters for its main battery, enough for less than a minute of continuous firing. When those rounds were expended, *Helena* switched to using smokeless powder, the resultant flash of which lit up the ship as a massive target.

The first torpedo hit *Helena* at 2:03 a.m., blowing off her bow,



The loss of USS *Helena* was significant. Although more than 730 crewmembers survived the sinking, 168 were lost or died of wounds aboard one of the rescuing ships. Here, *Honolulu's* Marine detachment fires a salute for those Sailors and Marines buried at sea on July 6, 1943.



just ahead of the No. 2 turret, killing the entire No. 1 turret crew and all but three of the No. 2 turret lower deck's crew. It is likely that Private First Classes Albert Davis, Jesse Jones and Jack Kempe along with Private John Supitowsky were members of the forward battery gun crews, serving as powder cartridge handlers in the lower portions of the turret. The only survivors from turret No. 2 were on the shell deck just below the turret and those in the gun turret itself.

While the loss of life was significant, the hit might have been survivable, but two more torpedoes hit amidships moments later, breaking *Helena's* back and finishing her off. Within the first five minutes of the engagement, the Japanese flagship and a U.S. light cruiser were sinking.

While *Honolulu* and *St. Louis* were certain they'd hit all of the Japanese ships and sunk more than one, reality was somewhat different. In all, six Japanese destroyers were hit, but four of them received only minor damage and were able to continue their missions. The Japanese force withdrew by 3 a.m., which allowed the screening U.S. destroyers to pick up *Helena* survivors.

According to *Helena's* MarDet report, "One officer and 31 men of the detachment were rescued by destroyers after being in the water for several hours." *Helena's* MarDet commander, Major Bernard Kelly, who had reported aboard in July 1941, was missing. He and five other Marines spent roughly 30 hours in the water before securing a drifting rubber raft dropped by a rescue aircraft and gathering up another 20 or so survivors. After rigging up a makeshift sail and paddling as best they could for a day and a half, the survivors made it to Vella Lavella.

The local natives helped in hiding the survivors from Japanese patrols that were active in the area, and by midday on July 9, the

natives had gathered up about 93 enlisted men (including five Marines) and 11 officers (including the MarDet's commanding officer) in the bivouac area. The natives provided a few rifles and some ammunition for the survivors to defend themselves against Japanese patrols and got word through the coast watcher network that the survivors were there. Six days later, at 4 a.m. local time, an APD destroyer transport with additional destroyer escorts arrived to rescue the survivors from Vella Lavella. The five Marines and Major Kelly, accompanied by six volunteer sailors, covered the evacuation with the few weapons they had. When everyone was safely aboard the transport, Maj Kelly and his Marines were the last off the island.

Meanwhile, three days earlier in the early morning hours, TF18 was called on again to intercept the Tokyo Express. *Helena* had been replaced by the Royal Navy's cruiser HMNZS *Leander*, which fell in between *Honolulu* and *St. Louis* with the TG's five destroyers providing a forward screen and five more from Task Group 31.2 screening aft.

The action on July 13 played out in similar fashion to the previous week's engagement. U.S. cruisers commenced firing with overwhelming 6-inch firepower, completely demolishing the lead Japanese ship, while Japanese Type 93 torpedoes hit the U.S. ships accurately. Luck, however, was on the Allied side this time. The three cruisers completely demolished the light cruiser *Jintsu* after it attempted to illuminate the Allied task force by searchlight. After taking a number of hits and burning fiercely, *Jintsu* broke in half and sank. But the Japanese torpedoes found their marks again, with mixed results. *St. Louis* and *Honolulu* took torpedo hits to their bows, fortunately forward of where *Helena's* bow was severed. *Honolulu* took a second torpedo hit aft, but it failed to detonate, just punching



USN

While two torpedoes hit *Honolulu* on July 13, only one detonated, taking off a significant portion of her bow in front of the number one turret. The second torpedo hit toward the stern and was observed to be porpoising out of the water just before it hit. The warhead never detonated, but the torpedo punched a nice hole in the side of the hull.

a hole in the hull just above the waterline. Both ships were able to limp back to Tulagi for repairs.

The Japanese loss of the *Jintsu* was the only tactical loss, but replacing the ship and crew would prove a far greater challenge to the Japanese. The Japanese transports were able to withdraw and land their 1,200 troops on the western side of Kolombangara, but the action on July 13 was the last time they attempted to

reinforce positions via Kula Gulf. Japanese resistance on New Georgia would continue through the last week of August, and the Japanese would evacuate both Arundel and Kolombangara islands by the end of September.

After being fitted with makeshift bows at the Tulagi anchorage, *Honolulu* and *St. Louis* would head back to the U.S. for major repairs and refitting. They would later return to combat in the Pacific with new Marine detachments, while the Kula Gulf Marines would mostly be reassigned to infantry, artillery or defense battalions for their next assignments after rest and retraining stateside.

Helena survivor Lieutenant Rennell Dudley was assigned as executive officer of Battery F, 2nd Battalion, 13th Marines and returned to combat on Iwo Jima in February 1945. Captain Donald Sherman remained aboard *Honolulu*, taking over as Detachment CO in October 1943 before transferring to Quantico in 1944 and ultimately returning to the Pacific as part of Headquarters, III Marine Amphibious Corps for the invasion of Okinawa.

Author's bio: Jonathan Bernstein is the arms and armor curator for the National Museum of the Marine Corps. Previously he was the director/curator of the Air Defense Artillery Museum. Bernstein began his museum career in 1991 at the USS Intrepid Sea Air & Space Museum and has served in numerous museum roles since then. He was an Army aviation officer, flying AH-64A and D Apache attack helicopters with the 1-1-4th Attack Reconnaissance Battalion, PA NG from 2006-2012. He has published a number of books and articles on military and aviation history. He is the 2023 winner of the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation Robert Debs Heinl Jr. Award.



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Former Translator Graduates From Boot Camp

It's rare to come across a new graduate of Marine Corps recruit training who has already experienced the chaos of war, but for one Marine, this is exactly the case. Private First Class Aimal Taraki, a former translator and Afghan who once worked closely with Marine forces and other NATO allies in Afghanistan, graduated from boot camp aboard Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD) San Diego on April 7.

According to Taraki, working with the U.S. military to combat insurgent forces such as the Taliban inspired him to pursue his goal of one day becoming a U.S. Marine.

"Growing up, I was always interested in America and the western world, and was always very in tune with American culture," Taraki stated. "I applied for a translator job working with the troops because they were hiring local Afghan people. I worked with Marines and other NATO forces, which is what gave me the idea to move from Afghanistan."

At a very young age, Taraki became familiar with war. He was born in 1994 during the height of a civil war, and he fled with his family from their home in Mazar-e Sharif, Afghanistan, to find a more peaceful life in Pakistan. After spending approximately six years in Pakistan, Taraki and his family were able to move to Kabul, but still experienced the effects of a country embroiled in conflict."

"There's a place called the Massoud Circle [in Kabul], which is right next to the U.S. Embassy," Taraki said. "It was a perfect place for the Taliban to make an attack. They filled a car with explosives, and when they detonated it, I was sleeping. I remember waking up to the explosion and all of our windows were shattered even though we were several miles away."

The experience had a significant impact on Taraki.

During his time in Pakistan, he began to learn English and developed a skillset that would change the course of his life. "They taught us everything in English. The alphabet, math, biology," Taraki stated. "The national language is Urdu, but they don't even start to teach you that until third or fourth grade which was very odd to me ... that you would teach kids English before your own language."

In 2018, after working with NATO forces for two years, Taraki was able to obtain a visa and join other members of his family in America. When he arrived in Sacramento, Calif., he considered many options, but looked back fondly on his time working with the military and wanted to show his appreciation to the U.S. for allowing him to pursue a better life.

"I had a lot of different things I wanted to do with my life after I moved to the



LCPL ALEXANDER DEVEREUX, USMC

PFC Aimal Taraki at MCRD San Diego, on April 3. Taraki is a former translator who supported U.S. forces during the war in Afghanistan. He emigrated to the U.S. in 2018 with the hopes of joining the Marine Corps.

U.S.," Taraki said. "I thought, 'Should I go to college? Start my own business?' I decided that I can do any job and have any career, but first I want to be a Marine. This way I can say thank you to the United States and the Marine Corps for helping me."

Cpl Elliott Flood-Johnson, USMC

While Off Duty, Three Marines Prevent a Knife Attack

Corporals John W. Darby and Bradley J. Feldkamp and Lance Corporal Nicholas M. Dural did not expect their off-duty Saturday would go the way that it did.

The three Marines graduated from Marine Security Guard (MSG) training at Quantico on March 9 and awaited their new assignments as embassy guards. On April 1, after finishing errands in Stafford, Va., the three stopped at a local Chick-fil-A for lunch. They ordered their food then sat down in a booth at the back of the restaurant.

Looking around, Dural noticed two suspicious-looking teenagers glancing over at a man sitting nearby. "When I saw the two individuals, I was on edge a little bit," said Dural.

Moments later, the two teenagers began to verbally berate the man.

"The teenagers went over to antagonize the other person sitting down and while they're antagonizing him, they said something that sent him over the edge," continued Dural. "That's when the man got up and he went to tackle both of them, and they slammed into a woman, pushing her up against a wall."

Dural shot up out of his seat to intervene. Seeing what their friend was about to do, Darby and Feldkamp ran over to assist. Dural tried to de-escalate the situation by telling the teenagers they had to leave, while Darby went over to the woman who had been pushed to make sure she was OK. The teenagers weren't listening, and suddenly one of them pulled out a knife. Instinctively, Dural grabbed the teen's arm to disarm him, bringing him to the ground.

"This is serious; this went from one level to a whole different level. At that point I realized that there are women and children here. I couldn't let anyone get hurt," recalled Dural.

Darby and Feldkamp stood over the two, preventing both the man and the other teenager from causing any harm.

Dural yelled, "Darby, grab the blade."

Darby looked down at the knife that had been snapped in half while restraining the teen who was attempting to pry the knife back from Dural. He reached down and quickly took the knife away, bringing it to the Chick-fil-A manager.

"In the Marine Corps and in MSG training they teach you that your body will push yourself to a limit that you won't understand until you get there. When you're in a high stress situation, you go back to your most basic form of training, and the last training that I had was MSG training," said Dural. "I think the defensive tactics like wrist locks and

the manipulations that we learn definitely gave me the basis to do what I needed to do.”

When the teenager noticed the knife was snapped, he stopped fighting Dural, who then released him. Both teenagers fled through the back exit of the restaurant. Luckily, there were police officers already in the vicinity when the call was made, so they were able to quickly detain one of the teens. Within 10 minutes, the police were able to apprehend the other teenager and bring them both into custody.

The three Marines said that they believe any Marine would have done the same in their shoes.

“We were all in the situation. Dural decided to act. We followed his initiative and then just like that, we went on with it. It should be expected that in any situation where something hits the fan this severely, that Marines will act like Marines,” said Darby.

For their heroic actions stopping the fight, the three Marines each received Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals.

LCpl Dural, a native of Lafayette,

La., has orders to the U.S. Embassy in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo. Cpl Darby, a native of Breau Bridge, La., and Cpl Feldkamp, a native of Ann Arbor, Mich., are both currently serving at the U.S. Embassy in Abuja, Nigeria.

Cpl Keegan Bailey, USMC

Vietnam Veteran Receives Purple Heart 55 Years Later

It was 55 years ago on March 18, 1968, when 19-year-old Lance Corporal Stephen Peagler found himself under enemy fire near Quang Tri in Vietnam.

“I distinctly remember hearing my friend calling out my name from behind me,” said Peagler, recalling the events of the attack. “He was injured, but I couldn’t get to him.”

Peagler was struck in his left leg, and after a second hit to his left arm, he tried to quickly reload his rifle when another round pierced his chest.

“After I was hit in the chest, a nearby explosion threw me back to the ground,” said Peagler. “As I was laying on my back, I looked up at the sky and thought, ‘I’m still alive.’”

Peagler described those long grueling

moments after being wounded as not feeling any pain, but rather a feeling of numbness until a helicopter came to rescue his unit.

“The pain didn’t hit me until I was treated for my injuries,” said Peagler. “I was told that my flak jacket saved me. That vest and my rifle were both torn to pieces.”

After being stabilized, Peagler was transported to a hospital in Japan where he received intensive treatment for his wounds.

Back home, his mother received a visit from two military officers with a telegram informing her that her son had been wounded in action. “It felt like it took hours for them to tell me if he was OK,” said his mother. “I was so relieved when he finally called me from Japan.”

When Peagler was well enough, he was transferred back to the United States, where he was further evaluated at a naval hospital near Memphis, Tenn. From there, he was honorably discharged from the military and returned home. Once he arrived home in Birmingham, Ala., Peagler gratefully reunited with his family. “I didn’t care much about any awards when



CPL KEEGAN BAILEY, USMC

Cpl Bradley Feldkamp, a motor transport operator, left, LCpl Nicholas Dural, an infantry rifleman, center, and Cpl John Darby, a flight equipment technician, received Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals at an awards ceremony on Quantico, Va., April 6, for heroic acts performed while off-duty.



EMILY SMALLWOOD

LCpl Stephen Peagler in 1967, left, and Peagler in 2023, right.

I got home,” said Peagler. “I was just happy to be alive.”

Over the next several weeks, he underwent extensive physical therapy at the Birmingham VA health care system to strengthen his wounded arm and leg.

After he recovered, Peagler attended college and earned his degree in business administration. He then served in the U.S. Postal Service for 33 years, retiring in 2017.

“One day, my mother told me I should have received the Purple Heart,” said Peagler. “I only recently began to pursue

the award for my mother while she is still here. She is 91 years old now.”

After retiring from the U.S. Postal Service, Peagler had joined the American Legion in 2018. There, he met Angela Hunter, a Marine veteran, and Jefferson County Veterans Service Officer, who helped him file paperwork to receive the decorations.

“Not only did Peagler receive the Purple Heart, but he also received eight other awards and decorations,” said Hunter. “It was an honor to help him receive this well-deserved recognition.”

At the age of 75, Peagler was recently notified in a letter from Headquarters Marine Corps that he earned the following awards and decorations for his combat service in Vietnam: the Purple Heart, Combat Action Ribbon, Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Navy Unit Commendation, Vietnam Service Medal, Republic of Vietnam Meritorious Unit Citation, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal, and the Rifle Marksman Badge. “It feels good to be recognized for what I endured over there,” said Peagler. “I’m a very patriotic person. I’m a proud Marine and a proud American. They didn’t always treat us the best, but I still had that sense of pride that I stood for something; even if it doesn’t mean something to anybody else, it still means something to me.”

Peagler received his Purple Heart and other awards on April 7, at the Birmingham VA Clinic in front of his family.

“I’m happy my mother is still here to see me receive these awards after all these years,” he said.

“I have four children, three grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren I’m happy to share this with too.”

Emily Smallwood, VA



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GHOSTS OF BAGHDAD



COURTESY OF COLERIC BUER, USMC (RET)

Then-Maj Eric “Ferris” Buer flew with HMLA-269 during Operation Iraqi Freedom. His book, “Ghosts of Baghdad” recounts his personal experience in Iraq in 2003.

By Col Eric Buer, USMC (Ret)

Editor’s note: The following is an excerpt from the book “Ghosts of Baghdad: Marine Corps Gunships on the Opening Days of the Iraq War” by Colonel Eric “Ferris” Buer, USMC (Ret) and details the opening days of Operation Iraqi Freedom from the perspective of then-Major Buer and his fellow Cobra pilots of HMLA-269, the “Gunrunners,” as part of Task Force Tarawa.

Buer and his copilot, Matt, were Flight 45. Flight 46 was made up of pilots known as “Buss” and “Rosie.” The forward air controller was “Kool-Aid.”

An Nasiriyah, Iraq March 29, 2003

Whoosh. Tick. Tick. Tick.

The TOW missile’s launch motor makes a distinct sound separating from the hardened tube. That was followed by the sounds of the fins moving.

I saw the missile first, coming off the right weapons pylon with a small plume of white smoke. It immediately began a rotation before it stabilized about 200 meters in front of the aircraft. I was nose on to the target and scanning for anything near the second floor.

Matt was tracking the missile. I couldn’t see what he saw, and I was not about to ask him any questions. This was his missile. He wasn’t quiet for long. “I have a good capture and tracking the second floor. I’m aiming about 2 feet below the center window.”

The explosion was anticipated but the destruction wasn’t. The TOW ripped open the entire second floor, leaving a gaping hole. The debris and smoke plumed over the top of the building. Any Iraqi sniper team in that building was, at a minimum, no longer combat effective.

Buss was about 30 seconds behind us. “Kool-Aid, Deadly 46 is wings level.”

I could see Buss off to the left. It was time for Rosie to put another missile into the second floor.

“Deadly 46, hit leads hit, cleared hot!”

There was a sense of relief in the forward air controller’s (FAC) voice.

Once our missile hit the target, I was too close to shoot rockets. Matt took that as a cue to open with the gun. The gun is bore sighted to ensure the reticle in the targeting camera is where the rounds impact. This is an imperfect process, so Matt would sometimes have to walk his rounds onto the target.

Matt continued to fire until the gun hit its lateral and mechanical limit. I called us off the target and our cannon automatically stopped firing as it hit its mechanical limit to the left. There was a moment of silence, then the sound of another explosion. Rosie had nailed it. The force of the explosion could be heard above the chatter of the FAC.

Kool-Aid chimed in. “Those were good hits. 45 and 46, you are cleared for an immediate re-attack.”

“Kool-Aid, confirm you want to hit the same building?” I was waiting for a response, but I suspected he was getting an update from either the spotter, or he was up looking at the damage himself.

Buss was catching up to us. He had cut inside our turn and came back into position on the right side. “45, Rosie thinks he saw several MAMs [Military Age Males] with weapons one building to the left.”

Before we could continue, Kool-Aid

was back to us with an update. “45 and flight, it looks like the remaining shooters have moved between buildings and we are taking fire from the third building from the corner. Do you copy?”

“45 copies, we will be running in from the southeast this time and will call wings level.” The “wings level” call or “In” call is required for our attack and all attack aircraft. It lets the FAC know we are pointed at the target, are clear of friendlies, and ready to deliver ordnance.

It was time to share this with Buss. “46, we are going to run in from the southeast about 340. Once we see the target, we are calling wings level.”

Click. Click.

I continued to turn right. Bam, there it was, 330. We had a nice long final attack run in.

“Kool-Aid, 45s in from the south, 46 right pull again.” I waited for anyone’s response.

Click. Click.

I started to get that pinch in my stomach. There was no damn way the Iraqis were going to let us pound them again with the same tactic. They were going to make us pay. I could almost feel my head shaking left to right, an involuntary “no,” but my hands and legs were pushing us inbound, 330 degrees, 140 knots at 200 feet. The buildings felt close enough to touch.

I called Kool-Aid. “45s wings level. Matt, Master Arms going to Arm.”

Kool-Aid wanted this target now. “45s cleared hot.”

I could tell that Matt had the building in sight. He pulled the trigger on the laser;



COURTESY OF COL ERIC BUER, USMC (RET)



As they fly in to An Nasiriyah from the southeast (above), Maj Buer and his fellow Cobra pilots use a “wings level” call before executing attacks, which lets the forward air controller (FAC) know that the aircraft is pointed at the target, clear of friendlies, and ready to deliver ordnance (left).

it showed 2,300 meters and closing.

Whoosh.

The increasingly familiar sound let me know the missile fired. I saw the brief plume of white smoke and then the corkscrewing missile.

It quickly fell out of sight and was on a stabilized path to the target. Except for the routine noise of the engines and rotors, the cockpit was silent as Matt tracked the missile.

A flash, and then the explosion of

plaster, cement, and metal. Matt’s missile had created a hole that was cleaner than the first, but still caused irreversible damage. I pressed in for rockets, selected my left pod of 2.75” HE rockets and pressed the trigger. A near simultaneous release.

Buss was next. “46s is wing level from the south.”

Kool-Aid was ready. “46 hit leads hits.”

We slowed down on the turn, slowed enough to see Rosie put another TOW



A group photo of HMLA-269, the “Gunrunners,” in Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom 1.

COURTESY OF COL ERIC BUER, USMC (RET)

I didn't like the idea of going deeper into the city to find the suspected mortar position, but here we go.
"Hawk, 45's ready to copy."

into building number three. I was off the target with a hard turn to the east, Buss was in hot pursuit. It looked like Buss and Rosie had covered their pull off with some rockets and 20mm of their own.

Kool-Aid was back. "Nice work 45 and 46. We've got reports of a mortar team one block north of the intersection, call contact."

I was 180 degrees out and headed south. "45s pushing south, stand by one."

I wanted Kool-Aid to realize that we were almost 2 miles from that intersection and would need to come in from the east to get eyes on the target. I eased the stick back and got some distance between me and the desert.

"45 flight, check."

It was my request for an update from Buss and Rosie, a status check. It was an open-ended informal request. It was also a chance for Buss to assess fuel, ordnance, time on station and do a self-assessment. It was a chance for them to verbalize anything that was on their minds.

To my knowledge, there were no Marine ground units in direct contact with the Iraqis at the time. We seemed to be the only show in town. It was good for Kool-Aid, but also made us Iraq's public enemy number one. Kool-Aid was doing his job very well, giving us as much opportunity to engage targets before the Marines of Task Force Tarawa and the 1st Marine Division were sent back into Nasiriyah.

Buss and Rosie had time to assess. "46 has got about 30 minutes of playtime and plenty of ordnance." We had the same amount of fuel and ordnance, so I keyed the mic. "Copy."

Kool-Aid was back on the frequency, "Deadly 45 and flight, I'm pushing you to Hawk on TAD-5." We began another check in with a new FAC. "Hawk, 45 and 46 with you, we got 30 minutes on station for your work."

There was a slight pause. The pause was followed by a confident and clear response. "45, we are taking sporadic mortar fire to the east, I have a 9-line, advise when ready to copy."

I didn't like the idea of going deeper into the city to find the suspected mortar position, but here we go. "Hawk, 45's ready to copy."

I was still flying to the southeast when



Hawk began passing the 9-line brief to Matt. The target was deeper into the city, flying parallel to the river, and one block north of the last targets. There was no easy way to the target. The first option was a low-level approach from the east along Habobi Street, an east-west running road that led into the intersection of Highway 7, which ran north-south through the city. The target was another 300 meters to the west and described as two sandbagged mortar tubes with six to eight armed MAMs.

We had several options, but any plan with us flying inbound from the west or north had us firing towards friendly positions and put us over the city for nearly two minutes.

Firing toward friendly positions would require us to deliver rockets and cannon fire from a shallow dive angle. As the dive angle of the Cobras increased, the surface danger zone decreased. The smaller the danger zone, the less distance the parts and pieces of either a rocket warhead or 20 mm high explosive can



Two Marine Corps AH-1W Cobras provide close air support during a firefight between 1st LAR and Iraqi forces in Northern Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Maj Buer and his fellow Cobra pilots provided similar air support while searching for enemy mortar locations in An Nasiriyah, Iraq, on March 29, 2003.

LCPL ANDREW P. ROUFFS, USMC

travel. This reduced the chances of us sending shrapnel or any effects into friendly forces.

What we were not confident about was flying over the city at 200 feet, executing a pop maneuver or immediate climb to about 500 feet, followed by pushing the nose over into a 10- or 15-degree dive.

If we came in from the east, we limited our exposure to three or four blocks, and avoided flying directly over the entire city. It didn't take a tactical genius to realize low-level daytime helicopter

operations exposed us to nearly every weapon the Iraqis had.

I had an idea, but I was going to wait to hear what Matt had plotted and what the plan from Hawk looked like. It didn't take long to see we were expected to run in from the southeast and would need to nearly overfly the target.

The sun was beating down mercilessly, even with the air conditioning turned to maximum. The canopy gave us great visibility, but also acted as a greenhouse. It had been more than an hour on station,

and we had about 800 pounds of gas remaining. I had emptied my camelback, the sole water source in the cockpit, so I needed a break soon. With the fuel on board, it would be enough to take one or two shots at the mortar position.

Matt had been looking at the map and looking at the 9-line. "Ok, we can come at about a 300-degree heading, can track on about a 45-degree angle from the river, the target is 300 meters from the river in the road intersection."

I thought about that. "OK, this is going



LCPL CHRISTOPHER H. FITZGERALD, USMC

Cpl Alvin Hicks of Marine Wing Support Squadron 373, refuels an AH-1W Cobra from 3rd MAW on Jalibah Air Base, Iraq, on March 22, 2003. A full fuel tank was essential for the pilots of HMLA-269 as they flew over enemy territory.

to be guns from you, I am not sure I can get a dive angle, and we are too close for TOW.”

Time for Buss and Rosie to get the plan. “46, go trail, expect a left pull and guns only.”

Click. Click.

The trail position meant to simply follow behind me, not on either the left or right. I thought that would allow us to make quick corrections for him once we saw the target. It was a crapshoot, but it was the only idea I had based on the environment.

Hawk was back with us. “45, you are cleared for an immediate attack, report wings level.”

I pulled 100 percent power, pushed the nose down from 500 feet to 200 feet,

and rolled out 300 degrees. I saw the Marines from 2/8 to our left. We still had M1A1 tanks off the nose and then the Euphrates River. On the other side of the intersection was our target, still about 1,500 meters out.

The buildings began to zip by us, 140 knots, 200 feet.

“Matt, I’m going. Master Arm going to Arm. Hawk, 45s wings level.”

Nothing.

Every second he didn’t respond felt like 10. We were now only 500 meters east of the two still smoldering buildings we previously hit and running out of runway or at least running out of time to put these rounds on target.

“45’s wings level.” This time with a little more volume, a little more projection, a little more clarity, a little more to say, “Hey, we are hanging it all out up here, I need you to be quicker.”

Hawk keyed the radio. “45 and 46 you are cleared hot.”

We were now two blocks over the city cutting across streets on a diagonal path. We purposefully avoided going down the long axis of any roads to reduce weapons tracking time of Iraqi forces.

I wondered, “Matt, are you seeing anything?”

The tracking angle, or the amount of time from block to block, was just too fast. Matt was trying to compare what he was seeing in the targeting camera to the map, but there was no time. We passed the fourth block when the buildings gave way to a large two plus lane road—Highway 7. As we cleared the last building, we had a perfect view of the intersection.

There they were. Two clearly fortified mortar pits and a dozen or so Iraqi soldiers and armed paramilitary forces looking right at us. I could see their faces, and they were surprised. We passed them as fast as we saw them.

We needed to warn Buss. “46, in the middle of the intersection, just off our left wing, that’s your target!”

I was in a hard left turn. I could see the Iraqi teams staring at me, and they likely didn’t have time to think about Buss and Rosie. We continued a left turn to the south. I had an idea.

“46 is off; no shoot.” I could hear Buss’s frustration, I had dragged them into the city center again, only to again be a 48-foot flying target.

Time to put my idea to work. “Hawk, 45 and 46 requests an immediate reattack from the east.”

Pause. Pause.

Hawk wanted a little more from us. “Deadly, confirm you have the target in sight?”

“That’s affirmative, Hawk, we have the target in sight, but need a better run in.”

Hawk didn’t waste any time, “Deadly 45 and flight, you are cleared for an immediate reattack, you’ll be in from the east.”

The plan would bring us in from the east, but I needed to share it quickly with 46 and then execute it. What we saw were a dozen or so armed MAMs. They were arrayed at the intersection we had just flown over. If we could come in from the east on the street that flowed directly into their positions, we would have more time to acquire and engage them.

I needed to let Buss and Rosie in on the plan. “46, we are going to reset to the east and then fly directly down what looks like Habobi Street. It’s a two-thousand-meter run. Let’s do this in trail. The mortar position will be the second main intersection. How copy?”

Click. Click.

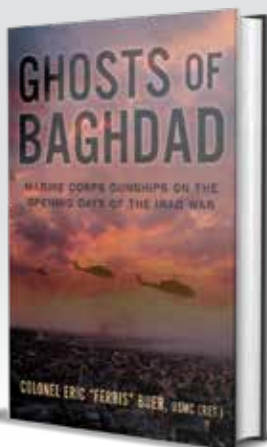
Matt was next. “Matt, you got anything? Once you can get eyes on the target, open with the gun. I will put a pod of rockets into the mortars, and you got the gun on pull-off.”

It was a question, a statement, and a course of action. I got the sense we were all holding our breaths and were all a little unsure about this, but this was the last pass on this target.

Matt was already looking through the camera as I came east of Nasiriyah and tried to line up on the street. I thought we were on the right one, but it was hard to tell. I was doing this starting at 500 feet with a planned acceleration down to

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**Seven rockets, each carrying 2 pounds of high explosives,
impacted almost as fast as they had left the rocket pod.**

I was too close to miss.

300 feet. I had already made our initial point inbound call. All that was left was a wings level call and a cleared hot.

I passed over the caked mudflats that were on the east and south of the city. We passed over the main road that circled the city and lined up on what had better be the right street.

I keyed the radio again. "Hawk 45 and 46, wings level."

Hawk was ready and I'm sure he heard the inflection in my voice this time. "Deadly 45 and 46, you are cleared hot."

"Matt, Master Arm is going to Arm, let me know when you see any ..."

The three barrels began spitting out 20 mm rounds. Matt had the trigger down for a solid eight or nine seconds; that was nearly 100 rounds of 20 mm. The buildings were getting bigger on each side of us, a clear sign I was still descending. I pulled gently back on the stick and leveled out the descent as the

intersection opened about four hundred meters ahead.

The pandemonium in the intersection reminded me of the misfortunes of the Iraqi defenders on Safwan, scrambling in all directions. I could see Matt's 20 mm rounds had devastated the two positions. I had a single pod of 2.75" HE rockets selected. I put the rocket reticle in the HUD on the first position and mashed the trigger.

Whoosh.

Seven rockets, each carrying 2 pounds of high explosives, impacted almost as fast as they had left the rocket pod. I was too close to miss. They impacted the closest mortar position, destroying anything remaining, while sending shrapnel and debris into the other position just meters to the west.

I let Buss and Rosie know. "46, leads off, hit the western most position."

I rolled hard to the left as Matt got off

the last few rounds of 20 mm. Buss was just flying through the intersection and finally announced, "46 is off to the south, good effects on target."

I rolled out south and started an easy left turn to allow Buss and Rosie to join up.

We were done.

Matt and I did a quick assessment, "46, I'm passing two mortar positions destroyed and two sniper positions. Do you have anything else?"

"No, that's what we got, but I think we took some rounds on that pass."

I quickly reminded them it was over, for now. "We are turning direct to Camden Yards."

Click. Click.

Author's bio: Col Eric F. Buer, USMC (Ret) has a degree in economics from Ohio Wesleyan University. He flew three tours in Iraq in the AH-1W Super Cobra from 2003 to 2005. He served on the staff of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, was a professor of national security strategy at the National War College, and later was an air group commanding officer. He is currently a senior executive for an aviation and training company. 🇺🇸

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SEA STORY OF THE MONTH

It Was the Weapon, Not Me!

I can sympathize with Bill Sullivan regarding his 1972 rifle range qualification situation with the M14 that he discussed in Sea Stories in the February issue of *Leatherneck*.

His unofficial score was 214, but the official score dropped him to 209. Bill referred to the marksman shooting badge as the “pizza box;” I remember it being called the “toilet seat.” In 1970 at Parris Island, my disked score on qualification day was 220—Expert. The official score taken in the butts, however, dropped me to 218—Sharpshooter.

That was bad enough, but the following year on the range at Camp Pendleton, I was shooting well below marksman every day. I was holding and squeezing with good sight alignment and sight picture, but some shots would be low to the right in the white, while others were high to the left interspersed with plowing up the dirt berm and Maggie’s drawers. There was no way to even adjust my sights, which were not loose.

Each day got more gruesome. I was in a panic. After finishing on a Wednesday, I complained to my coach that my rifle was screwed up. Of course, he did not believe me. A fellow Marine from my company was in the second relay on my target, and I was on the third. He said he was shooting high sharpshooter and that the next day, when he came off the line after each string of fire, he would hand me his weapon and I’d hand him mine. We’d

continue to swap back and forth. I would shoot his weapon with his dope on the sights for each string of fire at all distances on pre-qual day.

The result was that I fired low expert, and my coach acknowledged the problem was my weapon and not me. I told the armorer when I turned in my weapon how something was wrong with it. Whether he did anything or not, I don’t know. I felt sorry for any Marine who had to shoot that rifle after me.

My fellow Marine, who had just returned from Vietnam, saved the day for me with his rifle swap suggestion.

Coaches, sometimes it *can* be the weapon!

SSgt Bill Jochym
USMC, 1970-1973
Chattanooga, Tenn.

Editor’s note: And sometimes it’s the weather. During my initial rifle qualification at The Basic School, the first half of our company shot in the morning while the second half worked the targets in the pits. Lieutenants whose names began with A-K did well that bright, sunny morning. Then, just as the the company’s second half was heading to the firing line, a wind storm kicked in. Despite wind gusts in excess of 30 mph and pleas from the company commander, the rifle range officer-in-charge wouldn’t close the range. As one of the smaller lieutenants, I was fighting to simply stay upright in the offhand position—forget about holding the rifle steady! End result was the majority of lieutenants whose last names were L-Z ended up with pizza boxes. Even our

prior enlisted distinguished shooter barely escaped the range with a sharpshooter’s badge.

Where Have I Seen You Before?

In the spring of 1957, I was a coach on “Charlie” Range at Camp Lejeune. It was Monday and I had a new group of shooters who were shooting for requalification. In my last relay, there was a captain who was shooting very well. When I complimented him, he told me that he had his civilian rifle and he wanted to zero it on my target. I told him that no civilian rifle could be used on the range while requalification was taking place. When he argued with me, I said that I would need to get the range officer. The captain said that the range officer didn’t need to know. As I turned to go and get the range officer, the captain told me to forget it. But he gave me a look that told me he was very pissed at me. The next day the gunnery sergeant who ran the range called me aside and told me that one of my shooters, a captain, reported that I was neglecting my duties as a coach, that all I was doing was passing out ammunition. I told the gunny about the problem that I had with the captain. The gunny told me to forget it, that he knew that I was a good coach and commended me for sticking to my guns when I knew I was right. Six weeks later I was back at main side of Camp Lejeune awaiting orders to be sent to 3rd Marine Division in Japan. While there I was given an assignment to take a working party to the motor pool to wash vehicles. At

first, everything was going well, but then several of my men began horsing around and spraying one another with their hoses when my back was turned. I told them to knock it off but just then an officer came around the building and was nearly hit by a stream of water. He demanded that the person in charge report to him immediately. As I reported to him, my heart skipped several beats. It was the same captain that I had a problem with at the range. He was reading me the riot act and then hesitated. “Wait a minute, where have I seen you before?” I lied and said I had been stationed with the 8th Marines for the past 18 months. “Very well,” he said. “You had better watch your step; you could lose those stripes a lot faster than you got them.” Somehow, I felt that if he had recognized me from the rifle range, he might very well have charged me with dereliction of duty for the water hose incident. I have always felt that I had dodged a bullet that day.

SSgt Paul E. Gill
USMC, 1954-1966
Shippensburg, Pa.

Stranded in Onomichi

I was assigned to VMFA-323 in Chu Lai, Vietnam, from 1966-1967. We rotated to Iwakuni, Japan, to repair and refit our aircraft for three months before returning to Chu Lai.

Four of my fellow Marines and I decided to take seven days of leave and ride up to Tokyo on motorcycles. After a little less than 100 miles of riding, we rode through Onomichi, a town on the coast of Japan.

From the road, we could

see down into the port where a cargo ship with a large red Russian hammer and sickle painted on its stack was at anchor. We were amused but continued on our way to Tokyo.

Within a few minutes, a Japanese police car pulled us over. We were unable to communicate with them, so we had to follow them to their police station where we showed an interpreter our U.S. military ID cards. After a short question-and-answer session, we were released with an apology. The police officer thought we were Russians from the cargo ship. I guess we looked like Russians to them.

We made it to the outskirts of Kobe, just a third of the way to Tokyo when a monsoon storm hit. We were near a beach and took shelter there in unoccupied sheds near the road. A little later, a young man appeared and invited us to go to his father's restaurant where we were greeted by Papasan and his three sons. They were so gracious and invited us to have dinner and stay the night. We stayed there for three days. On our last night, we threw a party, and we all drank too much sake.

During a conversation I had with the oldest son, he chastised America for dropping the atomic bombs. I replied that Japan had bombed Pearl Harbor first and we got into a heated exchange, but it was stopped immediately. Papasan sent his son packing and we all went to sleep. In the morning, as we were loading up, the banished son appeared with a gift for each of us. We traded apologies and thanks and departed.

After some sightseeing in Kobe and Osaka, we headed back south toward Iwakuni. It was getting late, so we pulled into a small farm hoping to spend the night in the barn. An old Japanese

man came out to greet us. We could not communicate with him, so he called for his grandson who was about 12 years old and spoke fluent English.

They talked for a few minutes and the boy got his motorbike and took us a few miles, halfway up a mountain to a campground. The boy had to return home alone in the dark. We were incredulous that the old man allowed that.

The next morning, we bought more sake and returned to the farm. Papasan came out and we presented him with the sake and a few candy bars for the boy. We had a great experience in Japan.

Sgt Robert Wartman
USMC, 1965-1971
Union, Ky.

Airport Shenanigans

I was discharged at Camp Pendleton on Dec. 7, 1972. Several other guys and I arrived from MCB Kaneohe Bay a few days before.

On the day of our discharge about a hundred of us stood in formation behind a building someplace on base. As the lieutenant called each name, the Marine would march up and salute, and the lieutenant would shake each Marine's hand, and thank them for a job well done.

I remember rounding the corner of the building and leaping into the air and shouting hooray. Three years was a long time.

Another Marine from my unit in Hawaii, Corporal Speilbaur, and I caught a taxi that would take us to the Los Angeles airport. We sat in a seat that faced backwards in a station wagon cab. We had bought a case of beer and were well on our way to being soused when we arrived at our destination. It didn't help that some lady kept buying us drinks at the airport bar.

We were both on a flight to Kansas City. From there,

Cpl Speilbaur was on his way north to someplace near Wisconsin Dells, Wis., and I was headed to St. Joseph, Mo.

As we approached the gate, we saw a group of about five Marines who were straight out of boot camp and who were headed home on boot leave for a few days before they were going to Infantry Training Regiment at San Onofre at Camp Pendleton.

The new Marines were all joking around with their blouses unbuttoned and their field scarves loose, drinking sodas and eating pogeys when they saw us walk up. They immediately straightened their ties and buttoned their blouses. When I walked up, they were at attention and they all said, "Good afternoon, sergeant." Their drill instructors would have been proud of them.

It took me a minute to figure out they were talking to me. Once I did, I decided to have some fun. I gave them a few orders, one of which was "No drinking on the plane. That's an order."

"Aye, Aye sergeant," was the reply.

Before long they called for everyone to board the plane. Metal detectors were relatively new and at that time were just a few feet in front of the walkway down to the plane; the gate personnel were the people doing the screening. The Transportation Security Administration had not been invented yet.

In my state of inebriation, I decided to have some fun. I walked through the machine and set off all the bells. They asked if I had change in my pocket, so I handed it to them. I walked through again and set off the alarms once more. This continued several times because if they did not specifically ask for belt buckle, dog tags, shooting badges, or whatever, I did

not volunteer them. I think they finally got tired of the game and told me to just get on the plane.

Once airborne, the stewardess came down the aisle asking for drink orders. She asked the first few and they all said no. The third Marine said he would like a drink but the sergeant back there (pointing at me), said we can't have any. At that point I kind of sunk into the seat and fell asleep. The stewardess gave me a look that could have melted steel and told him she did not think I would mind if he ordered a beer.

It was about a three-hour flight, and I started to sober up and wake up as we were landing in Kansas City. Looking out the window I could see trees, farm fields, and cattle. The only problem was the Kansas City airport I remembered was downtown right by the river. The only thing around it was the building of downtown KCMO.

I thought to myself, "Oh My God, I got on the wrong plane."

I was a little frantic until someone told me they had built a new airport north of Kansas City. I had been in Hawaii for over a year and had come home on leave earlier that year, but I had not heard anything about a new airport.

Sgt Jim Grimes
USMC, 1969-1972
Wathena, Kan.

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." 🦁



LtGen David A. Ottignon, Commanding General, II MEF, was the guest speaker at the recent Camp Lejeune Leadership Seminar. Military spouses enrolled in the event had the opportunity to learn leadership skills from both active-duty military and civilian executives. Another seminar will take place in the fall.

Camp Lejeune Leadership Seminar Available for Military Spouses

The purpose of the Camp Lejeune Leadership Seminar (CLLS) is to enrich local and military communities by developing, exemplifying, and encouraging servant leadership. Leadership education and training is provided to spouses of active-duty and retired military personnel in order to develop the skills and confidence necessary to assume leadership positions.

CLLS was officially established in February 2018 and is patterned after Command Team Seminar, a program established in 1990 by a Marine spouse in El Toro, Calif. Her intent was to provide leadership training for 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing spouses using materials from the Army's Commanders Spouses course. Initially, 12 volunteers were trained and, soon after, more sem-



inars were planned, organized and executed.

The seminar initially was established with 10 spouses determined to implement a leadership seminar. This program is designed to provide leadership education

to military spouses of all services, active duty and retired.

CLLS is a nonprofit 501(C)(3) organization that employs more than 30 volunteers to operate the seminars and is financially supported by generous local businesses in the Jacksonville area.

The vision of CLLS is to empower military spouses to become leaders in their communities and realize their full potential. The seminar ensures a safe and secure environment is provided where military spouses can learn, grow, and build leadership skills that will last a lifetime.

The three-day seminar is offered twice a year to spouses who are eager to build their leadership toolbox and join a community of service-minded people. For more information and registration dates and contents of the upcoming fall seminar, visit <https://www.cllslejeune.com/>.

Camp Lejeune Leadership Seminar

Museums Will Provide Free Admission to Military Families Throughout the Summer

The National Endowment for the Arts and Blue Star Families (BSF) are pleased to announce that museums across the nation will be participating in the 14th summer of the Blue Star Museums program. From Saturday, May 20, Armed Forces Day, to Monday, Sept. 4, Labor Day, active-duty military families can enjoy free admission to participating museums in all 50 states, District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Additional information and a complete list of participating museums is available at arts.gov/bluestarmuseums.

"Blue Star Museums invite military personnel and their families to experience the many wonders our nation's museums have to offer, whether it's a glimpse into the past, an encounter with awe-inspiring art, or a moment of discovery," said Maria Rosario Jackson, Ph.D., chair of the National Endowment for the Arts. "These opportunities enrich the lives of military families and build meaningful connections within their local communities."

"Museums are a spectacular place to find a sense of belonging, create connections, and have meant so much to my family over the years," said Kathy Roth-Douquet, founder and CEO, BSF. "That is why this partnership means so much to me personally, and since 2010, to the Blue



Military families play at the New Children's Museum in San Diego, Calif., during a Blue Star Museums event on June 8, 2022. (Photo courtesy of National Endowment for the Arts)

Star Families organization. We are proud to partner with the National Endowment of the Arts for another great year of Blue Star Museums across the country.”

Blue Star Museums is a partnership between the National Endowment for the Arts and BSF, in collaboration with the Department of Defense and participating museums across America. Links to all participating museums are available on the map on www.arts.gov website and represent a variety of venues and subject areas, including Arizona's Heard Museum, the Delaware Art Museum, Minnesota's Duluth Children's Museum,

Western New York's Niagara History Center, Florida's Sawgrass Nature Center and Wildlife Hospital, the Rural Oklahoma Museum of Poetry, and the National Farm Toy Museum in Iowa.

Museums can join the Blue Star Museums program all summer long and families are encouraged to check the map for museums in their community or during summer travels. The free admission program is available for up to five family members of those currently serving in the United States Military—Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, Navy, and Space Force, members of the Re-



serves, National Guard, U.S. Public Health Commissioned Corps, and NOAA Commissioned Corps.

Allison Hill, National Endowment for the Arts



In Memoriam

Compiled by Briesa Koch and Nancy S. Lichtman



LtGen Vincent R. Stewart

Retired Lieutenant General Vincent R. Stewart, a Jamaican immigrant who broke many barriers during his 38-year Marine Corps career, died at his home in Virginia on April 28. He was 64.

"I join many others in mourning the sudden loss of Vince Stewart. He was a trailblazer, a selfless leader, and a mentor and dear personal friend to me," General David H. Berger, Commandant of the Marine Corps, said in a statement. "His impact as a leader of Marines and the broader intelligence community cannot be understated. Words cannot express how much he will be missed," Gen Berger added.

LtGen Stewart, who was commissioned in 1981, led Marines at nearly every level of command and was the Deputy Director of United States Cyber Command when he retired in 2019. Prior to that, he was the first Marine Corps officer to lead the Defense Intelligence Agency.

Born in Kingston, Jamaica, Stewart immigrated to the United States in 1971 when he was 13. He attended Western Illinois University on an athletic scholarship, earning a bachelor's degree in history. He was commissioned a second lieutenant in 1981 and completed The Basic School in 1982. He later earned master's degrees in national security and strategic studies from the Naval War College and in national resource strategy from the Industrial College of the Armed Forces.

His awards include: the Defense Superior Service Medal; the Legion of

Merit with one gold star; the Bronze Star; the Meritorious Service Medal with one gold star; the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal with two gold stars; the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal and the Combat Action Ribbon.

Nancy S. Lichtman

Rita E. (Vogler) Adams, 101, of Livonia, Mich. She enlisted and served during WW II. She was stationed at Pearl Harbor.

Robert L. "Bob" Bennett, 92, of Annawan, Ill. He was drafted and served from 1952 to 1954. Later, he worked for Growmark and retired as a sales manager in 1994. He was a member of VFW Post 7176.

MSgt Jerry L. Boyd, 78, in Amory, Miss. He enlisted in the Marine Corps at the age of 16 and served in Vietnam. During his career he was stationed in Clarksville, Tenn., for eight years where he worked as a recruiter. He later had a 20-year career with the Blanchfield Army Community Hospital.

Kenneth "Corky" Clements, 86, of Greeley, Colo. He was a Marine who served with an engineer battalion in the 1950s. He was a member of the MCL.

PFC Ronald Collins, 81, of Henderson, Nev. He was a recon Marine who served from 1960-1966. He had assignments at Camp Lejeune and Okinawa and completed a tour in Vietnam. He later had a career in printing and was an avid motorcycle rider.

Sgt Watson A. Crumbie Jr., 97, of Dallas, Texas. He served in the Pacific during WW II and was assigned to the 6thMarDiv where he saw action on Okinawa. He was called back to active duty during the Korean War where he fought at the Battle of Chosin Reservoir. He had a career in his family's appliance business.

He was very active with the 6thMarDiv Reunion Association and was featured in the January 2022 issue of *Leatherneck* in the article "The Last Men Standing: Battle of Okinawa Veterans Gather for Final 6th Marine Division Reunion."

Leo G. Denis, 99, in Wrentham, Mass. During World War II, he served in the Pacific and saw action on Saipan, Tinian and Iwo Jima. He later had a 30-year career with the Attleboro Fire Department.

Angela (Beaulieu) Daniels, 58, in

Missoula, Mont. She enlisted in 1983 and completed boot camp at Parris Island before being stationed at MCAS Cherry Point, N.C. After completing her enlistment in 1987, she used the GI bill to study business management at University of Montana.

William "Bill" Folkman, 80, of Krakow, Wis. He joined the Marine Corps in 1961 serving as a security guard at the U.S. Embassy in Bonn, Germany, until his discharge in 1966. Later, he worked as a farmer in Angelica, Wis., and in Snelling, Calif.

Capt James Warren "J.W." Gary, 93, of Sugar Land, Texas. He attended Rice Institute in Houston, Texas, where he was a member of the NROTC program, graduating in 1951 with a bachelor's degree in English and economics. He was then commissioned as an officer in the Marine Corps and deployed to Korea. In early 1953, he transitioned to the Ready Reserve where he served until 1960. During his civilian life he practiced law for more than 50 years. His awards include the Bronze Star with combat "V."

Janice M. Gochanour, 79, of DeForest, Wis. She enlisted after her 1961 graduation from high school. After completing boot camp at Parris Island, she was stationed in San Diego. She was a lifetime member of the WMA.

Raymond "Stubbs" Haggas Jr., 98, of Whitesboro, N.Y. He served in the Pacific during WW II and was assigned to VMF(N)-542. He was a member of the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation.

Robert "Bob" Hoelscher, 92, of Hamilton, Ohio. He served in the Korean War.

MSgt Raymond K. Johnson, 97, of Amherst, Va. He was a Marine who served during three wars. He enlisted in 1943 and saw action on Iwo Jima. During his 27-year Marine Corps career he served in duty stations around the world. He also was a DI at MCRD Parris Island.

Sgt Eleanor Jones, 101, of Eau Claire, Wis. She graduated from Cornell High school before joining the Marine Corps in 1943, where she was a trombonist in the Women's Reserve Band. She toured with the band extensively throughout the United States during the war bond tours. After her discharge she continued her career as a musician.

Sgt Hattie H. Kelley, 99, of Portland, Ore. She enlisted during WW II and served on recruiting duty. She had a 30-

year career with Tektronix and was an active member of her local chapter of the WMA.

Kenneth “Ken” Konop, 80, of Green Bay, Wis. He was a member of the Marine Corps Reserve. He later worked as a self-employed auto mechanic.

Cpl Michael “Sonny” Lowe, 72, of Jefferson, Md. He enlisted in 1968 and was a machine-gunner with Co B, 1st Bn, 1st Marines, in Quang Nam, Vietnam. His awards include the Purple Heart. He later had a career as a conditioning specialist and trainer.

David C. Massey, 79, of Green Bay, Wis. He was a Marine who served in Southern California during the 1960s.

Leo McElwee, 99, of Scottsbluff, Neb. He enlisted during WW II and served in the Pacific as a field radio operator. He saw action on Iwo Jima.

GySgt Richard G. Orndoff, 95, of Manassas, Va. He enlisted in the Marine Corps in the closing days of WW II. He retired in 1969, having served during the Korean War and the Vietnam War. After his retirement, he worked as a mail handler for the postal service distribution center in Merrifield, Va. He spent 50 years as a member of the Greater Manassas Volunteer Rescue Squad.

Theresa Malone “Sue” Sousa, 96,

of Essex, Conn. She enlisted in 1950 and was assigned to Camp Pendleton, Calif., where among other things she delivered mail and was chauffeur to “Flying Leatherneck” film star John Wayne. She worked 32 years for the federal government, including working as the exhibits and information officer for a joint venture between the Department of the Interior and NASA. She later was named as the chief visual information officer for the U.S. Geological Survey.


She was very active with the Women Marines Association, serving as the national president of the organization from 1974-1976, and is known as one of the “Founding Mothers.” She was a friend to *Leatherneck* magazine.

MSgt Ralph Wilcox, 100, of Fredericksburg, Va. He enlisted in 1939 and went to boot camp at Parris Island. During WW II he saw action on Guadalcanal, Peleliu and Okinawa. He retired in 1958. As a member of MCL’s Jack Maas Det., he threw out the first pitch on Marine Day for the Fredericksburg Nationals during their 2022 season.

Ronald J. Zaczek, 75, of Havre de Grace, Md. During the Vietnam War he was a UH-1E crew chief with VMO-3 and participated in Operation Deckhouse

V in the Mekong Delta. He flew nearly 400 missions, including medevac and gunship missions and was awarded the Bronze Star with combat “V” for the rescue of three Marines under heavy fire on a hill northwest of Khe Sanh. He recounted his story in a two-part feature for *Leatherneck* in 2011: “Ron Zaczek: The Crew Chief Who Couldn’t Forget the Marines on Hill 665.”

He was the author of “Farewell Darkness,” a book that outlines his post-war struggle with PTSD. He had a degree in mechanical engineering and a master’s certificate in program management. He had a career in the computer industry and worked for Hewlett Packard as a program manager during the complicated Y2K remediation endeavors.

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. 



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Reader Assistance

Edited by Briesa Koch

Reunions

• **Fox Co, 2/7**, July 9-13, Rapid City, S.D. Contact Tom Ciccariella, fox2seven@gmail.com.

• **USMC Motor Transport Association**, Sept. 17-22, Savannah, Ga. Contact MSgt Bruce Green, USMC (Ret), (910) 577-4230, secretary@usmcmta.org.

• **U.S. Naval Disciplinary Command**, Sept. 11-16, Portsmouth, N.H. Contact Don Ferry, (972) 334-0609, don.ferry1942@gmail.com.

• **Plt 2064, San Diego, 1965**, is planning a reunion. Contact Gary A. Gruenwald, (434) 609-3433, usmcgman74@aol.com.

• **TBS Class 3-67/41st OCC**, Oct. 26-29, Arlington, Va. Contact Paul Disario, (559) 273-9549, pdisario@comcast.net.

• **1st Marine Division Assn.**, August 13-20, Las Vegas, Nev. Contact June Cormier, (760) 763-3268, June.oldbreed@fmda.us.

• **USMC Vietnam Tankers Assn.**, Sept. 13-18, Colorado Springs, Colo. Contact John Wear, (719) 495-5998, johnwear2@verizon.net.

• **Marine Corps Engineer Assn. (MCEA)**, Sept. 18-20, Branson, Mo.

Contact LtCol George Carlson, USMC (Ret), (931) 307-9094, treasurer@marcorengasn.org or visit: www.marcorengasn.org.

• **USMC Scout Sniper Assn.**, Aug. 18-20, Quantico, Va. Contact Tim Parkhurst, (833) 976-4737, reunion@scoutsniper.org.

• **VMO-6**, Oct. 24-28, Pensacola, Fla. Contact Ed Kufeldt, (703) 250-1514.

• **Marine Corps Music Assn.**, Oct. 19-23, Temecula, Calif. Contact Krista Hackler, (843) 941-3693, aprilh5500@gmail.com.

• **Co G, 2/7**, Sept. 20-24, Beaufort, S.C. Contact Dave Kling, (267) 718-0419, dkling1969@yahoo.com or Bruce Guthrie, (760) 363-6141, bgguthrie@gmail.com.

• **Kilo Co, 3/7**, Oct. 5-9, Springfield Mo. Contact Bill Gerke, (631) 433-8575, msggerke@aol.com.

• **VMFA-115 Reunion Assn.**, Oct. 11-15, Portland, Maine. Contact Patti Kaas, (717) 422-6796, P.O. Box 170, Aspers, Pa., 17304.

Mail Call

• Rosemary Knight, rose.knight@me.com, is looking to hear from **Sgt Gary W. "JB" Beam** and **Sgt John "Reverend" Jones, MSG Det, U.S. Embassy, Panama, from 1979-1980.**

• Thomas Cunnally, (774) 215-5593, is looking to hear from **members of 1st Radio Co, FMF, Camp Geiger, N.C., from 1954-1956.**

Sales, Trades and Giveaways

• Terry Fritz, tefusmc58@aol.com, has a graduation book for **Platoon 107, MCRD Parris Island, 1957**, free to any platoon member.

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. 🇺🇸

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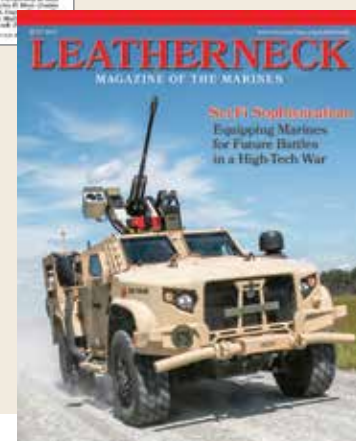
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AN EDITOR RETIRES—*Leatherneck* has more than a century-long history of reporting the news of the Marine Corps and telling the stories of Marines. And for the past nine years, the leader of that important effort has been Colonel Mary H. Reinwald, USMC (Ret). After a 27-year career as an officer of Marines, Col Reinwald came to the Marine Corps Association in spring 2014 as *Leatherneck's* editor. She saw other areas at MCA where she could lend her expertise and eventually, she was named the association's vice president for communications.

Among the layouts above are Col Reinwald's first cover for the magazine, July 2014, and this month's cover, which will be her last issue before her retirement. During her tenure as *Leatherneck* editor, she spearheaded a number of changes in the magazine, including the new cover design, as well as the addition of Passing the Word, Sea Stories, Corps Connections and Saved Round. She led the magazine staff through coverage of numerous major stories in the Marine Corps, including the passage of command for three Commandants, the final United States' withdrawal from Afghanistan, and the Huly Panel's efforts to set the record straight regarding the Marines in Joe Rosenthal's famous photo taken during the Battle of Iwo Jima. She also oversaw production of the magazine's epic 100th anniversary issue in 2017. Through it all, the *Leatherneck* staff understood our mission: Produce a magazine that informs and entertains our readers and includes not only the Corps' illustrious history, but also what Marines are doing today. Because

all of you, our readers, her fellow Marines, are still a top priority for Col Reinwald.

When she began to suspect that I planned to include something about her retirement in the magazine, which I neither confirmed nor denied, she tried to convince me to make a change. "*Leatherneck* is not about me," she said to me. "It's about Marines and it's for our readers."

Recently, I asked her what she thought her legacy to the magazine will be. Her answer came as no surprise to me because it's exactly how she conducted herself every single day. "I hope my legacy is simply that I've continued to uphold the long history of *Leatherneck* and continued it down the path of success." Indeed, she has.

While we here at the MCA and *Leatherneck* are happy for Col Reinwald to begin her new chapter, we are wondering how we might fill the void that she leaves. Not to worry, the articles will be written and the magazine will still come out every month. Readers may not even notice anything has changed. The difference, however, will be keenly felt by us in the office. We will miss her straight talk, her daily dose of energy and enthusiasm, her ability to have a story for every occasion, her refrigerator full of Diet Coke, and most importantly, her dedication to the Marine Corps and all those who have worn the eagle, globe and anchor.

Fair winds and following seas, Col Reinwald. Enjoy your time with your grandchildren. You've certainly earned it. It's been a privilege to work alongside you—you truly embody the meaning behind the words *Semper Fidelis*. 🦅

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