

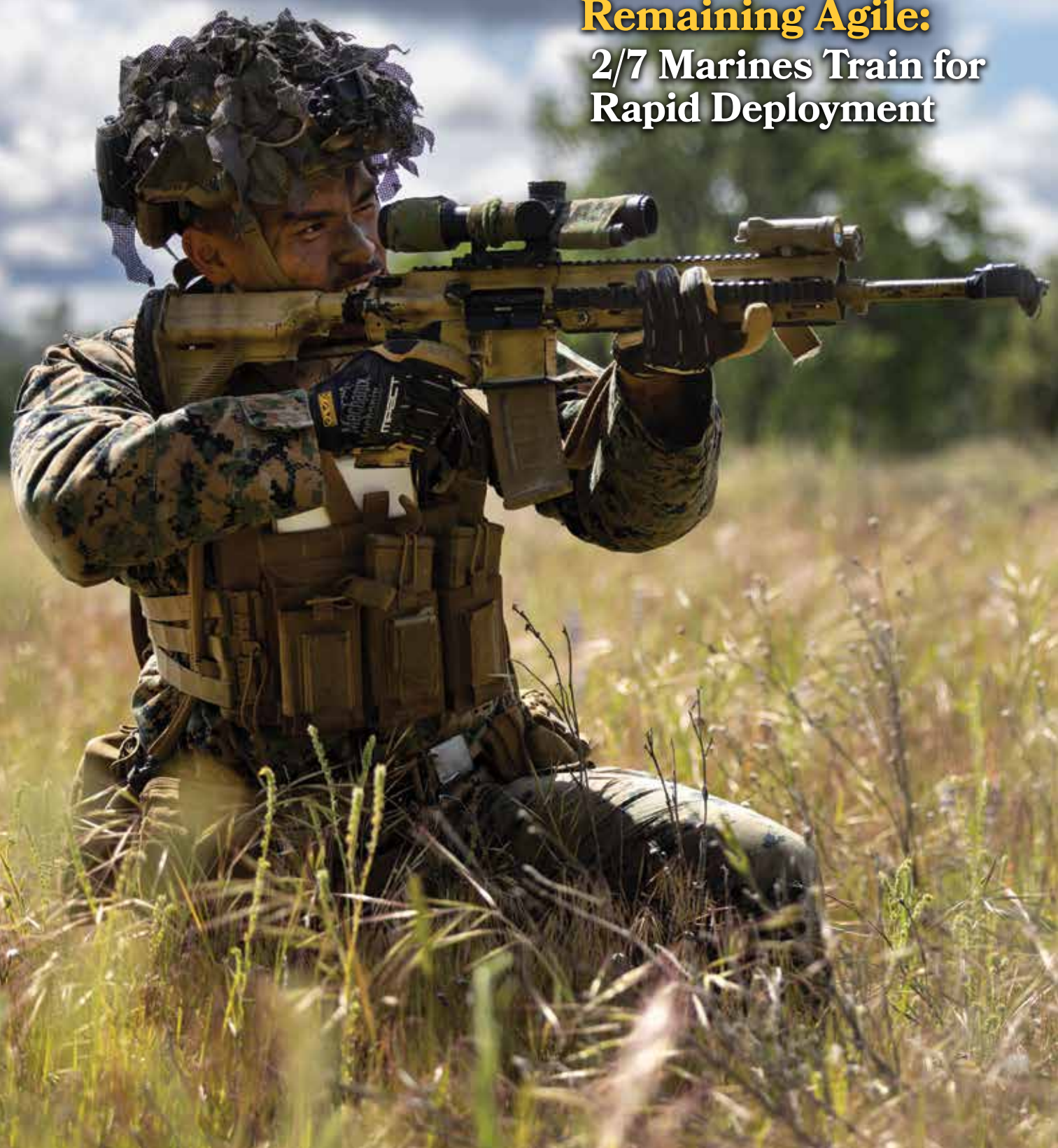
SEPTEMBER 2023

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LEATHERNECK

MAGAZINE OF THE MARINES

Remaining Agile:
2/7 Marines Train for
Rapid Deployment



A low-angle, upward-looking photograph of two Marine Raiders in camouflage uniforms climbing a thick, braided rope. The climbers are positioned diagonally across the frame, with their bodies and limbs straining against the rope. The background is a bright, cloudy sky. The overall tone is one of physical exertion and teamwork.

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From the Publisher & Editor-in-Chief

“September is recognized as National Suicide Prevention Month. Sometimes we all need the courage to communicate, and our strength lies in each other. Nobody can support with honesty and experience like another Marine, so stay connected to our veteran community so no one faces these challenges alone.”



Among a great lineup of articles this month, I recommend a few standouts. Starting with some backyard history for those in the Quantico area is a follow up (on page 56) to the August issue’s “Civil War Cannon” by National Museum of the Marine Corps curator Kater Miller. This article, “Learning from the Past,” describes the findings of recent excavations of Civil War artifacts in Quantico and explains the logistical significance of supply depots on the Potomac to campaigns like Fredericksburg, the Wilderness and Spotsylvania.

We also present a book excerpt from “The Mosquito Bowl: A Game of Life and Death in World War II” by “Buzz” Bissinger on page 28. In 2022, Bissinger, who also wrote “Friday Night Lights,” published this account of the football game played on Dec. 24, 1944, between 4th Marines and 29th Marines on Guadalcanal. At the time, both regiments were training on Guadalcanal for further operations in the western Pacific. Both could field teams made up of Marines who had played college football, many of whom were on All-Conference or All-American teams. No spoilers! If you are unfamiliar with the history, read the book for the outcome of the game. For *Leatherneck*, Bissinger selected a chapter from the book that covers the Battle of Sugar Loaf Hill from the perspective of a Marine who had been a spectator at the game.

Finally, September is recognized as National Suicide Prevention Month. On page 36, Colonel Patty Klop has written a first-person narrative about post-traumatic stress. Col Klop has been very open about her struggles after a deployment with Mortuary Affairs in Ramadi during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Suicide and mental health are uncomfortable subjects for everyone, but for Marines and veterans they are real problems that need courage and open communications. So much of the way we are: tough, self-reliant, never show a weakness, actually forms obstacles to seeking help when we need it. Sometimes we all need the courage to communicate, and our strength lies in each other. Nobody can support with honesty and experience like another Marine, so stay connected to our veteran community so no one faces these challenges alone.

Semper Fidelis.

Colonel Christopher Woodbridge,
USMC (Ret)



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COVER: On May 5, Lance Cpl Thien Nguyen with "Fox" Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment engages the "enemy" near Schoonover Airfield as part of a readiness exercise at Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif. The exercise was held alongside the Air Force's 60th Air Mobility Wing and was intended to test the battalion's readiness, logistics planning and expeditionary capabilities in the Indo-Pacific. Read more about the exercise on page 10. Photo by Cpl Earik Barton, USMC. Copies of the cover may be obtained by sending \$3 (for mailing costs) to *Leatherneck* Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134-0775.

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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.)

The story “90 Days a Grunt” by Kyle Watts in the June issue of *Leatherneck* really got my attention, as I was there and had the same experiences. It brought back a host of memories. The Bob Skeels story was not about him, but about those wonderful young Marines he had the privilege to lead. I arrived in Vietnam in April 1968 via Fort Sill, Okla., and was assigned as a forward observer with 1/3/4 for four months, then officer in charge of 2nd Provisional 155 mm Howitzer Battery with 60 young Marines who operated from 13 different FSBs (the same ones Bob mentions). They were firing 3,000 to 8,000 rounds per month in grueling conditions. The story of these fine Marines is one that should be written. Many documented photos exist.

LtCol Richard G. Hoops, USMC (Ret)
1963 to 1988
Bristol, Tenn.

Thanks for adding your memories to the story of these great Marines.—Publisher

Well Wishes to Col Reinwald

Congratulations to the retired editor of *Leatherneck*. Where did that decade go? You knocked it out of the park, especially with the recent issue [June 2023], which had many new contributors. I think you could make a business for writing magazine features in your new leisurely life!

The editors note in the July issue was very nice, I hope you frame it. My July issue arrived plenty early too. From the outside looking in, it seems you wrapped up the mission in the thoughtful, organized way we all knew you would. Thank you for all you have done!

Keith Oliver
Umatilla, Fla.

I just received my magazine today and read where you are passing the “helm” of *Leatherneck* editor. I would like to say it has been a pleasure knowing you and reading your “Extra Rations” emails.

May God bless you in whatever path he may lead you on in your new endeavors and my prayers go with you. As a Marine of the 1950s, *Leatherneck* has played an intricate part in my life with Col White, his daughter Nancy, Tom Bartlett and Keenan. Here’s to hoping you’re moving on to an even brighter future.

Sgt Joseph O. Burden
Washington, D.C.

Colonel Reinwald: best wishes as you embark on your next journey. You never know what is in store for you in the future as I can attest.

Last month I received a phone call from an assistant producer at Netflix. She asked for Marine William Ober. It seems that they are in the process of developing a documentary on the Cold War. I asked them how they got my name and was

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told it was through the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. It seems that in 2012 at the 50th anniversary of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Smithsonian did a feature article, but all the photos were taken from the air. I asked them why there were none taken on the ground and they replied that they were unable to locate any. I told them I had taken photos on the ground and they asked me to share them, which I did. They published them in a blog entitled "Never before seen photos taken on the ground by a Marine who was there." The assistant producer then went on to interview me on the phone for about 30 minutes. I asked when the show would be aired and was told sometime this summer.

Then in June, a producer from Netflix called and asked me to come to their studios in the city for a taping. I agreed if my wife would accompany me. Netflix sent a car to pick us up and drove us to their studios in New York City. After being fitted with an amplifier and microphone, I was interviewed by a producer in Hollywood via Zoom for 90 minutes. I had a lot of cameras focused on me and I am waiting to see when the program is completed. In the meantime, they asked me for my original photos that I had taken in 1962. I had copies made and shared them. I am now awaiting the finished product.

LCpl Bill Ober
USMC, 1961-1964
Huntington, N.Y.

*Special thanks to our readers for their farewells to Col Reinwald. I know all of your comments mean a lot to her.—
Publisher*

Lieutenant, This is War

This poem was written during WARFEX at The Basic School. It addresses the importance of realistic training, the magnitude of recognizing the implications of every decision, and the gravity of the trust bestowed to officers:

If this was war Lieutenant, then I might think twice.

My jokes and laughs would become few, lest my men pay the price.

I'd wear my kit in fight and rest and try to hide my trace.

I'd take every measure in the book to conquer hell we'll face.

I'd keep my weapon close and clean, never out of sight.

I'd set examples for my men, decide to do what's right.

I'd paint my face and don my pack with grass and sticks and leaves.

I'd train my men the best I could, ensure alive they'd leave.

I'd change my socks, lace tight my boots when my body starts to hurt.

Complaints remain within my lips. I'd treat my wounds with dirt.

Where push meets shove, the gloves come off, I'd wish I could go first.

When time should come for sacrifice, if it is not my own.

My men will die in honor. My love for them they'll know.

Lieutenant, this is war.

If this was war, Lieutenant, Sir, I'd do it without question.

I'd look to you for orders, and follow your direction.

I'd go without food and rest for my eyes, first into battle past enemy lines.

I'd leave behind my family and say goodbye to my friends.

I'd even give my life, if it meant that we would win.

Lieutenant, Sir, you and I know, the past cannot be changed,

but I beg of you, with all my heart, don't forget my name.

When your feet are worn and doubt creeps in, please know we'd do it all again.

We know, Lieutenant, you'll give your best, and think twice for souls now lain to rest.

We gave all we had to you, God, Country and our Corps. You know now, if not before,

Lieutenant, this is war.

If this was war, Lieutenant, Sir, my son will not come home.

I'll kiss his cheeks, he'll leave one day, and then forever, he'll be gone.

I'll spend nights awake, to hope and pray, my baby will return.

Part of myself now lives with him, on the mantle in the urn.

The feeling in my broken heart the day I heard the news, is the worst pain I've ever felt.

I'd take his place if I could choose. Today, he'd be a husband, a father, maybe, too,

but time goes on, without him now, for me, and Sir, for you.

Lieutenant, this is war.

Treat it like it is. This kind of agony and heartache is more than time can mend.

Lieutenant, I implore you, think of him and those before.

Many more will not come home.

Lieutenant, this is war.

2ndLt Sydney L. Bishop
USMC

Millington, Mich.



This memorial pays tribute to Cpl Charles W. Lindberg, one of the first Marines to raise a flag on Mount Suribachi during World War II.

the honor to shake his hand at a Marine Birthday Ball many years ago.

Norm Spilleth
Minneapolis, Minn.

Thanks for sharing the picture of Cpl Lindberg's memorial. Like all who fought on Iwo, he'll always be remembered. Longtime Leatherneck readers will remember that SSgt Louis Lowery, Leatherneck combat correspondent, took photos at the first flag raising.—Publisher

Marine Cruiser Story Resonates With Former Sailor

I really enjoyed reading "Cruiser Marines: Marine Detachments in the New Georgia Campaign, July 1943" in the July 2023 issue of *Leatherneck*. Having served on USS *Galveston* (CLG-3), a light cruiser with Talos missiles on the fantail, the Marines on board were great to work with. The scuttlebutt was that our missiles carried the big bang warheads. The Marines were tight lipped if asked!

I always admired their sharp looking uniforms when not in their utilities.

Reader Visits Mount Suribachi Memorial

Largely forgotten and overshadowed by the more famous second flag picture shot by Joe Rosenthal is the first flag raised on Iwo Jima. The first Marines to plant a flag were Lt Harold Schrier, Pvt Phil

Ward, Sgt Henry Hansen, PFC Ernest Thomas, PhM2c John C. Bradley and Cpl Charles W. Lindberg. This memorial is in honor of Cpl Lindberg in his hometown of Richfield, Minn., in Veterans Park. Cpl Lindberg had a flamethrower, and the statue shows him holding it. I had

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Squared away was the look of the day! The Marines were on the 5-inch gun mount ahead of the bridge during general quarters. In August 1965 near Chu Lai, we were in general quarters for about a week providing gunfire support with our 6-inch main guns and 5-inch batteries during Operation Starlite. We had to cool the gun barrels with fire hoses after so many rounds to prevent a “cook off.” We had three 5-inch gun mounts and two triple barreled 6-inch turrets on the front of the bridge.

In the summer of 1965 as we were leaving Subic Bay for Yankee Station, the USS *Turner Joy* (DD-951) was pulling into Subic Bay when the front 5-inch gun completely blew up due to a cook off. The USS *Turner Joy* (DD-951) is on display near Bremerton in Seattle, Wash. In August of 2000, my son John and I toured the ship. Man, it was small compared to the *Galveston*. That was until we toured the USS *Iowa* (BB-61) in Long Beach, Calif., in 2010. Those battleships were huge! I met so many great people during my years in service to our great country.

John Sanchez
USN, 1961-1966
Hanford, Calif.

Thanks shipmate!—Publisher

More on the Deactivation of 3/3

I want to reference the June 2023 issue of *Leatherneck* regarding the deactivation of 3/3 which had a long history and many Marines were a part of that history. I have an experience with 3/3 to share.

In early November 1956, 3/3 was stationed at Camp Fuji, Japan. While the unit was in the field, the commander, LtCol John A. White, was notified that the battalion was designated a BLT in response to the crisis in the Suez Canal region.

All personnel would have to spend at least 90 days retainability in overseas tours or enlistments. That required a large number of swaps with 1/3 and 2/3.

The newly organized battalion left Fuji on Nov. 10 to board USS *Telfair* (APA-210) at Yokosuka. The other two ships of the group were USS *Oak Hill* (LSD-7) and USS *Algol* (AKA-54). BLT-3/3 sailed on Nov. 12.

After a stop in British North Borneo, the BLT sailed into the Indian Ocean prepared to protect U.S. interests in that area. Subsequently, the BLT visited Karachi, Pakistan; Mumbai, India; and Colombo, Sri Lanka, where the Marines shared time with Hollywood movie stars William Holden, Alec Guinness and Jack Hawkins. New Year’s Eve was spent at

the British Naval Base, Trincomalee. Visits were also made to Singapore and Hong Kong before returning to Japan on Feb. 4, 1957.

John F. Forgette
USMC, 1951-1957
Bellingham, Wash.

Thanks for sharing the memories. It sounds like the port calls were really exceptional, and I’ll bet those actors were taking a break from making “The Bridge on the River Kwai” (1957).—Publisher

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

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1 September 2023

A MESSAGE FROM THE ASSISTANT COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS

Our Corps remains an indispensable element of our nation's security and readiness. As I write, our 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) is providing our Combatant Commanders with a ready and lethal force which requires no access, basing, or overflight. Simultaneously, I and III Marine Expeditionary Forces are in the Pacific campaigning alongside our allies and partners to deter conflicts and build advantages to win if our conventional deterrence fails. This is what we contribute to national defense; this and so much more.

For the foreseeable future I will serve as the acting Commandant of the Marine Corps while we wait for the Senate to confirm a Commandant. This is the only waiting we will do; wasted time is an offering to our adversaries. We will continue to modernize and prepare ourselves via Force Design 2030, making refinements as needed to account for changing threats, new tasks, and my best military judgment.

To win we must be unified in who we are and what we do. We are a combined arms Marine Air Ground Task Force comprised of professionals who can conduct campaigning / crisis response and combat operations against a peer adversary. We do this as part of a Naval and Joint force. Each of our missions is challenging in their own right. Conducting them all is a skill set few can master; but we are Marines. We volunteered because we seek to do difficult things. We represent our Corps and our country and understand that our actions today determine if we will be able to fill our ranks with volunteers tomorrow. Our discipline and courage are what Americans can count on and look up to. We fight, win, and return home with our honor clean. This is not bravado; it is who we are.

Our Marines are what make us unique among military forces and we must demonstrate our care for them. We will accelerate changes that allow Marines to be stakeholders in their careers, and to provide the facilities that show our Marines and families that they matter to us. This will be a long journey, but we will arrive at our destination together.

Every Marine must contribute to our future. Your thoughts, insights and opinions have value, and the Gazette and Leatherneck are among the venues to reveal them. These are publications built for respectful discourse and professional development for all ranks. These publications are part of our history and are often the birthplace of new concepts and visions, so place your idea guns on "full auto" and get involved. I'm truly proud of you Marines.

Semper Fidelis,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Eric M. Smith".

Eric M. Smith

General, U.S. Marine Corps
Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps



CPL EARICK BARTON, USMC

Cpl James Cullotta, a squad leader with "Fox" Co, 2/7, 1stMarDiv, patrols near Schoonover Airfield during a readiness exercise at Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif., May 5. The exercise was designed to enhance the combat and deployment readiness of the battalion and prepare them to deploy as part of a crisis response force.

Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif.

Rapid Deployment Capabilities: Marines of 2/7 Train For Crisis Response

Marines with 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, conducted a readiness exercise alongside the U.S. Air Force to practice rapid deployment capabilities and Infantry Battalion Experiment 2030 (IBX-30) concepts in a crisis response scenario.

The exercise was the latest in a long line of 1stMarDiv exercises to improve crisis response expertise and the ability to provide immediate combat power across a large geographic area.

The battalion conducted the exercise in conjunction with the Air Force's Exercise Golden Phoenix, a power projection event for the 60th Air Mobility Wing. As part of the exercise, the battalion deployed to Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif., under a simulated, short-notice scenario and seized key terrain. The intent was to replicate a crisis response action in the Indo-Pacific and provide the battalion a

realistic opportunity to test their readiness, logistics planning, and expeditionary capabilities.

"Crisis response is extremely important," said Master Gunnery Sergeant Paul O'Donnell, the operations chief for 2nd Bn, 7th Marines. "The Marine Corps is the most agile force in the Department of Defense. Our ability to be prepared, pack our kit, receive the information, receive the order, and execute, is a hallmark [and] the bread and butter of what the Marine Corps should be for the force. This exercise is so important because our Marines got put through the wringer of what that actually feels like."

After brief stops in March Air Reserve Base and Travis Air Force Base, where the Marines established hasty command centers for rapid planning and battlefield analysis, the battalion maneuvered into various locations across Fort Hunter Liggett to simulate distributed operations. Multiple rifle companies, reinforced with 60 mm and 81 mm mortars, along with scout sections and antiarmor sections,

seized key terrain as part of the broader maritime simulation.

"With the considerations for conflict across the globe right now, especially with the rise in the advent of our peer adversaries gaining more and more capabilities, I think it's prudent that we train with the joint force as much as possible," said O'Donnell. "Because wherever we end up, more than likely nine out of 10 times, it's not solely going to be a Marine operation. We will work with our brothers and sisters in the Navy, Air Force and Army."

Another key component of the exercise is 2nd Bn, 7th Marines' status as the IBX-30 experimentation battalion for 1stMarDiv and the Marine Corps. The use of a scout platoon and designated marksmen using FGM-148 Javelin missiles, M3E1 multipurpose antiarmor anti-personnel weapons, and other developing concepts, played major roles in how the battalion accomplished this training mission. The faster and more lethal construct of 2nd Bn, 7th Marines will pave



Above: Marines with Echo Co, 2nd Bn, 7th Marines, disembark from a U.S. Air Force C-17 Globemaster III during a readiness exercise at Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif., on May 5. (Photo by Cpl Earik Barton, USMC)

Left: Cpl Francisco Vasquez, a motor transportation mechanic, and Cpl Savionn Arthur, a radio operator, both with Headquarters and Service Co, 2nd Bn, 7th Marines, use a radio during a readiness exercise at Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif., on May 6.

CPL EARIK BARTON, USMC

the way for future infantry battalions to better provide combat power across the wide range of crisis response opportunities in the world.

“The Commandant’s vision for Force Design 2030 (FD2030) is nested in a more lethal, agile, more quickly deployable force that not only can get on the ‘X,’ but can persist near where the conflict

will be with the stand-in force concept,” explained O’Donnell. “For us, as the IBX-30 battalion, I think this is a good demonstration that, yes, we are geared and we are task organized to meet the Commandant’s intent. But in regard to crisis response—which hasn’t changed over the past 20 or 30 years—we still maintain that capability, that flexibility,

that lethality to respond to traditional operations while having those increased capabilities leaning into the IBX-30/FD2030 model.”

Crisis response and rapid deployment exercises are nothing new for the joint force. Division exercises in recent years have taken this theme to a new level. In 2021, 1stMarDiv supervised a major stra-



Marines with 1st Bn, 12th Marines, 3rdMarDiv, participate in the unit's deactivation ceremony at Marine Corps Base Hawaii on May 26. The deactivation is in accordance with Force Design 2030 modernization efforts.

tegic mobility exercise with a regiment-sized unit called Ready Diamond. Ready Diamond resulted in thousands of Marines physically and administratively postured to support crisis response or contingency operations within 48 hours of notification.

Last year, 3rd Bn, 5th Marines, 1stMarDiv, participated in a readiness exercise alongside Marine Rotational Force-Darwin in Australia to practice the logistics required to move units into position to support a wide range of operations. The leathernecks of 3rd Bn, 5th Marines will take the lessons learned from both exercises with them when they deploy across the Indo-Pacific in the near future as part of the Unit Deployment Program.

“We wanted to prove we can deploy

multiple company task forces on short notice to seize key terrain rapidly, and we did just that,” explained LtCol Jerome Greco, the commanding officer of 3/5, after last year’s exercise. “Spread across thousands of miles in three different locations, our Marines and Sailors fought through friction, solved problems, and accomplished the mission. I am especially happy our Marines got to experience such a unique training event.”

This year’s exercise provided an outstanding opportunity for 1stMarDiv to work and plan for immediate crisis response situations, especially alongside Air Force teammates. Quick reaction and providing globally effective combat power remain critical capabilities of 1stMarDiv and the Marine Corps.

Cpl Earik Barton, USMC

Marine Corps Base Hawaii USMC Deactivates Artillery Battalion

The 1st Battalion, 12th Marines Regiment cased its colors during the unit’s deactivation ceremony at Marine Corps Base Hawaii on May 26, 2023.

The artillery battalion was activated on Sept. 1, 1942, as 4th Bn, 12th Marines at Camp Elliot, Calif., in support of 3rd Marine Division. After participating in a number of World War II campaigns, including battles at Bougainville, Guam, and Iwo Jima, 1/12 underwent a brief period of deactivation before reactivating in support of the Far East Command during the Korean War.

The Marines of 1/12 operated in Vietnam from April 1965 to September 1969 from positions at Phu Bai, Da Nang, Cam



SGT ISRAEL CHINCIO, USMC

Lo, Khe Sanh, and Camp Carroll. As U.S. forces kicked off the major raid known as Operation Thor on June 1, 1968, 1/12 helped gain control of the Demilitarized Zone through the provision of fire support and conduct of artillery raids.

In June 1971, the battalion reported to Marine Corps Air Station Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, where they have since been permanently stationed. In September 1994, after the battalion's successful participation in operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, 1/12 was reassigned to the 3rdMarDiv as a part of III Marine Expeditionary Force. From August 2004 to November 2011, 1/12 participated in the Global War on Terror, deploying in support of operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

In recent years, 1/12 has been at the

Below: 1stSgt Mark Albert, left, and LtCol Joseph L. Gill II, the commanding officer, of 1st Bn, 12th Marines, case the colors during the unit's deactivation ceremony at Marine Corps Base Hawaii on May 26.



SGT ISRAEL CHINCIO, USMC

forefront of institutional change, leading the practical application of expeditionary advanced basing operations, experimentation with foraging concepts, and the employment of next-generation weapons systems. Most notably, operating in support of Large Scale Exercise 21, the battalion successfully employed the soon-to-be fielded Navy Marine Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System to fire the Naval Strike Missile on Aug. 5, 2021. The missiles traveled over 100 nautical miles before reaching their target—a simulated adversary ship played by the ex-USS *Ingraham* (FFG-61), a retired *Oliver Hazard Perry*-class guided missile frigate. Similar operational mission profiles will allow Marine artillery to deny key maritime terrain and facilitate joint force maneuver.

“First Battalion, 12th Marines spent the last two years at the forefront of force design and joint force integration,” said Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Gill, Commanding Officer, 1st Bn, 12th Marines. “We have made tremendous progress in the development of tactics, techniques and procedures and set conditions for the fielding of the Navy Marine Corps Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System. The battalion's efforts have increased the lethality of the 3rdMarDiv and influenced the way we'll fight for the foreseeable future.”

The deactivation of 1/12 took place in accordance with Force Design 2030's modernization efforts. The battalion has played a valuable role in setting conditions for the 3rd Marine Littoral Regiment (MLR), and future MLRs, to provide combat ready and lethal forces in the

Indo-Pacific. 3rd MLR and 12th Marines, which is scheduled to transition to an MLR in 2025, will provide ready and capable stand-in forces to the first island chain, bolstering the United States Indo-Pacific Command's ability to support deterrence efforts and respond to potential crises with allies and partners.

“Deactivating a battalion of this nature and ensuring the deliberate transfer of personnel, facilities, and equipment is a tremendous undertaking,” said Major Ryan Capdepon, the executive officer of 1st Bn, 12th Marines. “In true 1/12 fashion, our Marines and Sailors displayed professionalism, flexibility, and dedication in tackling the associated tasks. Concurrently, we continued to support numerous operational requirements and remain postured for potential contingency scenarios. I am proud of our team and the job they have done. Each one of them will be an asset to their next command.”

1stLt Anne Pentaleri, USMC

Libreville, Gabon Marines, Sailors Conduct Exercise Judicious Activation

Marines and Sailors from Fleet Antiterrorism Security Team, Europe (FASTEUR), operating under Task Force 61/2 (TF 61/2), U.S. Sixth Fleet, U.S. Naval Forces Europe (NAVEUR), and U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM), conducted Judicious Activation—Fleet Antiterrorism Security Team 2023 (JACT-FAST 23) from April 24-28, 2023.

During Judicious Activation 2023, Marines and Sailors stationed in Rota, Spain, participated in a reoccurring



LCpl John McFarland, a rifleman with Task Force 61/2.3, Fleet Anti-terrorism Security Team Europe, buddy drags a Gabonese Republican soldier while rehearsing tactical combat casualty care techniques during Judicious Activation 2023 in Libreville, Gabon on April 27.

bilateral exercise run by USAFRICOM. This year's iteration was in partnership with the host nation of Gabon.

"This exercise validates AFRICOM's capability to conduct crisis response operations, leveraging force sharing agreements with EUROM [United States European Command] for allocated forces," said Maj Timothy Stefan, the commanding officer of FASTEUR. "Additionally, it provides us the opportunity to strengthen the relationship between Departments of State and Defense with host nation partners in USAFRICOM as they work together to maintain and strengthen security measures."

During this exercise, FASTEUR conducted the deployment of personnel and assets in coordination with the Department of State and Gabonese Republic host nation and coalition forces, testing their theater support cooperation capabilities as a rapidly deployable force capable of responding to crisis in the AFRICOM region.

Judicious Activation 23 validates the ability for the deployment of FASTEUR in support of U.S. personnel and investments in the region while strengthening partnerships with the host nation. 1stLt Jason Mounombo, Gabonese Republican Guard, said "this exchange was a very important part for the Gabonese law enforcement, and I would like to very much do it again."

"Through this exercise, we are demonstrating a key FAST mission set; activating on short notice, moving organic personnel and gear, and reinforcing a U.S. embassy within our Area of Operations (AO) to include EUROM and AFRICOM regions," said Captain Connor McMahon, FASTEUR Platoon Commander. "This is also an excellent opportunity to conduct cross training with Marine security guards at the embassy in Libreville, and an exchange of information with our Gabonese partner forces."

1stLt William Reckley, USMC



LCpl Peter Dunn, a machine-gunner with Task Force 61/2.3, Fleet Anti-terrorism Security Team Europe, receives a demonstration on the application of a tourniquet from a Gabonese Republican soldier during Judicious Activation 2023 in Libreville, Gabon, on April 27.

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U.S. MARINES, CUBA, AND THE INVASION THAT NEVER WAS PART 1

By Edward T. Nevglowski, Ph.D.

On Oct. 14, 1962, photographic evidence produced by an American U-2 high-altitude reconnaissance aircraft revealed the construction of Soviet medium-range nuclear ballistic missile sites in Cuba a mere 90 miles off the southern coast of the continental U.S. Additional reconnaissance flights on Oct. 15 and 16 confirmed site construction as well as the presence of numerous ballistic missiles. One month prior, at the height of the Soviet Union's military buildup in Cuba that began in 1961, U.S. President John F. Kennedy had warned Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev that "if at any time the Communist build-up in Cuba were to endanger or interfere with our security in any way or if Cuba should ever become an offensive military base of significant capacity for the Soviet Union, then this country will do whatever must be done to protect its

own security and that of its allies." Although Cuba's budding military relationship with the Soviet Union and the deployment of Soviet advisors and operational ground and aviation units to Cuba increased American-Soviet tensions, the presence of nuclear-capable offensive missiles brought the two superpowers closer to a direct military confrontation than at any point during their 47-year Cold War.

In both open and back-channel discussions with Soviet officials, President Kennedy demanded the construction of the sites cease and that the missiles be removed. To convince Khrushchev of his resolve, Kennedy ordered a U.S. invasion force, including more than 35,000 Marines, into positions off Cuba and throughout the Caribbean in anticipa-

Above left: An aerial view of Guantanamo Bay Naval Station, 1961. Marines assigned to the II Marine Expeditionary Force were ordered by the President to deploy to Cuba to expand the station's perimeter amid growing global tensions during the Cold War. (Photo courtesy of All Hands Magazine)

Above: President John F. Kennedy speaks at a news conference in Washington D.C., 1961. The threat of nuclear missile sites in Cuba prompted the president to take defensive action. (Photo courtesy of John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum)

tion of having to take direct military action. Among the tasks assigned to the II Marine Amphibious Force in military contingency plans was the largest amphibious assault since Okinawa in 1945 aimed at seizing the Port of Havana and follow-on amphibious and ground assaults to expand the perimeter of the Guantanamo Bay Naval Station. Drawn from documents maintained by the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, Md., and the Marine Corps archives at Quantico, Va., this article reveals—for the first time to many—the Marines' roles in the planning and execution plan for the invasion that never was.



The Joint Chiefs of Staff meet with President Kennedy in the cabinet room of the White House in Washington, D.C. From left to right: Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Gen Curtis E. LeMay; Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, GEN Lyman L. Lemnitzer; President Kennedy; Chief of Staff of the Army, GEN George H. Decker; Chief of Staff of the U.S. Navy, ADM Arleigh A. Burke; and 22nd Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen David M. Shoup. (Photo courtesy of John F. Kennedy Presidential Library And Musuem)

MARINES AND INITIAL INVASION PLANNING

The Joint Chiefs of Staff approved America's first Cuba invasion plan in July 1959 following communist revolutionary Fidel Castro's brutal six-year struggle to remove Fulgencio Batista from power. Designed by a multi-service team of planners in Admiral Robert L. Dennison's U.S. Atlantic Command, Operation Plan (OPLAN) 312-60 called for a brief air campaign followed by an Army XVIII Airborne Corps' assault on the Jose Marti and San Antonio de los Baños military airfields south of the capital at Havana. After 19th Air Force transports delivered additional Army ground forces to seize the Port of Havana, the Second Fleet's Atlantic Amphibious Force would land an armored regiment at Regla inside the port to assist in capturing the capital. Planners later changed the armored regiment's insertion from sea to air. After toppling Havana, the American ground force would have to clear all remaining pockets of resistance east to the Guantanamo Bay. Planners estimated it would take 30 days to complete the invasion.

The Marine Corps did not participate in OPLAN 312-60 planning and, in the event of an invasion, had no role other than defending the Guantanamo Bay Naval Station and providing fixed-wing attack squadrons for air strikes. It is unclear as to why Marines were more or less left out, though the most plausible explanation was President Dwight D. Eisenhower's open animus toward the Marine Corps and the service's diminished role in the national defense strategy. With the nuclear triad of missiles, submarines and bombers syphoning off most of Eisenhower's defense budget beginning in 1953, the Marine Corps endured a more than \$40 million budget cut and an end-strength reduction of over 60,000 Marines between 1954 and 1959. The Marine Corps' 21st Commandant, General Randolph M. Pate, known more for his administrative acumen, overlooked his service's bloated supporting establishment and deactivated

six infantry battalions and six aircraft squadrons in 1959—a more than 30 percent reduction in combat strength—and left the remaining battalions and squadrons to function at 90 percent and 80 percent manning levels. Eisenhower's misguided policies and Gen Pate's misplaced priorities kept the Fleet Marine Forces chronically under-strength and incapable of supporting contingency plans like OPLAN 312-60.

The Marine Corps' scene changed dramatically in 1960 when General David M. Shoup became the 22nd Commandant. Restoring operational readiness as the service's primary focus, Gen Shoup chose to downsize training and support commands and used a 3,000 Marine end strength increase authorized by newly elected President Kennedy one year later to bring the Fleet Marine Forces back to full capacity. Under

Kennedy and Shoup, observed Marine Corps historian Edwin H. Simmons, "technical capabilities had caught up with doctrinal aspirations." The likelihood that current events would lead the Joint Chiefs to modify the invasion plan were high as were the chances that the Marines would play a part given the changes as a result of Shoup's operational focus and Kennedy's defense strategy.



ADM Robert L. Dennison served as the commander in chief of the U.S. Atlantic Command from 1960 to 1963. (USN photo)



Gen David M. Shoup, the 22nd Commandant of the Marine Corps. (USMC photo)



This 1962 painting by Richard Genders depicts Navy and Marine officers as they plan for the invasion of Cuba.

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(Courtesy of Newspapers.com)

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Gunman Steals Cuban Airliner

OPLANS 312-61 AND 312-61 (REVISED)

The January 1961 Department of Defense (DOD) study "Evaluation of Possible Military Courses of Action in Cuba," outlining potential courses of action "in view of increased capabilities of the Cuban Armed Forces and militia" and the Soviet military buildup on Cuba was a clear indication that Marines would have a role in invasion planning and a possible invasion. Specifically, DOD officials included in the study the forces available for an invasion, namely the U.S. Atlantic Fleet's "two carriers, a Marine Division, and a Marine Air Wing." When Admiral Dennison reconvened invasion planning in February at the direction of the Joint Chiefs, he invited Fleet Marine Force Atlantic planners to help develop the ground scheme. The resultant OPLAN 312-61 added an amphibious assault by a Marine brigade to seize the Port of Havana.

Concepts derived from Major General Robert E. Hogaboom's Fleet Marine Force Organization and Composition Boards in 1955 and 1956 offered planners integrated Marine air-ground forces at the expeditionary unit to force level for rapid deployment anywhere in the world by sea and air. With the prospects of a presidential decision to invade Cuba could come with little-to-no notice, the inclusion of fast landing forces, flexible emergency plans, and pre-loaded combat supplies on amphibious ships in contingency

were now essential and part of every discussion.

Intelligence gleaned from the botched Central Intelligence Agency-sponsored Cuba invasion by anti-Castro exiles in mid-April 1961 brought Atlantic Command planners back together. Of particular concern were reports of Soviet-made tanks and anti-aircraft systems and a Cuban ground force of upwards of 75,000 soldiers. In turn, planners produced OPLAN 312-61 (Revised). Remaining in were the air strikes, airborne assault on the military airfields, seizing Havana, and defeating all Cuban forces between the capital and Guantanamo Bay. The most significant change was an amphibious assault east of Havana and a series of land and sea-based attacks by II Marine Expeditionary Force. The Atlantic Amphibious Fleet commander, Admiral Alfred G. Ward, recalled, "We would plan on where the Marines would land, plan what cruisers would be needed in order to provide gunfire support, and what would be necessary to protect these landings."

Concerned that President Kennedy might order military action with very little notice, the Joint Chiefs directed ADM Dennison to develop a more synchronized invasion scheme. Although the concept of operations and force composition remained intact, OPLAN 314-61 now had more elaborate time strictures governing force deployments, the air campaign, and the time between the airborne and amphibious assaults. The changes had no impact on II Marine Expeditionary Force's plan completed during the summer of 1961.



ADM Alfred G. Ward was the Atlantic Amphibious Fleet commander. (USN photo)

Fidel Castro speaks at a rally in Havana, Cuba, 1959. Castro rose to power after a six-year struggle to forcefully remove Fulgencio Batista from office. (Photo courtesy of National Archives)





LtGen Joseph C. Burger, Commanding General, Fleet Marine Forces Atlantic, 1959 to 1961. Burger also assumed the command of the II Marine Expeditionary Force in June 1961. (USMC photo)



Marine Corps HUS-1 helicopters with HMR-262 take off from USS Boxer, during operations off Vieques Island with the 10th Provisional Marine Brigade, March 8, 1959. (Photo courtesy of Naval History and Heritage Command.)

II MARINE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE OPERATIONS PLAN 312-61

II Marine Expeditionary Force's involvement coincided with General Shoup's directive that Fleet Marine Force Atlantic and Pacific headquarters also function as expeditionary force-level command elements during division/wing-level exercises and contingencies. Lieutenant General Joseph C. Burger, in addition to commanding Fleet Marine Forces Atlantic, activated and assumed command of II Marine Expeditionary Force in June 1961. Explaining to *Leatherneck* that same month that being "prepared to react in the shortest possible notice" was his focus, LtGen Burger oversaw the detailed planning and completion of both Fleet Marine Force Atlantic Operation Plan 100-60 and II MEF Operations Plan 312-61. Burger's blueprint for keeping 25,000 Marines ready involved quarterly brigade-size amphibious assault exercises on Puerto Rico's Vieques Island with several smaller exercises taking place at Camp Lejeune in between. Doing this kept one third of his units assigned to II Marine Expeditionary Force Operations Plan 312-61 embarked and within a few hours transit time from Cuba.

In the event that President Kennedy ordered an invasion, the II Marine Expeditionary Force owned four major tactical tasks; one within each of OPLAN 314-61's four phases. In Phase I (Counter the Threat to Guantanamo and Prepare for Offensive Operations) LtGen Burger was responsible for defending the naval station. To do this, the battalion afloat in the Caribbean

would land and immediately take up positions the length of the demarcation line separating the naval station from sovereign Cuba. Burger would then fly 2nd Marine Division's "ready" battalion and a regimental headquarters directly to Guantanamo Bay where it would absorb an armor platoon, an engineer detachment, and an artillery battery deployed from Camp Lejeune as augments to the naval station's permanent Marine Barracks.

With the 2nd Marine Division (minus those defending the naval station) and 2nd Marine Air Wing's helicopter squadrons embarked on amphibious ships at Little Creek Amphibious Base near Norfolk, Va., and anchored off Camp Lejeune, N.C., the II MEF deployed to the Caribbean for Phase II (Position for Operations).

Once off Cuba, two helicopter squadrons had to relocate to Guantanamo Bay to support 2nd Marine Division elements there. Meanwhile, Marine fixed-wing squadrons transitioned to either aircraft carriers or to the Naval Air Station Key West, Fla., and the Naval Air Station Roosevelt Roads in Puerto Rico.



An aerial view of Guantanamo Bay Naval Station, Cuba, March 1964. (Photo by William C. Reed, USMC)



An aerial view of Naval Station Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico, circa 1964. (USMC Photo)



Cuba area of operations. (Map designed by Steve Walkowiak)

On the order to invade, 2nd Marine Air Wing's fixed wing squadrons would strike Soviet and Cuban air defense systems and ground forces in and around Havana and near Guantanamo. As a counter to Cuban and Soviet infantry, armor, and mechanized formations defending Havana, planners tasked the Army's 1st and 2nd Infantry Divisions and the 1st Armored Division with landing 10 miles east at Tarara and sweeping southwest and then north into the capital. For this to happen, 2nd Marine Division, in Phase III (Assault Havana Area) and "in coordination with airborne and surface-landing of Army forces," had to establish a beachhead at Tarara. The division's two infantry regiments reinforced with engineers and armor and supported by an artillery regiment would then attack west to seize the Morro Castle and the Port of Havana.

During Phase IV (Assault Guantanamo Area) operations, the II Marine Force re-embarked amphibious ships for "assault landing operations" in conjunction with 2nd Marine Division elements attacking west from the Guantanamo Bay. A consolidated II MEF would then attack toward central Cuba and link up with the Army's XVIII Airborne Corps and the 1st Armored Division. Planners assessed that major combat operations would take 60 to 90 days to complete.

President Kennedy and the Joint Chiefs grappled over invading Cuba. The Joint Chiefs' perspective was that in addition to Castro's growing military capability and ongoing Soviet military buildup, the failed CIA-sponsored invasion exposed gaps in Cuba's defenses such that if an invasion were to happen, it should be sooner rather than later. Surprisingly, Gen Shoup disagreed. In his novel "The

Best and Brightest," journalist David Halberstam recalled how Shoup's primary concern was the size of the invasion force needed to control the island and American casualties. To elaborate, Shoup placed a map of the U.S. on an overhead projector and covered it with a transparent map of Cuba. Drawing attention to Cuba's vastly smaller size in relation to the U.S., he covered the two maps with a transparency containing a small red dot. When asked what the red dot represented, Shoup explained it was the size of Tarawa before adding, "It took us three days and 18,000 Marines to take it." Whether or not Shoup influenced Kennedy's decision is unknown. Talk of an invasion, however, subsided. By the summer of 1962, the U.S. and Soviet Union were once again on the brink of war.

Editor's note: Read Part II of "U.S. Marines, Cuba, and the Invasion that Never Was," in the October issue of Leatherneck.

Author's bio: Dr. Nevglowski is the former director of the Marine Corps History Division. Before becoming the Marine Corps' history chief in 2019, he

was the History Division's Edwin N. McClellan Research Fellow from 2017 to 2019, and a U.S. Marine from 1989 to 2017.

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Marine Awards Scholarship to California Students

Gunnery Sergeant Chase McGrorty-Hunter presented the HM3 Christopher "Bobby" Gnem Memorial Scholarship Award on May 15 to a pair of Lincoln High School students in Stockton, Calif. Erika Thompson and Kayla Mendez submitted a short essay detailing their career goals, with a focus on helping the community. Thompson received \$3,000 while Mendez was awarded \$750.

HM3 Gnem was a 2016 graduate of Lincoln High School who went on to join the U.S. Navy and become a Fleet Marine Force corpsman. On July 30, 2020, Gnem and eight other Marines with the 1st Marine Division were killed in an accident during their preparation for deployment.

GySgt McGrorty-Hunter, a Stockton native, created the scholarship to honor Gnem's memory and family while awarding students who wish to pursue higher education.

"Bobby was that Sailor who happened to be from my hometown," GySgt McGrorty-Hunter said. "I am happy to have played a part in ensuring that his legacy is not forgotten, but also to make sure that it helps our future generations. And I can attest that the recipients of these awards exemplify the same things that he stood for."

Briesa Koch, *Leatherneck*



COURTESY OF GYSGT CHASE MCGRORTY-HUNTER, USMC

Tualitin, Ore.



SGT MENELIK COLLINS, USMC

100-Year-Old USMC Veteran Celebrates Milestone Birthday

One remarkable centenarian and Marine veteran, Private First Class Golda Fabian, turned 100 on May 29. Surrounded by a gathering of Marines a few days later, the honored veteran was presented with 100 roses. She also received a heartfelt letter from the 19th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, SgtMaj Troy E. Black, bringing tears of joy to the eyes of all those present.

The festivities held at her daughter's house were organized to honor her remarkable contribution to the nation and her

dedication to the Marine Corps. Reflecting on her time in the Marines, Fabian recounted stories that showcased her resilience, strength and unwavering commitment to her fellow Marines. Her experiences were a testament to the values instilled in her during her service and her dedication to upholding the legacy of the Marine Corps.

Sgt Menelik Collins, USMC

Phoenix, Ariz.



SSGT LUIS VEGA, USMC

Phoenix Marines Hike in Remembrance of Fallen Firefighters

This spring, Marines assigned to Recruiting Station (RS) Phoenix designated the unit the “Hotshots” in remembrance of Prescott’s local firefighters who perished in the 2013 Yarnell Hill Fire.

On June 28, 2013, a fire near Yarnell, Ariz., was started by a lightning strike and expanded from 4 acres to more than 6,000. Along with more than 250 other firefighters, the Prescott-based Granite Mountain Hotshots maneuvered through Yarnell Hill to preserve the Champion Tree landmark. The dry vegetation, coupled with changing winds, accelerated the spread of the fire. The crew became trapped when the winds changed and they were surrounded by fire.

Nineteen firefighters perished in the Yarnell Hill Fire. Only one member of the original Hotshot crew survived. This event was the greatest loss of life for firefighters since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. The Champion Tree remained intact because of the Hotshot crew’s actions.

On April 15, 2023, the Marines of RS Phoenix hiked within the Granite Mountain Hotshots Memorial State Park. The walk culminated at a memorial site honoring the members of the Granite Mountain Hotshots. The Marines designated their command



SSGT LUIS VEGA, USMC

“Hotshots” during a ceremony in remembrance of the fallen firefighters. Also in attendance were the city of Prescott’s Fire Chief Holger Dure, and Amanda Marsh, widow of Hotshots crew leader Eric Marsh.

Capt Obakai Grandisson, USMC

“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. 📷

Walk the Point:

The Legacy of Sergeant Matthew Abbate

Editor's note: The following article received an honorable mention in the 2023 Leatherneck Magazine Writing Contest. Major Richard A. "Rick" Stewart, USMC (Ret) sponsored the contest through the Marine Corps Association Foundation.

By SSgt Dana Beesley, USMC

From July 2010 to October 2011, the Sangin District, often referred to as "Hell on Earth" by Marines who were there, became known as one of the deadliest places in the country during the war in Afghanistan. The "Darkhorse Battalion," 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines, from Camp Pendleton, Calif., suffered the highest percentage of casualties of any Marine unit during this period. Today, Marines who don the French fourragère as members of 5th Marine Regiment carry their legacy in memoriam.

Many Marines had transferred from other battalions everywhere from Hawaii to Japan to 3/5 so they could fight in Afghanistan and earn their stripes as infantrymen.

"I thought [fighting in Afghanistan] was going to be easy, in a way; sort of like video games," said Logan Stark, another scout sniper in 3/5 during an interview for the documentary he produced, "For the 25." "We took a lot of casualties right away, something awful like nine casualties in the first two or four days. Experiencing that off the bat, you got the feeling like it could be like that the entire time and there was a possibility that there wouldn't be many people coming home."

Before he left his forward operating base on the morning of Dec. 2, 2010, for a routine foot patrol in the Sangin River Valley, Sergeant Matthew Abbate knew there was a good chance he wouldn't return alive. This was a normal perspective he accepted as part of his job as a scout sniper although he never spoke much of his combat tours to his family and friends. His parents had expressed their hesitancy in him reenlisting in the Marine Corps multiple times, but Abbate



Sgt Matthew T. Abbate was a scout sniper who served with 3/5. He posthumously received the Navy Cross for his actions in Sangin Province, Afghanistan in 2010.

recognized—and even welcomed—his fate as a way of life. Being a Marine was the only thing he'd ever been good at, he told them.

Two months prior, Abbate's scout sniper platoon was conducting a dismounted patrol through Sangin's northern green zone as part of a Quick Reaction Force in the area. The platoon became ambushed by insurgent gunfire, driving them to take cover. One, two, three of his

men were struck by explosives in rapid succession as they were taking cover; with the patrol leader incapacitated and three casualties behind him, Sgt Abbate, with complete disregard for his own safety, sprinted forward through the unswept minefield to draw fire away from the surviving Marines behind him. At this point, fully exposed, Abbate directed suppressive fires and coordinated medical evacuation while simultaneously sweep-



Above: Sgt Abbate, center, standing with his scout sniper platoon in Sangin, Afghanistan, 2010, in a screenshot from the documentary "For the 25." (Photo used with permission of Jordan Laird as seen in "For the 25")

ing the landing zone. With this outstanding display of divisive leadership and courage in the face of lethal fire, Abbate's heroic actions ultimately resulted in him being posthumously awarded the Navy Cross.

On a piece of spare paper Abbate composed a parting epilogue for the Marines he would leave behind that December day, which is scrawled along the back of his gravestone at Snelling Pioneer Cemetery today:

The Gunfighting Commandments

1. Thou shall never leave wire without bandana containing at least 4" of slack
2. In any situation ... thou shall blaze
3. Nothing matters more than thy brethren to the left and right ... thou shall protect no matter what.

4. When goin' out in a hail of gunfire ... thou shall pop dem nugs until thy body runs dry of blood ... and look hella sick.

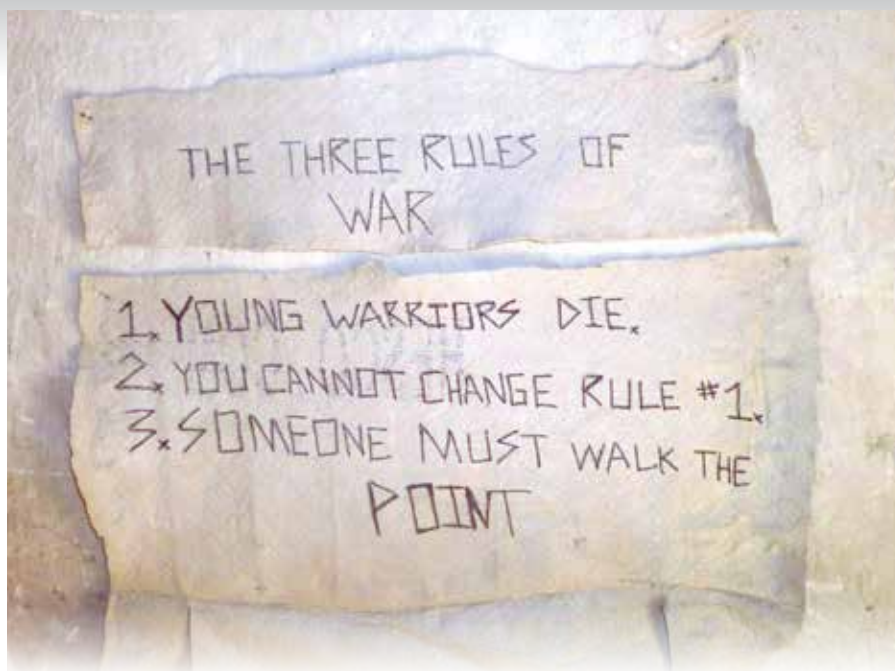
Abbate was the epitome of an un-

Abbate was the epitome of an unconventional, meticulous warfighter; a pure and magnetic personality who his Marines desired so strongly to emulate.



During his deployment to Afghanistan, Sgt Abbate, right, and his scout sniper platoon conducted a dismounted patrol through Sangin. The platoon was ambushed, and after suffering casualties, Abbate attempted to draw fire away from the surviving Marines.

USED WITH PERMISSION OF JORDAN LAIRD AS SEEN IN "FOR THE 25"



The three rules of war, shown in the “For the 25” documentary, written by Sgt Abbate and posted on the wall of his Sangin patrol base.

USED WITH PERMISSION OF JORDAN LAIRD AS SEEN IN “FOR THE 25”

conventional, meticulous warfighter; a pure and magnetic personality who his Marines desired so strongly to emulate. He was described by his platoon commander to be a “modern day Achilles,” a Marine who left an irreplaceable hole in the heart of the platoon. Anyone who would reach his voicemail message would hear his voice: “Sorry I can’t come to the phone right now, but I’m on adventures. With guns.”

The impact he left behind was one of unadulterated dedication to the brothers on his left and right, and he remains a symbol of leadership to Marines of 3/5. His Marines remembered his devoted mentorship and desire to pass skills and knowledge regardless of how inconvenient it could be for his own time. He accepted his mortality with a sense of fearlessness, a proverbial shoulder shrug, and the motto, “Just gotta keep blazin’ brother.”

He wrote three definitive rules of war and posted them on the wall of his Sangin patrol base:

1. Young warriors die.
2. You cannot change rule #1.
3. Someone must walk the point.

In scout sniper culture, “walking the point” means leading the platoon—unanimously viewed as the most important role in a patrol formation. The pointman is the first to spot anomalies on patrol, the “eyes and ears” of the group, and easily the most dangerous position to be in when taken under enemy fire. In combat and in life, Abbate was the beacon of leadership and bravery, a proverbial pointman for Marines under his charge.

“When you think of the perfect Marine, you think of him,” recalled Matt Smith, one of the Marines in Abbate’s platoon. “He was tall, built like a brick shithouse ... phenomenal at what he did. He completely redefined the battle space we were in.”

Sgt Abbate’s story of leadership and self-sacrifice laid roots so much deeper than people outside of his battalion could see. The impact of who he was as Marine lives in the hearts of people he will never meet, which is in its essence what being a Marine means.

Author’s bio: SSgt Dana Beesley is a native of Lewiston, Idaho, and a current communication strategy and operations chief at I MEF Information Group aboard Camp Pendleton, Calif.

COURTESY OF PATROL BASE ABBATE

His Marines remembered his devoted mentorship and desire to pass skills and knowledge regardless of how inconvenient it could be for his own time. He accepted his mortality with a sense of fearlessness.



Sgt Abbate reenlisted multiple times, telling his parents that “being a Marine was the only thing he’d ever been good at.”

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Dave Schreiner



University of Wisconsin football player Dave Schreiner makes a catch during a college game (above) before the war. Schreiner, and many other star athletes (left) cut their education short to fight overseas. (Photos courtesy of Buzz Bissinger)

Below: On Dec. 24, 1944, leathernecks of the 29th and 4th Marine Regiments played a football game on Guadalcanal. Referred to as the "Football Classic" or the "Mosquito Bowl," the game pitted two 11-man teams composed of former college football players. For those in attendance, it was a small break from the raging battles of the Pacific.



Tony Butkovich



George Murphy

FOOTBALL CLASSIC!

29th MARINES vs. 4th MARINES

- AT FRISCHARD FIELD -

Sunday, 24 December 1944 at 1400



SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- 1330 - 1400 - Music by Regimental Bands.
- 1400 - Reception of Major General Lemuel C. SHEPHERD, USMC, Commanding General, Sixth Marine Division. Honors by 29th Marines Band.
- 1405 - Colonel Victor F. BLEASDALE, USMC, Commanding, 29th Marines, and Colonel Alan SHAPLEY, USMC, Commanding, 4th Marines, meet in center of gridiron and exchange greetings.
- 1415 - Kick-off,
- Half - (1) Music and ceremony by 4th Marines Band.
(2) General SHEPHERD changes to opposite side of field.
(3) Music and ceremony by 29th Marines Band and 29th Marines Drum and Bugle Corps.

End of Game - Band Music.

The Mosquito Bowl

Just a Few Months After Playing a Legendary Football Game, The Same Marines Would Take On Sugar Loaf Hill

By Buzz Bissinger

The Mosquito Bowl was the name given to one of the most improbable football games ever played, taking place on Guadalcanal on Christmas Eve of 1944 between the 4th and 29th Regiments of the 6th Marine Division in the thick of the Pacific war. Each was loaded with some of the best college football players in the country, including three All-Americans and seven captains from the likes of Notre Dame, Wisconsin and Purdue. Some 1,500 fellow Marines, plump with beer bet on the game, and ringed the field that had been converted from a coral-filled parade ground.

Of the 65 who played, 15 were killed several months later at Okinawa, one of the bloodiest battles in modern history in which roughly 250,000 American and Japanese troops and civilians were killed in 82 days.

Bob McGowan, a sergeant and squad leader with "How" Company of the 3rd Battalion, 29th Regiment, was among the spectators at the game that day. The excerpt below, taken from the recently released paperback edition of "The Mosquito Bowl" by Buzz Bissinger, depicts McGowan's combat experiences during the Battle of Okinawa in the initial stages of what would be known as the attack on Sugar Loaf Hill. The fight for this seemingly inconsequential hill would take seven days to gain 520 yards. Roughly 2,660 Marines were killed, wounded or missing in action in what some believe was the deadliest campaign in Marine history.

The day before he knew he would die on Okinawa, Bob McGowan did everything right in the foxhole he shared with Corporal Grant Soper. Pinned down by enemy fire on May 13, 1945, he rolled to his side, took out his carrot and peed into the C-ration can in a fluid motion worthy of a Silver Star. But when he went to throw the contents out, his sleeve got caught on his cartridge belt and Soper got drenched with piss. McGowan thought that Soper would be upset, but he just laughed it off. Which



While under heavy Japanese machine-gun fire, Marines with the 29th Marines prepare to advance over open terrain. Securing Sugar Loaf Hill was crucial to the success of the entire Okinawa campaign. (USMC photo)

was why he loved Soper: he was always there for him, unflustered, understanding that if you got a little piss all over you in war, then you had done all right.

A day later, on the morning of May 14, Lieutenant Hank Johnson was told to take his 3rd Platoon, attack across a draw, and take grid 7671 on the left flank of Sugar Loaf Hill. It was a suicide mission, but

It was a suicide mission, but Johnson was taking orders from above, and that was it. He and McGowan just blinked at each other and knew it was going to be a slaughter with their flank exposed, shot at from virtually every direction.

Johnson was taking orders from above, and that was it. He and McGowan just blinked at each other and knew it was going to be a slaughter with their flank exposed, shot at from virtually every direction.

Sugar Loaf ...

Taken-retreat-retaken, taken-retreat-retaken, taken-retreat-retaken a third time and a fifth time and a seventh time and a ninth time and still not taken against an enemy in one of its strongest defensive positions of the entire war, concealed within a warren of caves and connecting tunnels with camouflaged machine-gun nests, unseen mortar pits, and superb use of artillery. Most deadly of all was the mutually supporting fire not just from Sugar Loaf itself but from Horseshoe and Half Moon. Those three inconsequential hills a triangular arrowhead of death, now of pivotal strategic significance for the entire Okinawa campaign. Attack Sugar Loaf, and a blizzard of fire came from Horseshoe to the right and Half Moon to the left. Attack Half Moon, and a blizzard of fire came from Sugar Loaf and Horseshoe. Attack Horseshoe, and a blizzard of fire came from Half Moon and Sugar Loaf. The surrounding area was skinned of life by artillery and mortar shells, so there was little cover. You had to keep moving, get to the top of the hills and stay there, even though the Japanese had the reverse slopes expertly covered and could fire accurately from below.



Marines were pinned down by Japanese fire at Cemetery Ridge on Okinawa. Sgt Bob McGowan, a squad leader with "How" Company, 3rd Bn, 29th Marines, survived despite being shot through the lung. (USMC photo)

So many officers and rank and file were killed and wounded that companies were depleted. Replacements came up, did not have a clue about what to do, and were scorned by the vets because they were taking over for men loved and gone. They were thrown into battle to fulfill manpower requirements—essentially alone, sometimes shooting wildly, pulling a pin on a grenade and then trying to shove it back in, perhaps their best use as dead bodies shielding foxholes.

McGowan was lying on top of an Okinawan burial tomb lobbing grenades. He threw all he had, and Martin tossed up some more from inside the tomb where he could just see over the edge. McGowan had to cover his eyes because machine-gun fire from two sides was throwing stuff up all over the place and he was afraid of getting fragments in them. He held one arm over his eyes as Martin rolled him the grenades. It was really the only way to neutralize the Japanese—lob grenades into their pillboxes or foxholes and take them inch by inch.

He felt something hit his shoulder. He looked down, and a grenade was rolling down his right leg. It fell over the lip of the tomb and blew up in Martin's face. It killed Martin instantly.

McGowan hopped off the tomb to help Martin, but it was useless. He moved off

to his left to another tomb and took out his last grenade, white phosphorous. As he was about to pull the pin, he stepped too far around the side of the hill he was behind and the Japanese got him in their sights from another hill. The grenade dropped to the ground. His right arm turned around in its socket from a bullet he took. His pack and cartridge belt were shot off. There was no pain

**He felt something hit his
shoulder. He looked down,
and a grenade was rolling down
his right leg. It fell over the
lip of the tomb and
blew up in Martin's face.
It killed Martin instantly.**

or noise. He did not even know he had been shot through the biceps. Another bullet just missed his spine by an inch and went through his lung. That one he did feel, as though he were standing against a brick wall and the strongest man he knew had just hit him with a 10-pound sledgehammer. The bullet went all the way through. Somehow, he did not fall down. He staggered against the entrance

of the tomb. He was bleeding from his mouth. He figured from watching cowboy movies that once you started bleeding from your mouth, you were dead. That was it. So, get your shit together and act with final duty.

He stripped his rifle and threw it away as instructed during training so the Japanese could not use it. He called Knoss over and told him to administer one of the remaining morphine syrettes that he carried in his shirt pocket to him. Knoss shot him up in the calf. He told him to find Soper and that Soper was now in charge of the squad. The last he had seen of Soper was when he and Judge had taken the top of the hill. He crawled into the tomb for protection. He said the Lord's Prayer and the Twenty-third Psalm and lost consciousness. Sometime later somebody threw a grenade into the tomb, or maybe it was a mortar shell, and exploded the burial urns that the Okinawans kept inside. He did not awaken.

What woke him up were the inch-long ants that covered him. Ants? Ants! Now he was mad and said to himself that if he was going to die, he was not going to be covered by a thousand ants.

"F--- this f---ing place."

He had to go back through the valley, filled with Marine dead and dying, sitting

Right: Tony Butkovich, third from the left, poses with other Marine football players as part of a public relations campaign.

ducks because the Japanese had been shooting machine guns from three sides. He had two bullet wounds. He found a little depression where Tyree and Ruddy and Rafferty from his squad were lying wounded, next to Johnson, who was dead. He dived in with them. They lay there flat all day. Japanese snipers knew their location, so they could not move. They were lying partially in water, and McGowan could hear his lungs sucking in liquid. The others tried to stop his bleeding, but they could not get a patch on. A Marine holding his rifle above his head at high port came running, most likely looking for McGowan. He was blown away. In midafternoon, the Japanese started walking mortars 6 feet this way and 6 feet that way to cover as much area as possible before hitting the precise mark. Ruddy and Tyree lay there, knowing it was coming. McGowan was spread-eagled on his back—they all were—with his helmet over his nuts. He still knew his priorities.

A mortar shell landed beside his right foot and blew half of his boot off. Shrapnel shot into his right foot. A piece of shrapnel got stuck in Tyree's forehead, and McGowan reached over and pulled it out. Another mortar landed next to McGowan's head and didn't go off because of the mud. McGowan couldn't drink any water because he thought he was gut shot. It didn't matter anyway because the canteens were full of bullet holes. Another runner came in, and everyone screamed at him:

"Get down! Get down!"

"The lieutenant says to tell you—"

He was shot through the head and fell on top of the three of them. He was dead, but his body was still thrashing and kicking McGowan: he used his last syrette of morphine to put a stop to it. They pushed the body out to use as a shield.

Around 4 p.m., three tanks and a platoon of Marines came roaring in. The tank started firing a machine gun. The three men still in the ditch were holding their heads down because of the ricochet, and a bullet landed in the middle of McGowan's back and burned like hell. McGowan put a helmet on Ruddy's rifle and stuck it up as high as he could without getting shot.

"There's Marines in here! There's Marines in here!"

The tank commander popped through



USMC

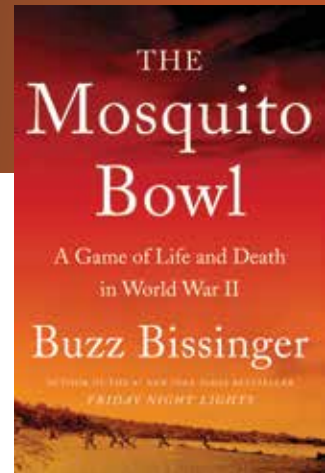


USMC

During the fight for Sugar Loaf Hill, tanks equipped with flame-throwers fired back at the enemy to provide some relief for the riflemen.



A Marine provides comfort to a fellow leatherneck who witnessed the death of a friend on an Okinawa hillside.



Above: This excerpt was taken from chapter 31 of “The Mosquito Bowl: A Game of Life and Death in World War II” by Buzz Bissinger. He is the best-selling author of “Friday Night Lights.” (Courtesy of Harper Perennial)

the hatch. McGowan told him to get the hell out of there. The Japanese had 8-inch artillery shells registered on the exact spot. The tank commander didn't believe him. Right then shells started falling, blasting up 2-foot clumps of earth that fell all around them. A Marine supporting the tanks was standing over McGowan. He was big, about 200 pounds.

He was disemboweled.

He fell on top of the three of them. The tank driver did a 180 to get out. Rafferty, Ruddy, and Tyree made their move and climbed onto the tank in the hope of reaching safety. McGowan thought there was too much flying shrapnel and decided to wait until twilight: he hoped the Japanese might relax a little bit because of the time of day and not get a good bead on him. Around nightfall, he went. He had 100 yards to go to relative safety, which felt like 100 miles. Somehow, despite his wounds, he was able to run; he didn't know how he did it, the adrenaline rush of the body trying to save itself. He didn't want the aid of corpsmen. The two attached to the platoon had both lost their legs anyway.

He was taken to an aid station, where the doctor asked if he wanted a Coke.

“I always heard you got brandy.” He gulped down a hit and passed out. When he woke up, there was a corpsman next to him.

“We thought we lost you a couple of times last night.”

McGowan did not have any personal possessions, but he wanted to thank the corpsman, so he gave him his leather belt. He was still partially in shock. They loaded him onto a jeep in the prone position to another aid station. The jeep was ambushed. The driver took off running.

McGowan lay there watching bullets go through the back of the jeep. He didn't

McGowan lay there watching bullets go through the back of the jeep. He didn't think much about them; they were more of a curiosity, just some more bullets, big deal, let's see where they land.

think much about them; they were more of a curiosity, just some more bullets, big deal, let's see where they land. Other Marines saw what the driver had done and screamed at him to get back into the jeep. He did.

McGowan was taken to a field hospital that was being shelled, and he could hear someone screaming that his arm had just been blown off, but he was stiff as a board and could not roll under his cot for protection.

He grieved over the obliteration of his

squad: four killed—Martin, Soper, Laney, Judge; nine wounded—McGowan, Lancer, Huber, Thibodeau, Rafferty, Nuzzi, LaFountain, Novitski, Knoss. He wondered, as all men in combat wonder, what else he could have done, if he had abandoned Soper and Josephus Judge on that little hill, if they had made it to the top knowing that they were going to get killed but hoping to draw enough fire to save him. McGowan had been closest to Soper in the platoon, but he also had a soft spot for Judge. A private first class, he was 18 years old and had grown up in rural West Virginia. McGowan wondered if he had ever worn shoes before he got into the Marine Corps. He was small and wiry, hardly a hunk, except that he had been an ornery little turd and liked going across the street in Pine Grove to try to beat up the neighborhood kid, just as the neighborhood kid liked to do the same to him.

McGowan was flown to a hospital in Guam. As he was about to be airlifted to Hawaii a nurse asked him, “Would you like a cigarette, soldier?”

“I'm not a soldier. I'm a Marine!”

Don't ever forget it.

Editor's note: This excerpt has been reprinted with permission from “The Mosquito Bowl,” by Buzz Bissinger, published by Harper Perennial, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers. Bissinger is the 2023 recipient of the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation's General Wallace M. Greene Jr. Award for the book, which is now available in paperback. 🦖

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SEA STORY OF THE MONTH

A Memorable Mine Sweep

From 1969 to 1970 during my second tour in Vietnam with Company B, 7th Engineer Battalion, one of my duties as a sergeant was to lead a mine sweeping team. We were detached from the company assigned to the South Korean Marines. We lived in a rustic bunker compound that was miles from Da Nang. Every morning we would saddle up and walk our merry way down Route 3a looking for land mines.

The South Koreans were our security, and they were no-nonsense, well-disciplined professionals, and our sweep team always felt safe.

Our boss was a Korean gunnery sergeant. The gunny spoke perfect English because he was adopted by a Marine during the Korean War and was raised and educated in the states. The gunny would always bend over backwards to keep our team happy and supplied with anything we needed. As security guards, the Koreans were very serious. One day when we were checking for mines, I witnessed how serious they were. The Koreans were led by a hard-charging lieutenant, halting the Vietnamese crowd from advancing toward us. There was one guy on a motor scooter who refused to stop. The Korean lieutenant yelled at him in the native language. Then the lieutenant fired a round in the air. The guy stopped but kept the scooter idling. The lieutenant walked up like Clint Eastwood, grabbed the key and shut

down the scooter. He then took the key out and threw it into the roadside rice paddy, grabbed the guy and pulled him off the scooter. He then rolled the scooter down the embankment into the rice paddy! I regret not having a camera that day!

CWO-3 Jack Wing
Apopka, Fla.

High-Altitude High Jinks

When I was a plane captain with VMA-212 at MCAS Kaneohe from 1961 to 1963, I got the opportunity to fly in the backseat of an F9-8T. Before I could go, I had to get trained in the pressure chamber, which simulates high altitude loss of air pressure and oxygen. This chamber is a large circular steel room with benches inside and portholes for the operators to observe the participants.

There were maybe a half dozen aviators going through the training with me. They took us up in increments to around 40,000 feet. Told us to give a “level off” signal if we had problems. At one point, I felt like my ears were going to explode and I was waving my arms for them to level off. I noticed one of our pilots looking in a porthole from the outside laughing at me. Anyway, it stabilized, and we continued to 40 kilometers. Then we had to take off the oxygen masks and perform a task. The instructor had a wooden box with four slots in it, each with a picture of one of the suits in a deck of cards. He then came around to each of us, handed us a deck of cards, and we had to separate them by suit and drop them into the corresponding slot. As I recall, it was difficult to think straight, and I tried to

stuff an ace of spades in his mouth. High altitude will do that to you.

Norm Spilleth
Minneapolis, Minn.

Duck for Cover!

In the summer of 1988, I was a fat, dumb and happy first lieutenant stationed at Marine Corps Air Station, Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii. At the time, I was a backseater with the call sign of “Ping,” flying in the F-4S Phantom II—the McDonnell Douglas flying cement truck.

Three months later, I was a forward air controller with 1st Bn, 3rd Marines, also stationed at Kaneohe.

A FAC is a company commander’s right-hand man for calling in close air support (CAS). In 1989, the AH-1 Cobra was the Marine

corporal with our PRC-77, a VHF radio. Additionally, there were observers from the company’s command elements. The current attack position (AP) in use was located 500 meters to our right.

This was a safe position where an AH-1 could hover while taking the FAC’s brief. Then the Cobra would commence its attack from the AP, awaiting a “cleared hot” call from the FAC to fire. Well, I had already given my brief to a single Cobra, call sign “Snake Zero Two,” hovering at the AP. In accordance with line five of the brief, the target was a stack of tires simulating a tank. In line seven, I had briefed Snake that we would be using white phosphorous smoke from the artillery to mark the target. Lastly, I had given a time-to-target of six minutes. Thus, a simultaneous countdown was running in three different positions: atop that bunker, at the artillery, and in the Cobra cockpit.

Suddenly, the artillery forward observer—hunkered down over his radio—declared “The mark is in the air.” The entire TACP looked downrange. Seconds later, the artillery FO stated, “The mark is on the deck.”

POOOOM! A puff of white phosphorous smoke appeared 50 meters east of the target. I checked my watch to see five minutes and 30 seconds, whispering “Perfect!”

Just then, I heard “Ping, Snake Zero-Two is pushing.” I looked to my right, where an AH-1 popped up from behind a hill and began tracking inbound.

Instantly, the sound of Snake’s Gatling gun

**Suddenly, the Cobra’s
nose tracked across
our position with
his Gatling gun
continuing to roar.
I just stood there,
but everybody else
dove for cover!**

Corps’ rotary-wing platform for CAS. The AH-1 was a twin-engine, two-bladed, attack helicopter, offering a very diverse arsenal of weaponry. For CAS, the AH-1 had a 20 mm three-barreled, Gatling gun mounted in a turret under the nose. So there I was, standing atop a bunker with my tactical air control party. To my left was a salty old sergeant with our PRC-113, a UHF radio; and to my right was a brand spankin’ new lance

ripped through the air—
RATATATATATATAT—
as he tracked inbound
on our right. Then the
AH-1 commenced a left
turn, with his Gatling
gun still blazing—
RATATATATATATAT!
Suddenly, the Cobra's nose
tracked across our position
with his Gatling gun
continuing to roar. I just
stood there, but everybody
else dove for cover! With an
abandoned PRC-113 on my
left and a discarded PRC-
77 on my right, I looked
around, asking "Where did
everybody go?"

Evidently, I was the
only one who knew that a
Cobra's Gatling gun was
mounted in a turret that
rotates. Thus, the AH-1 can
turn away from a target
but still swivel its gun to
point down range and fire.
Just then, Snake Zero-Two
ceased firing and continued
back to the AP. Meanwhile,
helmeted heads with big,
wide eyes began to pop up

around the bunker.
"Snake Zero-Two, Ping,"
I called on the PRC-113.
"Nice rounds—direct hit!"

The salty sergeant, and
the new lance corporal,
as well as elements of
the company commands
began climbing back atop
the bunker ready for the
Cobra's next run.

LtCol John M. Scanlan,
USMC (Ret)
Hilton Head Island, S.C.

Like Tom Sawyer and the Painted Fence

It was during basic
infantry training at Camp
Lejeune in December 1967,
I had weekend liberty and
was sleeping in at "India,"
3/10 one Saturday morning.
A staff sergeant found me
and woke me up. I was
none too happy. I pleaded
liberty but it did no good.
Staff sergeants can be like
that. He dragged me over
to the 10th Marines CP. He
opened a closet and had me
drag out a big heavy floor

**The ruckus finally
brought out a major
from the office. He
tried telling me how
to do it. He then
began buffing the
floor**

buffer. I had never seen one
before. He showed me the
controls and told me to buff
the main corridor. He then
made the mistake of leaving
me alone.

I was none too happy.
So, I proceeded to buff the
corridor, banging the buffer
against the walls as I went.
The ruckus finally brought
out a major from the office.
He tried telling me how to
do it. He then began buffing
the floor. That's when
the scene of Tom Sawyer
painting the fence came to

mind. I stood there with a
dumb look and watched him
do a full quarter of the hall.

He finally got wise
and had me try it again.
The result was the same,
loud bangs on the wall.
Annoyed, he ordered me
back to the barracks.

I protested, but to no
avail. One happy, smiling
private headed back to the
rack.

LCpl Snuffy Jackson
Loudonville, N.Y.

Do you have any interesting
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the Corps that will give our
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Write them down (500 words
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The Healing Of a Marine



Years after a seven-month deployment to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2005-2006, Col Patty Klop shares her story of living with PTSD. (Photo courtesy of Col Patty Klop, USMCR)

By Col Patty Klop, USMCR

Editor's note: We are publishing Col Patty Klop's story to reinforce the importance of speaking openly about PTSD and other mental health issues and to encourage veterans to ask for help. For information about resources available to veterans, visit: <https://mca-marines.org/blog/resource/resources-for-veteran-marines/>

My name is Patty Klop. I have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and I am not ashamed. I am a wife, mother, sister, and a colonel in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve. Following seven weeks of PTSD treatment in March of 2022, I received the most precious gift of my life—the empowerment to live life with joy and contentment.

As much as I prefer the privacy of my personal and professional life, especially since I am still serving in the Marine Corps Reserve, I am taking a tremendous risk by sharing my PTSD story. However, the worst thing I can do is to keep this gift to myself. Assuming the risk of being transparent and vulnerable as a senior Marine Corps

officer, I feel it is my obligation to my sisters and brothers-in-arms to share this incredible gift as encouragement and possible inspiration.

In April 2006, I returned from a seven-month deployment to Iraq (Ramadi and Fallujah) in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. I had a hard time adjusting to post-deployment life. Reflecting back during this difficult period, I now realize I was experiencing PTSD symptoms. The uncontrollable rage and angry outbursts were shocking and damaging to my family. I had never acted like that before.

Through Military One Source, I was

I thought my exposure to a war-torn and under-developed country and the conditions of how the Afghan people lived would remind me of how good I have it as an American and to live life to the fullest.

referred to a counselor who assessed my symptoms of agitation, sleep disturbance, low energy, depressed mood, and irritability. At this point in my life, I was unmarried and had no children.

From May to October 2009, I deployed as the officer in charge of Personnel Retrieval and Processing (PRP) Detachment, also known as mortuary affairs, to Camp Bastion, Helmand Province, Afghanistan, in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. As the first Marine Corps mortuary affairs unit to deploy to Afghanistan, we were assigned the daunting task of establishing the first Marine Corps Unit Collection Point. As a PRP team, we provided care in handling and preparing human remains for evacuation and subsequent repatriation to next of kin. This was an emotionally fatiguing job with repeated traumatizing experiences.

When I returned home from Afghanistan, I anticipated having the best year of my life with my recent promotion to lieutenant colonel, getting married, and surviving a combat deployment. I thought my exposure to a war-torn and under-developed country and the conditions of how the Afghan people lived would remind me of how good I have it as an American and to live life to the fullest. I thought I would see life through a perpetual optimistic lens, enjoying life for all its worth and embracing each precious moment.

On the contrary, I had one of the worst years of my life, as my emotions, especially anger, were out of control. The first six months of marriage was turbulent. I was irritable, easily agitated at the slightest annoyance, and extremely jumpy. My husband and I attended marriage counseling funded by Military One Source. I did not think my marriage was going to make it.

At this time, my PTSD symptoms were extremely severe with anxiety, agitation, anger, depressed mood, low energy/chronic fatigue, irritability, impatience, hypervigilance (extreme sensitivity to my environment's noises, temperature, and activities), trouble sleeping coupled with haunting nightmares, loss of interest in activities that I used to enjoy, and feeling like my skin was crawling. I was not aware I had PTSD until our marriage counselor shared her insight about my symptoms.

Our counselor referred me to a psychiatrist who prescribed me anti-anxiety medication. I was reluctant to take prescriptions as I felt I reached an all-time low by taking medication for my mental health. I was a senior Marine Corps Officer. I should have control over my emotions and behaviors.

During the summer of 2010, I remembered vividly the moment I knew my prescription medication had taken effect. I was painting the spare bedroom, and I honestly felt my irritability and tension lifting and departing from my body. I finally felt relief and a calmness I had not experienced since I returned from Afghanistan. I instantly knew my experience of relief and calmness was the therapeutic effects of my prescription medication. I now knew that prescription medication was appropriate in my time of need.

In the military, and especially in the Marine Corps, I believe there is a stigma in admitting mental health problems and that pursuing treatment may be perceived as being weak. There is an expectation in the military to handle problems on one's own.

I was fully aware of this stigma and that pursuing mental health treatment was counter-culture to the Marine Corps, especially as a senior officer. I was willing to take this risk because I needed help. I was not the same person when I returned from Afghanistan. My PTSD symptoms were progressively spinning out of control and negatively impacting my marriage.

According to the Stress Continuum Model on the Marine Forces Reserve website, I felt like I was living in the "yellow zone" of reacting while

READY (Green Zone)	REACTING (Yellow Zone)	INJURED (Orange Zone)	ILL (Red Zone)
Definition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adaptive coping and mastery - Optimal functioning - Wellness Features <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Well trained and prepared - Fit and focused - In control - Optimally effective - Behaving ethically - Having fun 	Definition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mild and transient distress or loss of optimal functioning - Always goes away - Low risk for illness Features <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Irritable, angry - Anxious or depressed - Physically too pumped up or tired - Loss of complete self control - Poor focus - Poor sleep - Not having fun 	Definition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More severe and persistent distress or loss of function - Leaves a "scar" - Higher risk for illness Causes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Life threat - Loss - Inner conflict - Wear and tear Features <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Panic or rage - Loss of control of body or mind - Can't sleep - Recurrent nightmares or bad memories - Persistent shame, guilt, or blame - Loss of moral values and beliefs 	Definition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Persistent and disabling distress or loss of function - Clinical mental disorders - Unhealed stress injuries Types <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PTSD - Depression - Anxiety - Substance abuse Features <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Symptoms and disability persist over many weeks - Symptoms and disability get worse over time
Unit Leader Responsibility	Individual, Peer, Family Responsibility		Caregiver Responsibility

MARFORRES COURTESY OF COL PATTY KLOP, USMC



Col Patty Klop with her two sons.

COURTESY OF COL PATTY KLOP, USMC

slipping forward and backward between the yellow zone and the orange zone. Just give me a lame excuse to advance into the orange zone and I pounce! I like to blame my hot-tempered Irish, fighting spirit as an excuse for my behavior. To be

In the military, and especially in the Marine Corps, I believe there is a stigma in admitting mental health problems and that pursuing treatment may be perceived as being weak.

honest, I would like nothing more than to be confrontational, close the gap between me and my offender, and give them a piece of my mind after only the slightest provocation.

I also felt I was unworthy to receive PTSD treatment because I did not think I was qualified in meeting the criteria. I had a false impression that I needed to be an extremely burned-out combat veteran with severe and debilitating PTSD about to hit skid row to be admitted to inpatient PTSD treatment.

On the contrary, to successfully

receive intense PTSD therapy, the veteran must be functional to a degree that enables him or her to be fully present, engaged and to participate in the process of individual counseling and group sessions as well as completing writing assignments.

When I finally checked in to the inpatient facility, I was still shell shocked from life and eager to get the help I desperately needed. When I arrived, all of my doubts that I was not worthy of PTSD treatment, that I did not meet the criteria of PTSD treatment, and that I should not take a seat reserved for another combat veteran, vanished instantly.

After a couple of days, I knew with every fiber of my being that I was in the right place. The PTSD treatment deeply resonated with me because it was exactly the relief that I was looking for. I was able to unpack the burdens of my PTSD, disarm them and hit the reset

When I arrived, all of my doubts that I was not worthy of PTSD treatment, that I did not meet the criteria of PTSD treatment, and that I should not take a seat reserved for another combat veteran, vanished instantly.

button on my life. It felt like God sent his best guardian angels to my flanks to pull me out of my pit of PTSD hell. My disposition slowly improved from dark ominous stormy clouds to clear blue skies.

Initially, I struggled with baring my soul about my traumatic combat experiences to a civilian who never served in the military a day in her life. As combat veterans, I sense we have a common mentality that only another combat veteran will understand us, which is true to an extent. Outside of therapy and a few close military comrades, I would certainly never share my combat experiences with anyone.

My therapist did not serve in the military. However, she was an expert in trauma and was unequivocally the best therapist I encountered after 16 years and more than 10 therapists. She may not have served in the military or in a combat zone but certainly understood my trauma and helped me navigate to a healthier state of mind.

If I was stuck in a mentality that my therapist's credibility and qualifications were as a combat veteran rather than a specialist in trauma, I would regret in missing out on her expertise. My narrow mindset would have truly prevented me from fully embracing the healing power of my PTSD treatment.

What I Experienced in PTSD Treatment

PTSD treatment was like a sanctuary for warriors to begin the healing process from the invisible wounds of combat trauma, which is what I desperately longed for the last 16 years of my life. The Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) is a self-discovery process of identifying thought patterns, emotions and behaviors that were weighing me down from living my best life. I was immersed in a safe and nurturing environment where I was fully accepted without condemnation or shame of myself, my PTSD diagnosis or my past.

What I Did Not Experience in PTSD Treatment

I did not experience a lecture or an unending infomercial of how screwed up I was. I honestly felt like damaged goods but not once did I receive unsolicited advice about how I was doing life wrong, or how bad and destructive my behavior was, or how out of control I was in being a wife and a mother. Not once did I receive condemnation, shame or disapproval for my PTSD diagnosis.

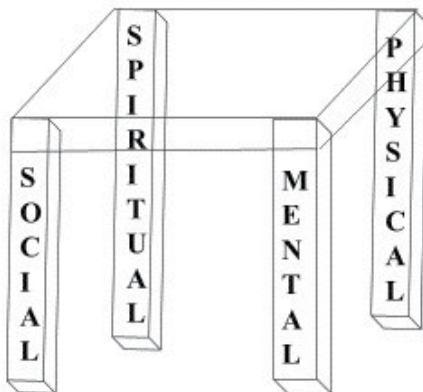
Instead, I was guided in a self-discovery process of exploring my thought patterns, which were challenged and rewritten towards a healthier baseline. Thoughts lead to feelings, feelings lead to actions,



Col Patty Klop, gathered with her husband, two children and in-laws after giving a speech at a Memorial Day event. Klop now works to prevent the stigma of PTSD and encourages other Marines to speak openly about their condition.

COURTESY OF COL PATTY KLOP, USMCR

Wellness: Connecting Mind-Body-Spirit in optimal harmony.



COURTESY OF COL PATTY KLOP, USMCR

Initially, I struggled with baring my soul about my traumatic combat experiences to a civilian who never served in the military a day in her life.

my foundation for life, especially in the daily grind; therefore, my table must be leveled to create a strong base and prevent the perpetual accidents and injuries that life throws at me.

Exercise serves a purpose for my physical and mental health. Exercise is my personal medicine for my PTSD symptoms, as it is a natural elixir to remedy anxiety, depression and stress with no negative side effects that medications may have. I definitely experience a positive change in my mood when I exercise. Conversely, I definitely experience irritability when I do not exercise.

Due to feeling chronically tired all the time and trying to lose a few pounds, I also pursued whole food, plant-based nutrition, as the health benefits are profound in achieving optimal health, preventing diseases and managing weight.

Health is one of the most important predictors of happiness. When it comes to health, my motto is “pay now or pay later.” In other words, there’s no successful procrastination option in taking care of your health. If you take care of your health today, you are preventing avoidable chronic health diseases. If you take care of your health tomorrow, you are reacting to avoidable chronic health diseases. Investing in my physical health was one of the best decisions I ever made, and I will never regret it.

<https://freedomfitnessamerica.org/patty-klop-advisory-group-member-1>



Fit For The Fight and Life

FREEDOM FITNESS AMERICA, COURTESY OF COL PATTY KLOP, USMCR

and actions lead to results. Everything begins with thoughts, which are produced by the mind. The mind is a battlefield!

What I learned in PTSD Treatment

I approached my health holistically: mental, social, physical, and spiritual health. The mind, body and spirit are connected. The best metaphor to describe wellness is imagining the four legs of a table. Each leg represents a major component of health, to include physical, mental, social, and spiritual.

If one leg of the table is too long, then I am spending excessive time in that component of health, such as physical exercise. If one leg of the table is too short, then I am neglecting

that component of health, such as my spiritual fitness. The legs of my table must be equal in length in order for me to reap the benefits of optimal health. If the legs of my table are not equal in length, then my foundation is wobbly.

If I stand on my wobbly table, there is a propensity for accidents and injuries that could have been prevented. My table is

Health is one of the most important predictors of happiness. When it comes to health, my motto is “pay now or pay later.” In other words, there’s no successful procrastination option in taking care of your health.

Author’s note: This article is dedicated to my loving family and to the amazing staff at the VA Fort Thomas Division Trauma Recovery Center, Fort Thomas, Ky. I owe a debt of gratitude to this facility for giving me the most precious and invaluable gift that I have ever received in my life, which was the empowerment to live life with joy and contentment. My eternal gratitude!

Editor’s note: The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense visual information does not imply or constitute DOD endorsement. The views presented are strictly of the author and do not represent official policy positions nor imply endorsements by the U.S. Department of Defense or any of its military services.

Helping Veterans Face Their Fight

Marine Corps Association Supporting Suicide Prevention Coalition

By Kipp Hanley

The Marine Corps Association (MCA) is supporting a new initiative to help stop military veteran suicide.

Face the Fight was created to raise awareness and support for suicide prevention programs available to veterans. It is being funded by USAA and the USAA Foundation, Humana Foundation, and Reach Resilience, an arm of the faith-based Endeavors nonprofit located in San Antonio, Texas.

“Addressing the problems and challenges affecting our veteran population will remain a top priority for the Marine Corps Association,” said Lieutenant General C.G., Chiarotti USMC (Ret),

President and CEO of MCA. “We are fortunate to be partnered with USAA and other organizations and private businesses to support this vitally important initiative addressing suicide and as importantly, suicide among our veteran population. It is a call to arms, and we will answer this call.”

“The suicide rate among veterans is 1.5 times the rate of the general population, yet veteran suicide isn’t inevitable—it is preventable,” said Wayne Peacock, president and CEO of USAA. “These are our fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, friends, neighbors, and children. They are the brave men and women who have given so much through their service, and now it’s our turn. Through Face

the Fight, together we can help eliminate the stigma around asking for help and provide the resources needed to save lives.”

USAA and The USAA Foundation funded the initiative with \$10 million in grants, and have been working with the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, Veterans Affairs, the Defense Department, RAND Corporation and nonprofit alliances to create a strategy to stop veteran suicide. In addition, the Humana Foundation made a three-year, \$6 million philanthropic commitment and Reach Resilience made a five-year, \$25 million commitment. The initiative also has the support of nearly 40 nonprofits and businesses, including veterans service organizations and defense industry leaders.

A key component of Face the Fight’s work is providing grants to nonprofit organizations that can help stop veteran suicide. The initial \$41 million in grants will focus on supporting nonprofit programs with specific focus areas. These include expansion of suicide prevention and training programs; clinical fellowships to strengthen the pipeline of qualified clinicians; and distribution of tools to veteran service organizations, the legal



DOD

community and other entities who work with veterans.

Since 2001, more than 120,000 veterans have died by suicide and the suicide rate of veterans is one and a half times the general population. Face the Fight hopes to cut veteran suicide rate in half by 2030.

“Veteran suicide is a national crisis,” said Sonya Medina Williams, Reach Resilience President and CEO. “An estimated 50,000 more veterans will die by suicide this decade if we don’t act now. As part of our mission to serve communities and people in crisis, we are committed to Face the Fight with USAA and the Humana Foundation. Together, we will break the silence around veteran suicide and spark a national conversation about military life, mental health, and the need for our country to show up for our veterans and ensure that no one is left behind,” she added.

“Humana is committed to ensuring all veterans and military members have access to the care they need, especially those in underserved communities where advances in health equity are greatly needed,” said Bruce D. Broussard, Humana President and CEO. “The launch of Face the Fight is an important milestone in the fight against veteran suicide and will help significantly ease the challenges experienced by veterans and their families. Together, with the Humana Foundation, USAA, Reach Resilience and others, we join this fight to help remove systemic barriers and raise awareness of the mental health challenges faced by our veteran community who have dedicated their lives to serving our country.”

In addition to supporting the Face the Fight initiative, MCA is increasing support to commanders across the Corps as they monitor the mental health of their Marines. According to a 2021 Department of Defense report, of all active-duty service members, Marines accounted for the second highest number of suicides per 100,000 during the 2021 calendar year (23.9). From 2020-21, 106 Marines committed suicide.

Confidential crisis support for veterans and their loved ones can be accessed 24 hours a day by calling the Suicide & Crisis Hotline at 988. For more information on Face the Fight, visit <https://wefacethefight.org/>. 🇺🇸



JOSHUA SEYBERT, USAFR



PFC JOSHUA GRANT, USMC



USMC



COURTESY OF FACE THE FIGHT

We—the Marines

Compiled by Kyle Watts

From the Congo to U.S. Citizen, Now Marine Officer

Corporal Nkundimana Binene Claude, a rifleman with 2nd Platoon, “Alpha” Company, 1st Battalion, 23rd Marine Regiment, 4th Marine Division, was commissioned as a second lieutenant after leading his squad through a kinetic live fire range at the Marine Air Ground Combat Training Center in Twentynine Palms, Calif. A native of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and naturalized U.S. citizen, Claude recited his oath of office as he came off the range to attain his lifelong goal of becoming a Marine Corps officer.

Claude delayed his commissioning ceremony to run Range 400 one last time with his squad at Integrated Training Exercise (ITX) 4-23, an event that brings more than 300 Marines together to provide support for the maneuver of a single company to assault multiple positions. First Lieutenant Conor Patterson, his platoon commander, described Claude as, “an undeniable leader within 2nd Platoon, always leading from the front in all that he does and displays all it means to be an infantryman in the Marine Corps.”

Claude was born in 1996 to Philemon Sebihendo Gasengo, a chief of the Banyamulenge Tribe of the DRC, lo-

cated in the Kivu region of the Congo. To Claude’s friends and family, he was known as Dani Gasengo, which in his native language of Kinyamulenge means “Young Gasengo” or “Gasengo Junior.”

As a result of his father’s job, Claude was exposed at an early age to many different cultures, including that of the United States. One such influence came from a foreign aid worker and retired Marine officer named Captain Claude, who Claude’s father befriended. Claude’s father was particularly fond of the American fighting spirit and knew about many of the battles the Marines fought, which inspired him to name his son after his friend.

The Banyamulenges Tribe live by a code of bravery, honor and honesty. These values attracted Claude from an early age to the core values of the Marine Corps—honor, courage and commitment.

Claude described it as a marriage at first sight. “My tribal values and the values that are instilled in any Marine, that’s what led my father to lead me into an enlistment and, later, the pursuit of becoming an officer,” he explained.

Violence broke out in their home region in 1998 and Claude’s father used all his resources to evacuate as many people as he could, including his infant son Claude



Above: Marine 2ndLt Nkundimana Claude, a fire team leader assigned to 1st Bn, 23rd Marines, 4thMarDiv, recites the oath of office during his commissioning ceremony at the Marine Corps Air-Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, Calif., on June 17. (Photo by Cpl Ryan Schmid, USMC)

Marine 2ndLt Nkundimana Claude’s commissioning ceremony was held after a training exercise at the Marine Corps Air-Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, Calif., on June 17.



CPL RYAN SCHMID, USMC

and the rest of his family. During this time Claude's father stayed to fight and entrusted his family's safety to Capt Claude. The family was separated, and Claude did not see his father for the next four years, believing he had died.

His family was rescued by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC. The U.N.'s mission was to protect the civilians, humanitarian personnel, and human rights defenders under imminent threat of physical violence, and to support the government of the DRC in its stabilization and peace consolidation efforts. After being rescued, Claude's family was granted asylum in United States in 2011. He now calls Houston, Texas, home.

Upon arriving in his new home, Claude had one goal set in mind: to become a Marine Corps officer. He knew there were steps he had to take to achieve his goal, the first being U.S. citizenship. In 2016, he enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserve and entered a program called the Basic Training Initiative, a program run by United States Citizenship and Immigration Service. This program allows servicemembers to immediately start the naturalization process so they can become citizens as soon as basic training is complete.

Serving in the Marine Corps Reserve accelerated Claude's path to commissioning. Now, as a U.S. citizen and having earned the title of Marine, his next step was completing Officer Candidates School (OCS) and earning his degree. He began studies at Texas A&M University in 2015, and he completed the 10-week Platoon Leaders Course (PLC) at OCS in 2019. Tragically, his father was dying from cancer at the time and few months later, he passed away. Claude decided to take a break from school and Marine Corps policy requires that candidates who leave college are dropped from the PLC program. They are allowed to reapply, but they cannot continue the current contract.

Claude did just that after a few years, applying this time at Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas. Knowing exactly what he needed to do, he submitted another OCS package and was selected. He completed the PLC a second time, knowing all that was left was to finish his degree. He graduated from Texas State University in 2023 with a degree in political science.

Although Claude initially wanted to serve on active duty, he credits his time in the Marine Corps Reserve as an important step to achieve his goals.

"Once I commission, I will go active duty," Claude said. "And the Reserve was

a route for me to get my citizenship and that way I could start my PLC application. I've learned so much from the Reserve."

Capt Ryan Petty, a former platoon commander of Claude's said, "I have been fortunate to watch Cpl Claude mature and grow into a strong leader, capable of leading Marines as a non-commissioned officer and now an officer. His zeal for being a Marine was always strong and now he will pass that zeal to his Marines. As his former platoon commander, I take pride in the Marine leader he has become and look forward to his future service and unlimited potential. Through adversity he persevered and took his own losses as the fuel for his strength."

This is Claude's second time at ITX since joining the Marine Corps. "It is a once-in-a-lifetime experience, you don't really get to train as much as we do here." He said. "As an officer, this is exactly what I want to do. I want to be able to command an operation as big as this, maybe in a training environment or maybe in an operational environment."

Claude is excited about his future as an officer. "The Marine Corps brings together a lot of people from a lot of different walks of life. I want to be able to travel, I want to be able to talk to dif-

ferent individuals, and just broaden my knowledge of the geography of the world, of the different cultures. And, of course, everybody has a little something that they bring to the table. I want to get as much of that as possible."

Claude will continue his officer journey when he attends The Basic School in Quantico, Va. He sees this as an homage to his father, who had always wanted his son to uphold the values of the Banyamulenge tribe and the Marine Corps.

"My job is to be a warrior and to learn how to fight, and once the time is right, actually go fight," he said. "I know this made my father proud and he is smiling down on me wherever he is."

Capt Mark Andries, USMC

Marines from VMU-2 Awarded For Responding to Vehicle Crash

On a Friday night, a group of Marines from Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, N.C., celebrated a birthday at a local bar. They met another patron shortly before closing time. The thought of pulling this individual from a flipped car never crossed their minds as they wished him a safe travel home. However, the scene that the Marines encountered while



LtCol Michael Donlin, center, the commanding officer of Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron (VMU) 2, congratulates Cpl Jose Arispe III, left, an unmanned-aerial vehicle avionics technician with VMU-2, during a ceremony at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, N.C., on May 22. (Photo by LCpl Elias E. Pimentel III, USMC)



LCPL ELIAS E. PIMENTEL III, USMC

Cpl John Graham, left, and Cpl Jose Arispe III, unmanned-aerial vehicle avionics technicians with Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron (VMU) 2, along with two other Marines from the squadron, were awarded certificates of commendation for their actions in response to a vehicle crash they saw while off duty.

traveling back to base tested instincts and skills instilled in them since boot camp.

“As we were coming around a bend, it looked like there was a car waiting to pull out,” said Corporal John Graham, an unmanned-aerial vehicle avionics technician with Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron (VMU) 2. “But then we saw that it was upside down. There were three smaller trees knocked over, and it was in the middle of a ditch.”

The initial sight of a flipped vehicle shocked the group of Marines. Cpl Jose Arispe III, an unmanned-aerial vehicle avionics technician, Lance Corporal Zelina Reyes, an aviation-maintenance data specialist, Cpl Tanner Swain, an aviation-logistics information management and support specialist, and Cpl Graham pulled over to better assess the situation.

“It was an absurd sight,” said Arispe. “The creek was really marshy, and I remember just seeing water pretty much waist deep.”

The vehicle was mostly submerged in the creek. The car’s engine was shut off, but the wheels were still spinning. The accident had just happened. The driver was still inside the vehicle, also upside down.

“I checked for consciousness by trying to get him to talk before I opened the door,” said Graham. “When I got him out, I checked him for broken bones, bleeding, scratches, and bruises. He was completely lost. At first, I thought that he had a concussion, so I was really slow with him. He seemed to be all right, so we laid him down.”

While Graham inspected the driver for external wounds, Arispe called the ambulance while assuring the driver that help was on the way. Once paramedics arrived, Graham and Arispe stayed to ensure the driver would be okay. The course of events lasted about 30 minutes.

“It was pretty quick,” said Graham. “No matter how fast life is moving, to see something like that happen makes you realize that stuff can change on a dime. One decision can change the whole outcome of your life.”

In the days following the accident, Graham and Arispe reflected on what had transpired. “It didn’t feel real at the time,” said Arispe. “There are many ways that situation could have [gone], but I’m glad that he was OK and that we were there to actually call somebody. I don’t think he would have called anybody, and if nobody was driving down that road, he

just would have been stuck there upside down and possibly would’ve passed out.”

The Marines were not told that they would receive an award for their actions. To them, they did what any Marine would have been expected to do. They were caught by complete surprise when their commanding officer called them in front of the entire squadron to receive recognition for their response to the incident.

“I didn’t think we were going to be recognized or anything for it,” said Arispe. “I think the bigger picture here is that there’s good people out in this world. Marines are always going to do the right thing. If we see something, we’re going to help.”

Graham and Arispe seek to be an example for any Marine who may find themselves in a similar situation.

“You never know what life’s going to bring and that could be you at some point,” said Graham. “Do the right thing.”

On May 22, Reyes, Swain, Graham and Arispe were awarded certificates of commendation for their response to the accident and assistance to the driver.

LCpl Elias E. Pimentel III, USMC



THANK YOU



MCA extends our appreciation to our partners supporting our Marine Corps-wide Professional Leaders Conferences on "Suicide Prevention and Awareness for Leaders."

Through the assistance of USAA, Focus Marines, KSA Integration, and the Semper Fi/America's Fund, we have provided two new Professional Leaders Conferences in 2023 to I MEF and in the NCR and will provide our third for III MEF in September.

We also thank Dr. M. David Rudd of the Rudd Institute for Veteran and Military Suicide Prevention at the University of Memphis for his support and insights provided at our conferences. Together we can make a difference in our Marines' lives. Thank You All!



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“Every Marine a Rifleman”

Sergeant Major Thomas F. Sweeney and Quartermaster Sergeant John E. Haskin; Defense of Water Tank Hill, Corregidor, May 6, 1942

By Mike Miller

Born into humble circumstances, Sergeant Major Thomas F. Sweeney and Quartermaster Sergeant John E. Haskin made the ultimate sacrifice for their country during World War II in the bloody battle for Corregidor in the Philippines.

Sweeney was born on Jan. 22, 1905, in Rockford, Ill. His parents were born in Ireland and immigrated to the United States. Sweeney did not attend school; he learned how to read and write on his own. On Dec. 20, 1926, Sweeney began his Marine Corps career inside the recruiting office in San Francisco.

Haskin was born on Aug. 21, 1910, in Vallonia, Ind. He was one of five children and worked as in a factory, which provided more than enough incentive to enlist in the Marine Corps. On Jan. 5, 1932, Haskin signed his enlistment papers in the offices of the Western Recruiting Division in Los Angeles.

Nine years later, they crossed the

Pacific Ocean to Shanghai together on the USS *Henderson* (AP-1) as America's entry into World War II drew near.

In Shanghai, Haskin and Sweeney took their places as the senior leadership of Service Company, 4th Marine Regiment. Now a sergeant major, Sweeney became the senior noncommissioned officer of the company, while Haskin became one of four supply sergeants and the non-commissioned officer in charge of the regimental clothing room.

Haskin had little time to enjoy his duty in China before the evacuation of the regiment to the Philippines on Nov. 28, quickly followed by the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor and the Philippines on Dec. 7-8, 1941. The attack plunged the 4th Marines into the front lines of WW II, many miles of ocean between the Marines and any hope of reinforcement from the United States.

The 4th Marines were temporarily in a better defensive position in the Philippines, reinforced by the Marine Battalion at the Cavite Naval Base. However,

the Japanese invasion of the Philippines quickly collapsed the American and Filipino defenses. On Dec. 26, as the Japanese forced the Allies to Bataan, the entire 4th Marines shifted across 2 miles of Manila Bay to the island of Corregidor. The regiment, under the command of Colonel Samuel Howard, defended the headquarters of the American harbor defenses of Manila Bay. The Marines received orders to take control of the beach defense of the tadpole-shaped island, only 3.5 miles long and 1.5 miles wide at the most spacious extent of the island, known as “Topside.”

Farther east was “Middleside,” containing more barracks and artillery positions. Last was “Bottomside,” with the supply docks, a small Filipino town, and the Malinta Tunnel, which held most of the American headquarters and supply facilities, burrowed safely underneath the rock hill above. The far eastern end of Corregidor dwindled into a narrow ridge running down the center of the island's tail, with a small landing field, concrete water tanks, and steep cliffs along the beach.

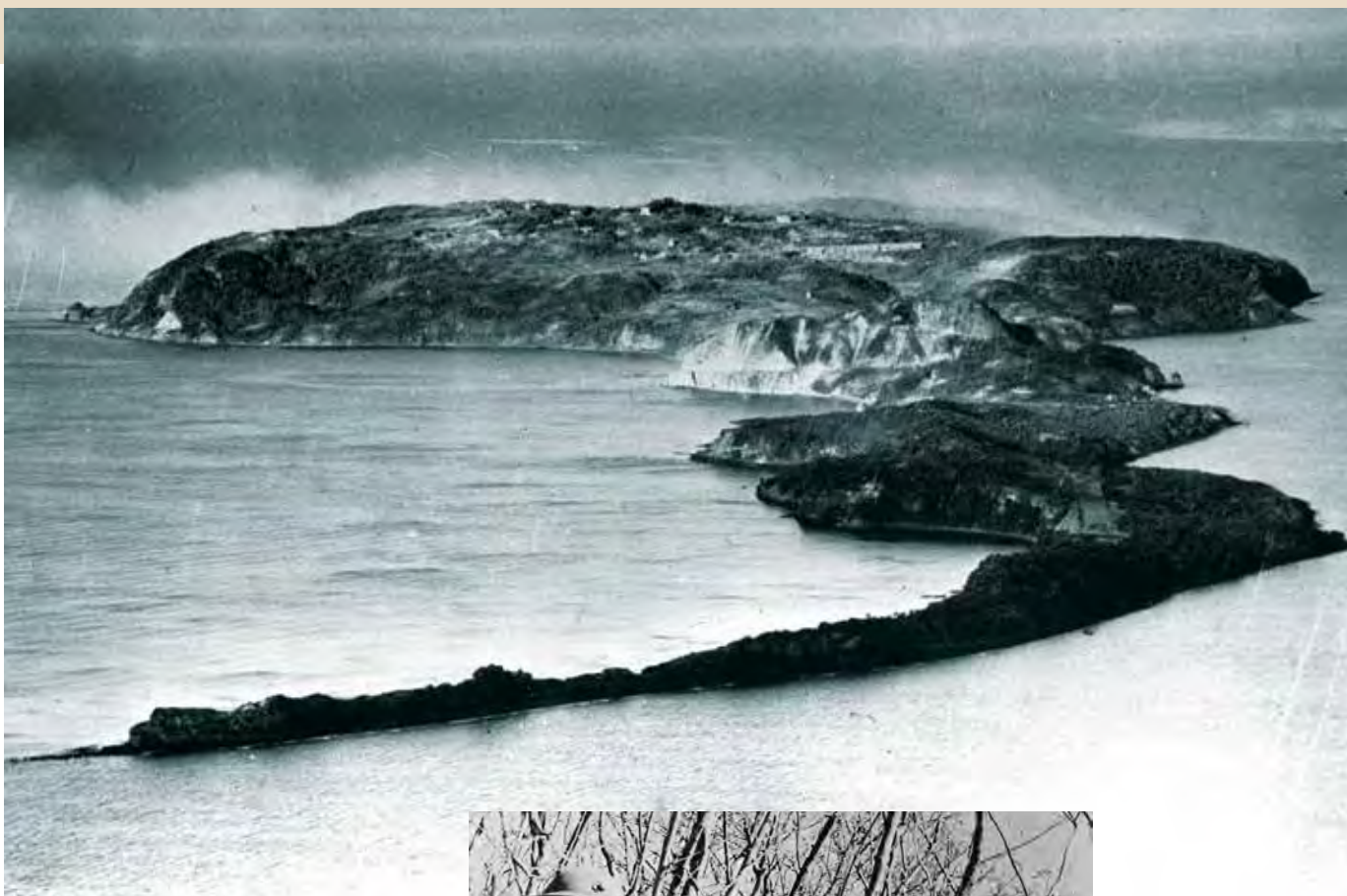
General Jonathan Wainwright, commanding the American forces on Corregidor, assigned many additional units to support Howard's 4th Marines and the Army Coast Artillery. The fall of Bataan on April 9, 1942, brought many disparate Army and Navy units to the island. On April 29, the 4th Marines numbered 229 officers and 3,770 men, but only 1,500 Marines interspersed into the now-four infantry battalions. Over 72 Army and Navy officers and 1,173 enlisted men joined the 4th Marines, transforming the regiment into a Marine Corps Foreign Legion by necessity. Howard now commanded a motley crew of Marines, soldiers from Army aviation, infantry, and engineer units who escaped from Bataan, Navy Sailors who lost their ships; and Filipino scouts and soldiers.

The expanded 4th Marines prepared their defense of Corregidor, without any hope of reinforcement from the United States. Essentially, the island became a modern Alamo, and the only questions



USMC

Officers of 2nd Bn, 4th Marines. Haskin and Sweeney served with the 4th Marine Regiment during WW II.



USMC

**Once in Shanghai,
both Haskin and Sweeney
took their places as the
senior leadership of
Service Company,
4th Marine Regiment.**

remaining were how long the garrison could hold out and how the end would come—by starvation or Japanese attack. Sweeney celebrated his 36th birthday on Corregidor, facing days of explosions from 1,701 Japanese bombs and artillery fire from nine 240 mm howitzers, 34 149 mm howitzers, and 32 other cannons of varied size. Japan's pounding of Corregidor before its May invasion continued day and night, causing 30 Marine deaths and 60 men wounded. The Marine beach defenses were particularly damaged, but worse was the loss of fresh water and food supplies to men already on short rations.

The inevitable Japanese assault began in the darkness of May 5, 1942, concealing three waves of landing craft carrying 790 Japanese soldiers of Colonel Gempachi Sato's 1st Battalion, 61st Infantry Regiment. The Japanese soldiers



USMC

Above: An aerial view of Corregidor Island. The long thin strip of land toward the coast was where the 1st Battalion, 4th Marines, commanded by Maj Curtis Beecher, defended the island against Japanese forces.

Left: Col Samuel L. Howard, right, oversaw the protection of the headquarters of the American harbor defenses of Manila Bay on Corregidor.

ended their preparations by singing the melody "Prayer in the Dawn," then boarding their landing craft. The dark waters of Manila Bay masked Sato's men as they departed the Bataan Peninsula, destined for the tail of the tadpole-shaped island of Corregidor.

Howard's 4th Marines awaited the Japanese assault, forewarned the day before by the arrival of a small fishing boat. Its occupant provided intelligence

of Sato's attack but lacked the time and location of the assault. Howard assembled his senior officers, ordering the entire regiment to occupy their beach defenses at nightfall. If the Japanese failed to arrive early in the night, half of the regiment would be held in place until dawn while the other, perhaps more fortunate half, would stand down to sleep and eat. The entire 4th Marines would be ready in their beach defensive positions before



USMC

Japanese troops landing on Corregidor. The enemy launched their attack on May 5, 1942.

an expected landing at daylight.

No matter when the landing might come, Major Max W. Shaeffer's regimental reserve anticipated heavy combat ahead. His two companies, labeled O and P, were primarily composed of Headquarters Company and Service Company Marines. They spent their days repairing equipment damaged by the constant shelling and bombing. Particularly vulnerable were the Browning water-cooled machine guns, as their water-cooling jackets had been ingeniously and repeatedly patched by the Marines, including Sgt Gerald A. Turner, after many encounters with enemy shrapnel.

Shaeffer appointed Turner the rank of a provisional lieutenant and placed him in command of a platoon of Filipino Army officer cadets. He cautioned Turner, "Don't go out and try to be a hero; I want you to look after these kids." Even with the improvised platoon, Schaeffer's reserve counted less than 500 men.

Evidence of the coming attack arrived in the form of a massive Japanese artillery barrage at 10:40 p.m., targeting the 4th Marines' north shore defenses. Particularly smothered by explosions was Maj Curtis Beecher's 1st Battalion, defending the long, narrow east tail of Corregidor. The augmented 1st Battalion command could be the most intriguing unit in the Marine Corps history. With a core of 16 Marine officers and 352

enlisted men forming the backbone of the battalion, detachments of four Navy officers and 121 Sailors, 26 Army officers 286 enlisted men, and 281 Filipino soldiers and airmen joined to defend the tail of the island.

Beecher fully believed the Japanese would land on the north beaches in his sector, so he prepared his conglomerate

Mercurio's Marines opened fire at once, but the Japanese were too close to be stopped before grounding their craft on the beach. The Marines and Japanese soldiers immediately engaged in a deadly firefight at close range.

command accordingly. He made daily inspections and constant improvements to his defenses, bolstered by his combat experience in WW I. "His strong control and clear foresight, imperative attributes at the time," a naval officer observed, "were well recognized by all service arms under his command, I am sure." Company A, led by Captain Lewis H. Pickup, held the most obvious landing zone on the north shore, while Co B

took up position on the south shore. Co D waited in reserve to reinforce any threatened portion of the beach.

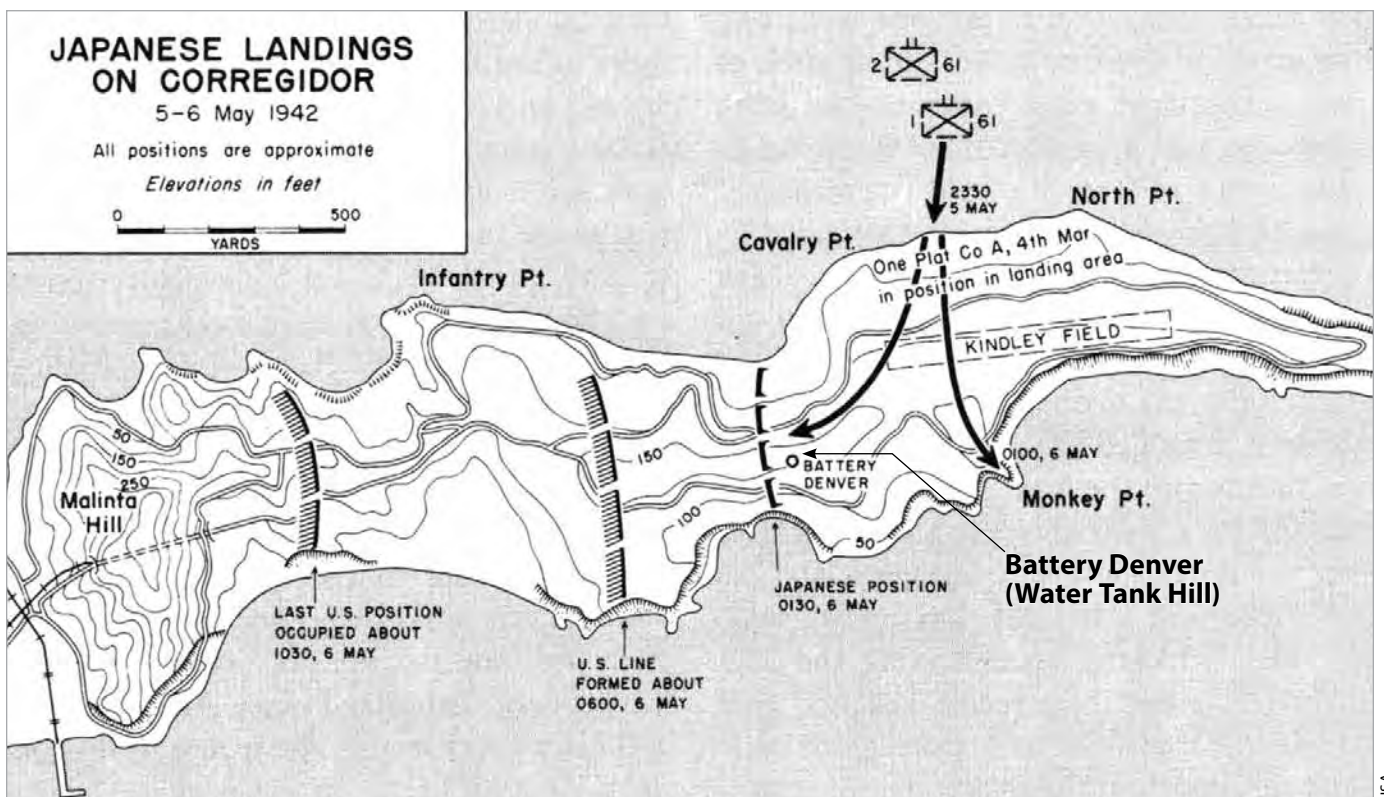
At 11:30 p.m., the blazing glare of American searchlights illuminated Sato's approaching small craft headed for Corregidor's north shore toward the thin beaches of Infantry Point, Cavalry Point, and North Point. Co A defended the area, opening a devastating fire on the Japanese landing craft. Corregidor's searchlights easily targeted Sato's three waves of boats. Particularly devastating were Co A's 37 mm guns. Sgt Louis E. Duncan prepared for a night such as this, altering the traversing mechanism on his gun, which allowed him to shift fire on the Japanese craft quickly, one after another.

However, the effective Japanese artillery barrage destroyed all but two of Co A's 13 machine guns covering the cove. The two remaining machine guns still took a heavy toll on the approaching Japanese landing craft. PFC Silas K. Barnes, manning one of the surviving machine guns, heard the approach of the Japanese boats and poured a devastating fire as they entered his cove. Barnes then enfiladed the 61st Regiment's foothold on the beach, gunning down many of Sato's men as they came ashore.

First Lieutenant William F. Harris' 1st Platoon defended the area between Infantry and Cavalry Points from the crest of the ridge overlooking the oily



USA



USA

beach below, while Master Gunnery Sergeant John Mercurio's 2nd Platoon defended the beach from Cavalry to North Points, with many Marines so close to the waterline that Cpl Edwin R. Franklin could almost touch the surf at high tide from his foxhole. The Japanese there fired illuminating flares from their boats 100 yards offshore. Mercurio's Marines opened fire at once, but the Japanese were

too close to be stopped before grounding their craft on the beach. The Marines and Japanese soldiers immediately engaged in a deadly firefight at close range.

Mercurio, armed with only a pistol, killed a Japanese soldier at a range "so close he could have touched him," while Franklin was struck in the head by a grenade fragment, sending him to the ground, where he saw a Japanese soldier

charging with fixed bayonet to finish him off. Franklin immediately decided he wasn't going to die that way and although dazed, quickly jumped to his feet with his own bayoneted rifle. The two men clashed in a fierce moment of combat, Franklin taking a bayonet wound to the chest but killing his enemy with a bayonet thrust of his own. Another Japanese soldier put a bullet into Franklin's leg,



A Marine platoon sergeant instructs Filipino aviation cadets on the use of the Lewis machine gun.

but the Marine was able to crawl to safety.

After struggling against the fire of Co A's wrath, many of Sato's men reached the beach only to encounter a thick layer of oil, drifted ashore from ships previously sunk in Manila Bay. The men of the 61st Japanese infantry Regiment waded through the oil, now in defilade, then began climbing up a steep incline to engage the Marines above. Despite the enemy's concealment on the slope, Co A continued to fire down into the Japanese foothold on the beach. GySgt William A. Dudley elevated by hand his 37 mm gun to fire on the struggling Japanese landing craft below.

Darkness concealed many of the fierce hand-to-hand brawls, but Japanese soldiers opened gaps through Co A and overran the beach in only 15 minutes. Sato's men signaled a successful landing at 15 minutes after midnight, moving inland after 30 minutes of intense combat, primarily with bayonets and grenades. Pickup's orders had been, should the Japanese break through the company positions, he would retire with his company and join Co B on a hill held by soldiers of Coastal Artillery Battery D, known as Denver or Water Tank Hill. The two companies would form a north-south position across the tail of the island, stopping the Japanese from approaching Malinta Tunnel. With their flank now anchored on the north and south coasts, the company commanders held a more defensible position.

At the same time, Sato's battalion moved quickly to the high ground, overrunning the Denver Battery position be-

fore Beecher could completely establish his own line of defense. The problem facing Beecher was another swift Japanese advance, which would threaten Malinta Tunnel, the heart of the American defense. Capt Noel O. Castle organized Co D and the 1st Battalion Headquarters Company for a counterattack to retake the hill. At the same time, he ordered Sgt Matthew Monk as well as 15 drivers and cooks to secure the abandoned beach defenses on his left flank.

Just before midnight, Howard ordered

**The problem facing Beecher
was another swift
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Malinta Tunnel, the heart
of the American defense.**

Shaeffer's regimental reserve into Malinta Tunnel, ready to support the Marines already engaged in the fight on the north shore beaches. Sweeney and Haskin provided the backbone of leadership that would be tested on the morning of May 6, 1942. Schaeffer's battalion departed their bivouac in Government Ravine on the eastern side of Corregidor shortly before midnight. They observed tracers and heard a massive amount of machine-gun fire from the 1st Battalion beaches as they moved, getting a glimpse of what lay ahead.

However, the two reserve companies'

initial problem was surviving the heavy shelling by Japanese artillery before entering the safety of Malinta Tunnel to reach the 1st Battalion. Schaeffer's Marines gradually made their way in darkness, using the torn earth of bomb and shell craters and collapsed sewage ditches for safe passage into the night. The Service and Supply Marines entered the tunnel and picked up bandoliers of rifle ammunition, hand grenades, and extra magazines for their Lewis machine guns. The Marines then fixed bayonets and departed through the east end of the tunnel into the night. Several headquarters Marines and Sailors volunteered to join the battalion as ammunition bearers, some of whom would be killed in only minutes during the ensuing fray.

Once out of the east end of the tunnel at 2 a.m., the Service and Headquarters Marines of Companies O and P harbored little illusion over the eventual result of what lay ahead, facing a concentrated Japanese landing now covered by night. No matter the odds against them, the Marines were determined to fight to the end. Capt Robert Chambers' Co O and 1stLt William F. Hogaboom's Co P entered the furious vortex of battle, moving east along the main road to Beecher's battalion, taking fire as they approached the critical high ground of Denver and Water Tank Hill. Schaeffer's battalion immediately met with Japanese flares overhead, signaling a smothering barrage of artillery in addition to the rifle and machine-gun fire of the enemy pushing ahead from the landing beaches.

Co P led the attack, taking the left of the battalion advance toward the landing beaches, with Co O deploying on the right, advancing on the main south road leading to the eastern end of Corregidor. Haskin led 3rd Platoon of Co O into the fray on the right side of the road while QM Clerk Frank W. Ferguson's platoon tied in on the left side of the road. The 2nd Platoon followed Ferguson in reserve. Both companies continued east until reaching the junction below Water Tank Hill and the captured Denver Battery emplacements.

The Marines of Co P quickly identified Japanese soldiers on Water Tank Hill, halting to prepare their assault. Co O also arrived in the darkness, opening fire on the shadowy figures ahead. The volley of bullets was returned with a severe round of curse words, a return barrage of "sulphurous oaths" from Hogaboom's Co P platoon. The volume and choice words could only be uttered by Marines, allowing Co O to hold fire.

The commotion alerted the Japanese battalion to Marine reinforcements, and



The steep ridges and rocky beaches on Corregidor proved difficult for Japanese tanks to traverse.

USMC



Leathernecks from the 4th Marines who were defending Corregidor Island celebrate the arrival of a fresh supply of Camel cigarettes in early 1942.

USMC

they responded with white flares, requesting artillery support from the Bataan Peninsula. Ferguson immediately warned his platoon to take cover, as he knew the enemy artillery must have prepared barrages, bracketing any point on the island. The long weeks of shelling ensured extremely accurate fire anywhere on the

island. “Almost immediately, all hell broke loose,” remembered Ferguson. Fortunately, most of the Marines found shelter in convenient Japanese-made bomb craters. Instead of losing his entire platoon, only eight Marines were injured.

The Marines fired back at the shadowy forms of the enemy, silhouetted on the

skyline. Two Marines charged up the hill, returning with a wounded, English-speaking Japanese soldier. With confirmation of the enemy positions, Hogaboom launched his attack on the left side of the hill, toward the north shore defenses of Beecher’s beleaguered Co A. The Marines fragmented, almost immediately—while Hogaboom’s 1st Platoon linked up with the remnants of Harris’ platoon, his two follow-up platoons diverted directly up the hill to the water tanks, directed by the orders of an unfamiliar Captain.

Hogaboom quickly entered the melee along the beach while dispatching runners to find his two missing platoons. The Marines took out several enemy snipers before striking a north-south draw, extending from the beach to Water Tank Hill. A Japanese machine-gunner, located inside a captured sandbag bunker, dominated the draw, locking in with other machine guns to form multiple kill zones. Hogaboom grounded in the ravine, unable to advance further. The Marines met fire with fire, with a hail of bullets from their own machine guns. In the midst of the battle, a second wave of Japanese landing craft approached the north shore once again, packed full of Japanese soldiers eager to join the brawl.

Unfortunately for these Japanese men, the remains of Harris and Hogaboom’s platoons were in perfect position to devastate the landing. The Marines eagerly turned their wrath from the Japanese on the island to the enemy approaching from the bay. A barrage of Marine rifle and machine-gun fire erupted from the beach and slopes of Water Tank Hill. Several .30-caliber machine guns created a wicked crossfire on the landing craft, but even more devastating was a previously unknown, solitary Denver Battery, 60th Coast Artillery Corps .50-cal. machine gun actually behind the Japanese in the ravine. The soldiers manning the fearsome weapon were wisely silent until the full moon illuminated their targets and they could not resist.

The incessant hammering of machine-gun rounds into the crowded landing craft emphatically concealed the screams onboard. The Marines’ massacre of the landing craft inflamed the fighting spirit of PFC Robert P. McKechnie, who ran forward to a rocky point extending from the beach, establishing a flanking position for his Lewis machine gun. Supported by two Marines serving as ammunition runners, McKechnie raked two enemy barges with measured bursts of fire until they were seen drifting aimlessly into

the moonlit bay, never touching the soil of Corregidor. His flanking fire accomplished much the same effect on the enemy who came ashore.

After obliterating the landing, the battle across the ravine resumed with little progress made by either side. The interlocking enemy fire caused heavy casualties among the Marines, who struggled to find weaknesses in the enemy position. Dawn illuminated the fight, which now raged over Water Tank Hill. Both sides fought at close range, with grenades as the weapon of choice. "One side or the other would, sooner or later, have to give way, it would seem," Hogaboom recalled, "but, as the morning wore away, the Japanese appeared to be losing very little, if any, of their determination." Faced with the prospect of being driven into the sea, Sato's men had little choice but defend the hill, which commanded both Japanese and American positions.



A view of the road to Malinta Tunnel, which contained most of the American supplies and headquarters facilities.

Maj Francis H. Williams' 4th Battalion of Sailors arrived at daybreak, stabilizing the Marine defense as they joined the fight for Water Tank Hill. Two companies from the battalion reinforced Hogaboom, with two more joining Chamber's company. The Japanese soldiers fought hard to capture the hill, but suffered heavy casualties which could not be replaced. American machine-gun fire ripped into any enemy who showed himself, who then fell with agonizing cries of pain and fear. The Marines were haunted long years after the war by the sound of the dying Japanese soldiers. The Americans in turn continued attacks of their own but

could make little headway in the blasted ruins of Water Tank Hill, named for the water tanks at each end of the crest.

Daylight revealed the Marines of Co O mixed with the Sailors and soldiers of the 4th provisional battalion, battling at grenade range over the crest of the hill. A Marine sergeant ordered the soldiers of Denver Battery to join the Marines on beach defense, leaving only

Haskin never hesitated to come to the rescue of his friend. The nearby Marines and soldiers on the ground watched as Haskin began his own ascent of the tower with a fresh supply of grenades.

a small detachment to hold the hill. The Japanese soldiers soon filtered up from the beach, capturing the battery despite strong resistance from the few men left on the hill.

At the same time, Chambers' Marines advanced up the hill to hold the saltwater tank on the western crest, and then drove east across the central finger toward the Japanese in Denver Battery. Close in fighting raged on the eastern finger of the crest, overlooking the Japanese positions. The fiercest fighting swirled about the freshwater tank at 10 a.m. and continued for another hour. Cries of "Banzai! Banzai!" rang out over the hill,

screamed by the Japanese to embolden their charges.

Hand-to-hand combat became commonplace, with bayoneted rifles, pistols, and fists the common weapons of choice. A soldier of Denver Battery grappled with a charging Japanese soldier, who bayoneted him in the hip. The artilleryman was able to draw his pistol as he went down, killing his enemy with a volley of bullets. He was then wounded by a grenade tossed into his foxhole, but he remained in the fight. Two soldiers of Denver Battery defended the base of the tank, and as two Japanese soldiers approached nearby, the Americans jumped them, beating one enemy soldier to death with his pistol and dispatching the other with a rifle butt.

The freshwater tank became a central focus of the brawl, where several Marines were pinned down in a nearby shell crater. Japanese knee mortars targeted the Marines, slowly ranging on them with increased accuracy, portending a fatal end for the men in the crater. Try as they might, the Marines could not escape.

Sweeney and Haskin refused to allow the inevitable. "Well, this is it," Sweeney told a fellow Marine that morning, "We have been in the Marine Corps for 15 years, and this is what we have been waiting for. If I don't see you, that's the way it is." Observing an opportunity to drive back the enemy soldiers, he climbed the ladder to the top of the 20-foot-high freshwater tank. Armed with grenades gathered from close-by Marines, he crawled over the flat surface of the top of the tank, the only cover nearby a row of sandbags protecting the south side of the structure. While drawing enemy fire, Sweeney now dominated the battlefield with volleys of grenades.

An infuriating Japanese sniper took the first grenade, followed by a machine-gun position. "Those bastards are right over there in the brush," Sweeney called down to Cpl Sidney M. Funk. "If I had more grenades, I'd blow the hell out of them." A second position fell to Sweeney's accurate aim. Unfortunately, Sweeney's supply of grenades was soon exhausted by the plentiful targets only yards away, leaving him exposed to the Japanese fire without any ability to return the favor.

Haskin never hesitated to come to the rescue of his friend. The nearby Marines and soldiers on the ground watched as Haskin began his own ascent of the tower with a fresh supply of grenades. The two Marines then unleashed another barrage of grenades on the Japanese positions, allowing the pinned-down Marines to escape. The Japanese soon turned their fire on the two Marines on the water tank.



A section of the Malinta Tunnel was occupied by the finance office and the Signal Corps during the attack. When the 4th Marines' resistance fell, remaining forces retreated to the tunnel.

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Haskin died on the ladder, making another trip to support his friend. Sweeney was killed soon after by a Japanese knee mortar, while still raining grenades down on the enemy. Sweeney and Haskin “were very close friends in life,” Ferguson remembered, “it was most fitting they should go out together.” The struggle for Water Tank Hill remained a stalemate, leaving Sato’s men in a perilous position. The repulse of the attempted second Japanese landing by the 4th Marines and attached Army, Navy, and Filipino units, combined with the destruction of a second Japanese battalion landing on the far east end of Corregidor, gave Beecher’s battalion the upper hand in the fight. No reinforcements arrived to replace the heavy Japanese losses and dwindling ammunition, while Howard could call on detachments from the other two battalions of the 4th Marines, still defending beaches on the western end of Corregidor, where no threat existed.

At 8:30 a.m., the American advantages disappeared on the north road leading to Malinta Tunnel with the surprising arrival of three Japanese tanks. Two type 97s and a captured American M3 landed during the night but were stalled on the beach due to the steep incline of the cliffs ahead. The Japanese soldiers

dug an opening by daylight, allowing the M3 to climb the slope, which then towed the less nimble Type 97s up as well. The frontline Marines had no answer for the Japanese armor but fired their machine guns anyway, watching their bullets ricochet off the steel hulls.

One by one, the 4th Marine pockets of resistance fell, so that a general withdrawal began, back to prepared positions outside Malinta Tunnel. Now aware of the enemy tanks, Wainwright ordered a surrender at noon in an attempt to avoid a slaughter should the Japanese tanks enter the tunnel. Despite the surrender orders, the Marines continued to fight but were ordered to stop their fire. Howard made certain that the 4th Marines’ regimental colors were burned to avoid capture. The battle for Corregidor ended, even as three Marines boarded a small boat to escape the surrender.

The war was far from over for the 4th Marines. Except for a handful of men who escaped from the island, every Marine captured on Corregidor spent the rest of the war in captivity under horrendous conditions in the Philippines or in Japan. At least 474 of the 1,487 Marines captured did not survive the long years of captivity.

The bodies of Sweeney and Haskin

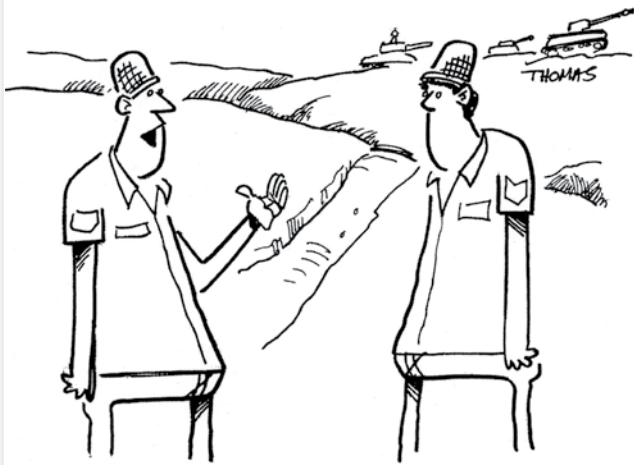
were identified following the American surrender and prior to burial, but only Haskin was located after the war. His remains were returned home in 1949 for burial. Sweeney’s remains were never located. Both Service Company Marines affirmed one of the oldest adages in the modern Marine Corps, “Every Marine a rifleman.”

Both men posthumously received the Silver Star for their bravery defending Water Tank Hill. On May 6, 1951, the ninth anniversary of the fall of Corregidor, PFC Thomas F. Sweeney Jr. received his father’s Silver Star in a ceremony at Camp Lejeune. He recalled the anxious days waiting for news from his father until the telegram arrived, informing the family of Sweeney’s death. His son had become a Marine, carrying on his father’s legacy of Semper Fidelis.

Editor’s note: According to records, Haskin’s name was originally spelled “Haskins.” The “s” at the end of his name was left off the Marine Corps’ muster roll for unknown reasons.

Author’s bio: Mike Miller has written books and articles about Marine Corps and Civil War History. He had a 34-year career in the Marine Corps archival, museum and history programs. 🦖

Leatherneck Laffs



"It's a nice place for a battle,
but I wouldn't want to live here."



"Hello? Yes, I do have health care!"



"I got in trouble with the Gunny,
so he moved my bed by the snorers."



"First rule of real estate, location, location, location."



"When we used to break, we had a smoke.
Now, they text."



"One thing about the sergeant ...
you're never overlooked when it comes to
climbing the wall."



"I'm into botany and
jewelry making."

"Space Force ...
two tables down."



Learning from the Past

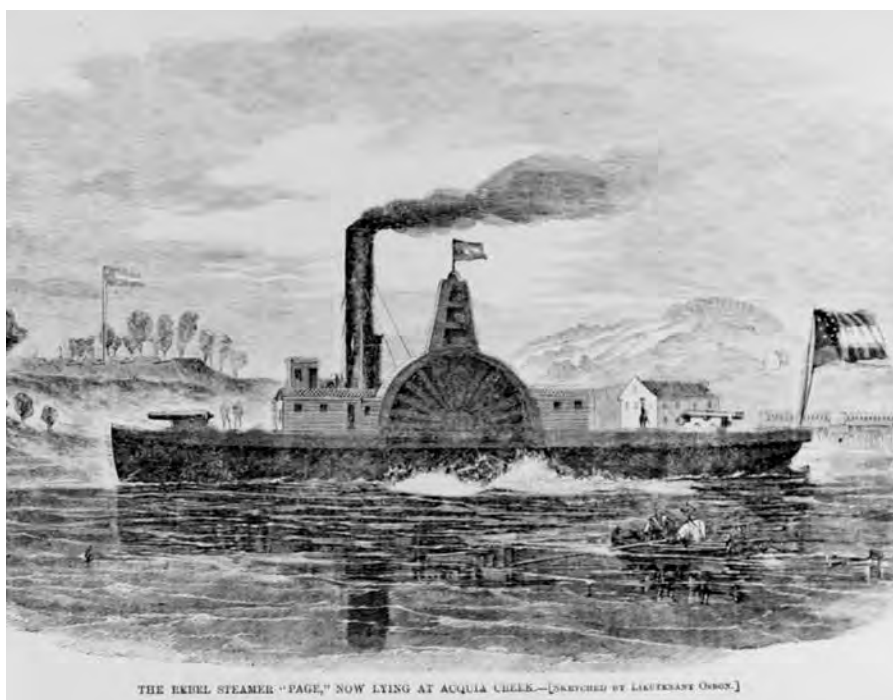
MCB Quantico Was Key Strategic Location During the Civil War

By Kater Miller

In my last article, I wrote about a pair of 32-pounder naval guns unearthed at Marine Corps Base (MCB) Quantico. In this article, I am going to explain why these guns were here and in use by the Confederate Army. For a brief period in late 1861 and early 1862, the land on which Quantico now sits was one of the most vital strategic points for the early stages of the Civil War.

In 1860, the first slave-holding states seceded from the United States. On April 12, 1861, Confederate forces fired on Fort Sumter in the opening salvos of the Civil War. Throughout the spring and summer of that year, the U.S. and Confederate militaries organized and reorganized, strategized, and tried to consolidate positions for the war. In July, the two armies clashed outside of Manassas, and the Confederates declared victory in the confused battle, leaving them a stone's throw from Washington, D.C. However, this also left General Joseph Johnston with a very large line to defend. Fortunately for Johnston, the U.S. Army was in disarray after their defeat, and it took them a while to put together a new plan for operations.

The Confederate Army needed to protect Richmond from attack, but they also wanted to close off traffic on the Potomac River, Washington, D.C.'s main supply artery. They searched for locations



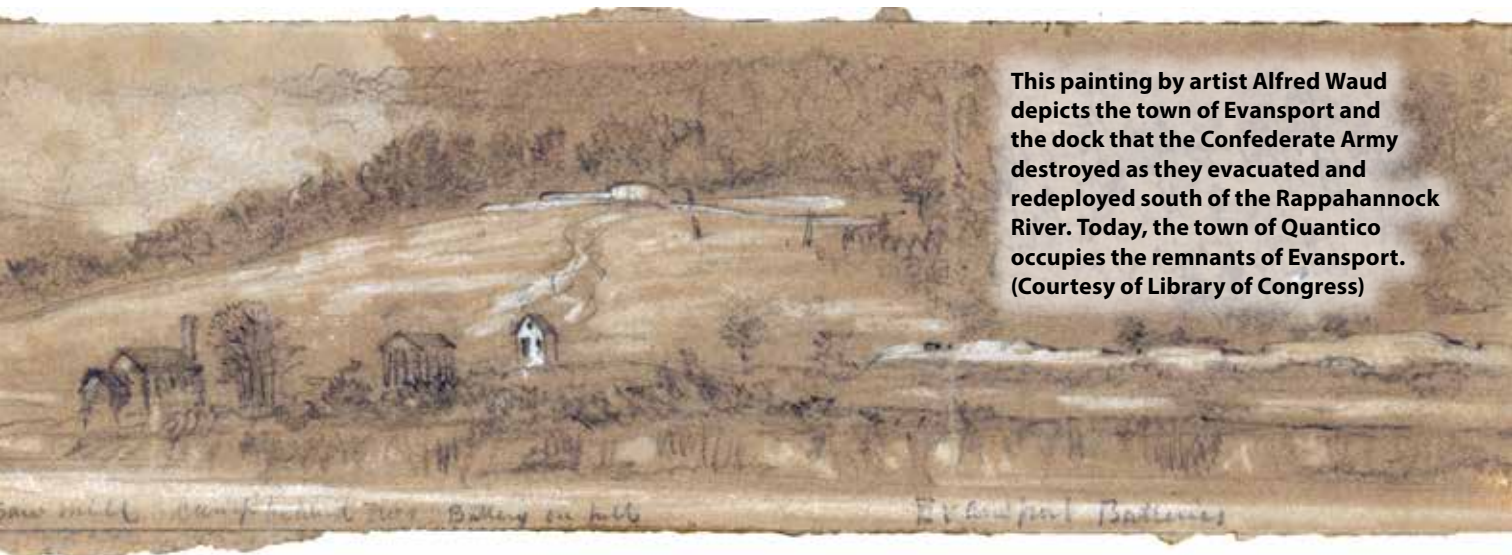
A wheel-powered steamer that was captured by Confederate forces at Aquia Creek.

to place seacoast batteries for this purpose. In late April of 1861, only a few weeks after Confederate forces evicted U.S. troops from Fort Sumter, and before their victory at Bull Run, the Confederate Forces had captured the Gosport Navy Yard in Norfolk, Va. It was a huge boon as the nascent forces tried to gather supplies and organize themselves. Not only did they capture USS *Merrimack*, but

the navy yard stored loads of materiel, including over 1,000 pieces of artillery and carriages. This gave them the supply of heavy guns they needed to begin blockading the Potomac.

With railroads being vital to movement, the Confederate government wanted to protect the terminus of the Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac Railroad on the south bank of Aquia Creek using

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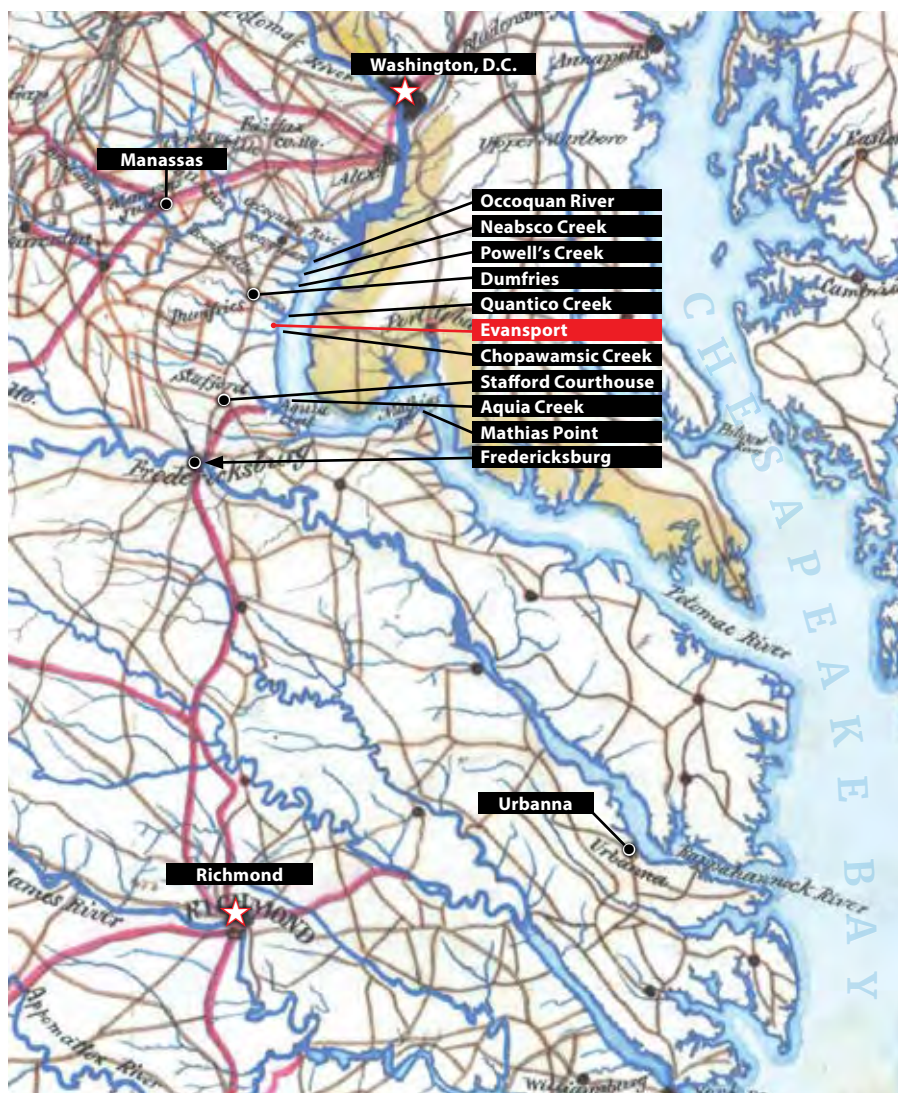
This painting by artist Alfred Waud depicts the town of Evansport and the dock that the Confederate Army destroyed as they evacuated and redeployed south of the Rappahannock River. Today, the town of Quantico occupies the remnants of Evansport. (Courtesy of Library of Congress)

the newly captured guns. They placed a battery there, but it was too far removed from the Potomac River to threaten ships that were sailing by. U.S. Navy vessels operating on the river attacked the battery at the end of May, but the Battle of Aquia Creek was largely inconclusive, though Confederate forces were able to capture USS *George Page*.

Next, they chose a small peninsula on the lower Potomac called Mathias Point. They started building seacoast defense batteries in June but almost immediately found that the land was too hard to defend. They largely abandoned the position after an abortive U.S. Navy assault on June 27. The U.S. Army would not cross the Potomac from Maryland to support the operation, but Mathias Point was too isolated from the main concentration of Confederate forces in northern Virginia to effectively defend in case of another attack. The Confederates kept looking for a suitable location.

After their victory at the Battle of Bull Run, the Confederate Army maintained a long, thin defensive line just south of the U.S. Capitol. The line stretched from the Allegheny Mountains in the west all the way to the Chesapeake Bay in the east, but the true anchor of the line was in Colchester on the north bank, at the mouth of the Occoquan River. The U.S. Navy expected a blockade on the Potomac River, as well as the coastal defense fortifications there. However, the Confederates believed that a battery close to Washington would be nearly impossible to defend. They looked to build their defenses further south.

Evansport was a small settlement on the Potomac River between the Quantico and Chopawamsic Creeks. The modern town of Quantico occupies the remnants of Evansport. Confederate Navy surveyors found that the location was ideal because the Potomac River was only a

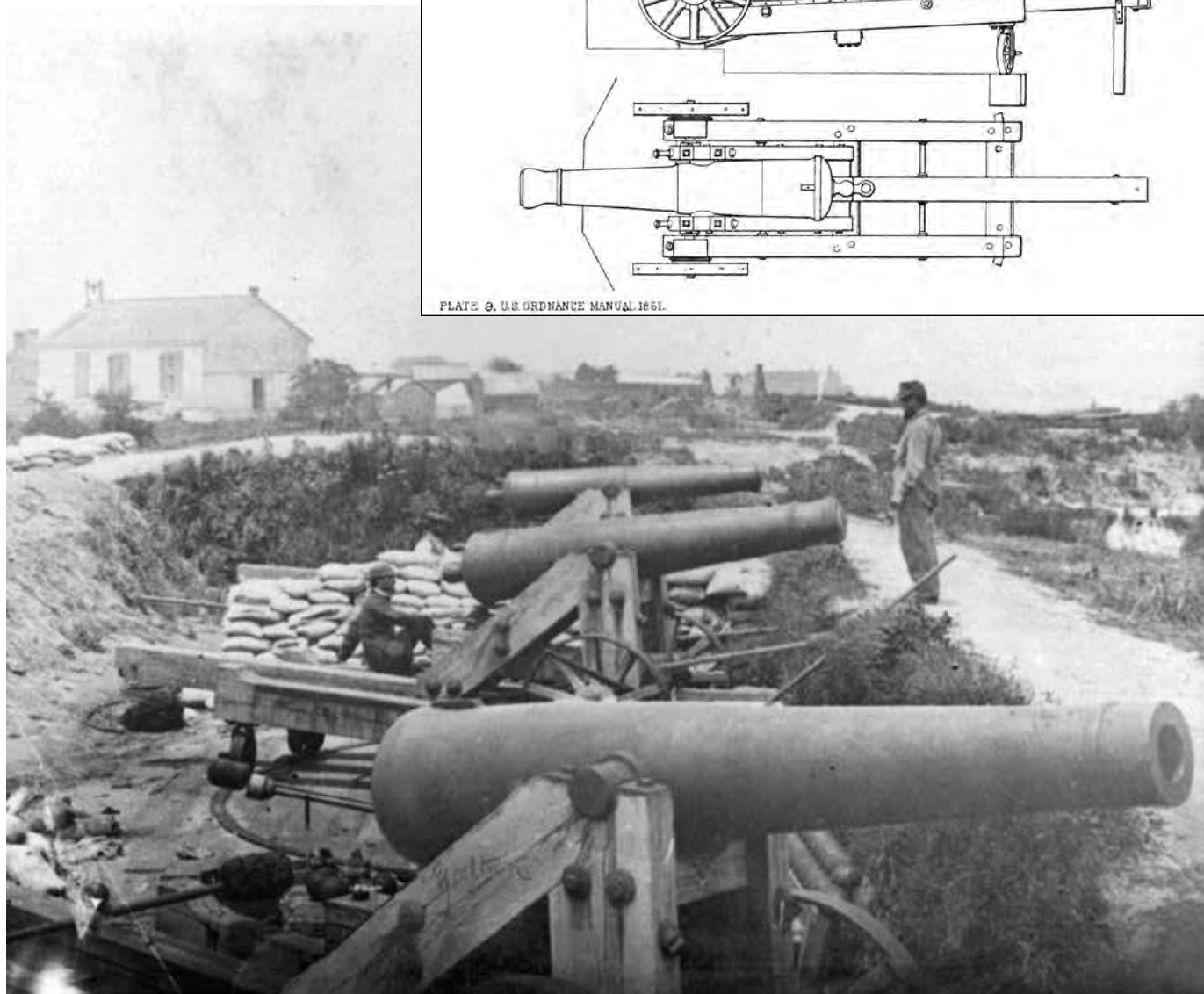
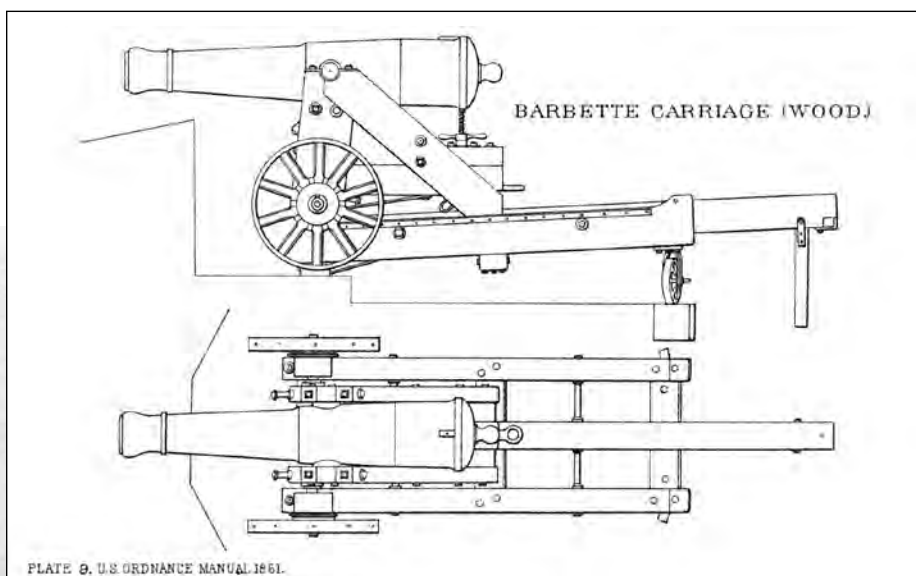


COURTESY OF LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

mile and a half wide there. Moreover, the Potomac River had two shipping channels, a shallow one on the Maryland side of the river and a deeper one on the Virginia side. This meant any heavy ships would have to pass within a few hundred yards of any artillery situated at Evansport. The location also had good roads to Manassas, a major hub of the Confederate

Army to the north, and Fredericksburg to the south. If you stand on top of Waller Hill on a clear day, it is possible to see down the Potomac River, nearly 14 miles to the south. The only thing that blocks the view down the river is the sharp eastward turn it takes. Any vessel trying to come up the river would be visible to the Confederates for a long time.

MG P.G.T. Beauregard commanded the Potomac District of Confederate batteries that stretched from the Blue Ridge Mountains to the Potomac River and Quantico Creek. A total of seven defensive batteries were stationed near Evansport.



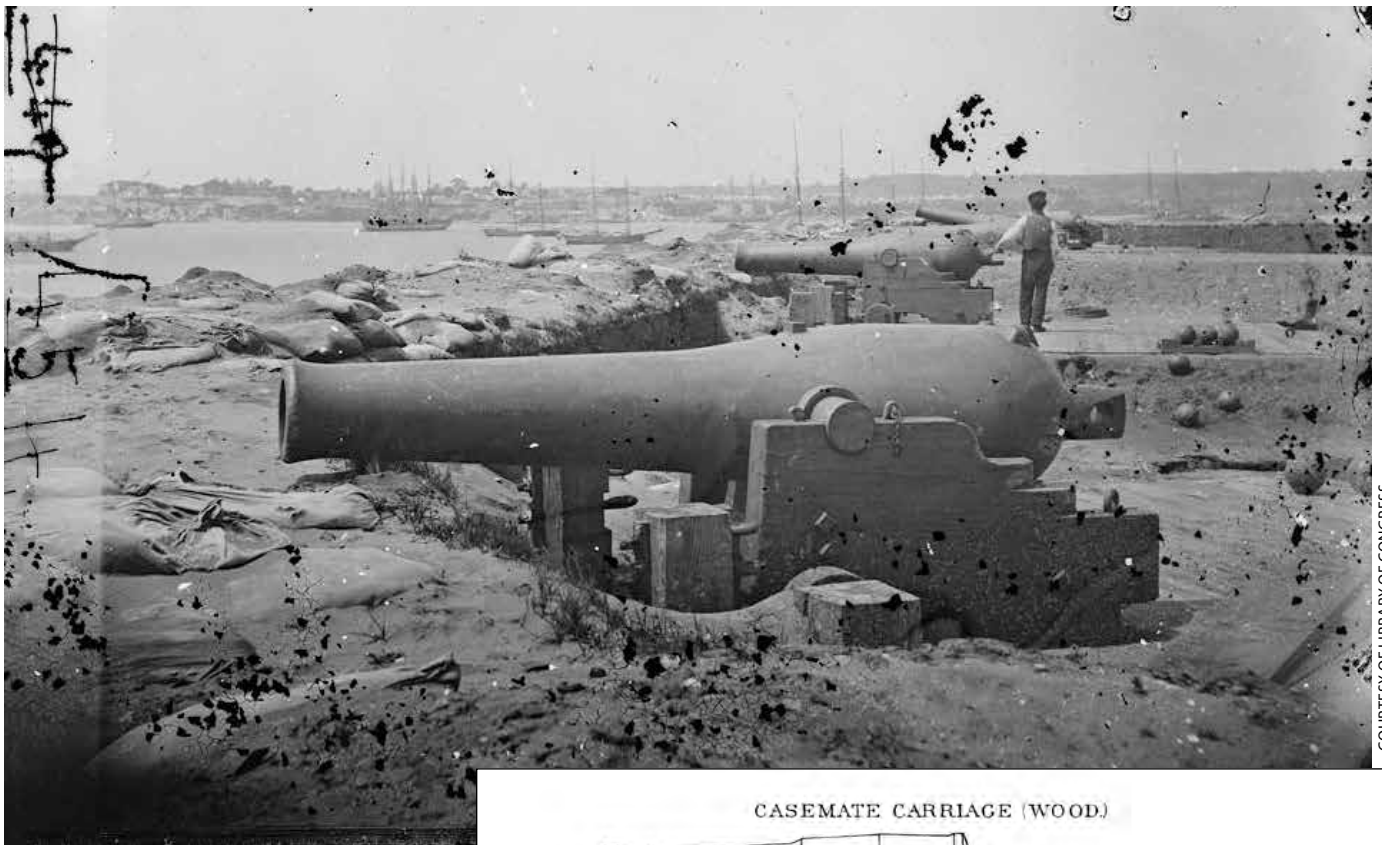
The Confederate Army, though still growing, was considerably smaller than the U.S. Army. There was also some debate over seniority and division of command. Johnston divided his force into three districts. Major General Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson commanded the district to the west, between the Allegheny Mountains and the Blue Ridge Mountains; MG P.G.T. Beauregard commanded the Potomac District that stretched from the Blue Ridge Mountains to the Potomac River and south to Quantico Creek; and MG Theophilus Holmes commanded the Aquia District, from the south bank of Quantico Creek, across the Northern Neck, into the Chesapeake Bay.

In August, Holmes was ordered to begin construction of the batteries at

Evansport. Holmes placed Brigadier General Isaac Trimble in charge of the construction of the defense works, but Confederate Navy Commander Frederick Chatard directed the layout. Confederate soldiers worked in secret, behind thick lines of trees, hidden from the eyes of the U.S. Navy crews steaming up and down the river. Johnston did not want to give any clues to his enemies about what his troops were doing. The work progressed quickly, building an extensive system of ditches, revetments, bunkers, and magazines to prepare. Though Evansport was in Holmes’ Aquia District, it was on the border of Beauregard’s Potomac District. BG William Whiting anchored Beauregard’s right flank. Whiting commanded a division that occupied the

land stretching from Colchester all the way down to Dumfries. He additionally commanded a brigade within his division, which he located within easy marching distance of Evansport. This brigade’s function was to provide support to the coastal defense batteries in the event of a Union assault or march north to the Occoquan if the U.S. Army division in Pohick threatened Colchester.

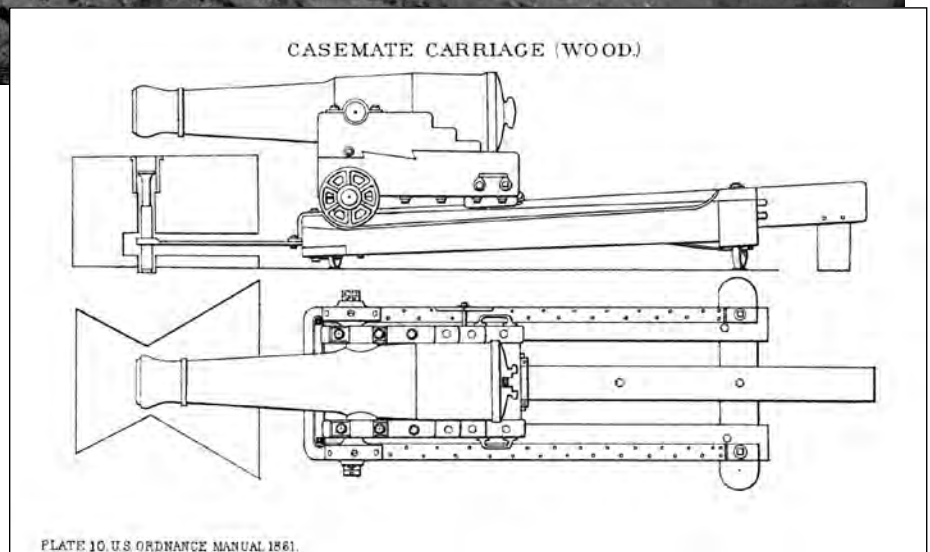
One contemporaneous map from September of 1861 shows there were a total of seven batteries at or near Evansport. Three batteries were located on the shore of the Potomac River between Quantico Creek and Chopawamsic Creek. One was on Rising Hill (modern-day Waller Hill, with the commanding view of the Lower Potomac



Confederate coastal defense batteries at Yorktown. Battery cannons were mounted on casemate and barbette carriages. The casemate carriages offered more protection from incoming fire but had a smaller field of fire. The carriages were heavy and complicated to build and transport.

River) and another was on Triplett Hill (where the Expeditionary Warfare School building sits). Two more were on the north side of Quantico Creek: one on Possum Nose, and one on Cockpit Point. Cockpit Point was the most formidable of all of the batteries because it was situated on a bluff that was 80-100 feet high. Some of the Confederate officers worried that if the U.S. Navy took over the Cockpit Point positions, they could fire unopposed on the positions to their south.

The Evansport guns were mounted on a combination of barbette carriages and casemate carriages. Barbette carriages offered quite a few advantages to their crews. They were quite sturdy and lifted heavy guns high enough to fire over the walls of fortifications. Because they were also mounted on a swivel, artillery crews could traverse them easily and in a very wide arc, but their crews were more vulnerable to counter battery fire. Casemate carriages were lower to the ground and were built lower and looked like naval carriages. They offered crews more protection but were generally fired



through embrasures, giving them a smaller field of fire. Embrasures were also weak points in the line of fortification. Both casemate- and barbette-mounted guns made aiming easier than those mounted on field carriages, but both were extremely heavy and much more complicated to construct and transport.

By October, the earthworks were in place and the guns were mounted, and the positions were still masked by trees on the banks of the Potomac. U.S. Navy officers started to hear rumors about the location of newly constructed batteries and were trying to determine where they were. The Confederate Army also used field artillery to fire at Union shipping to help conceal the more permanent batteries. Johnston ordered that the Evansport batteries should remain hidden

until he gave the order for them to let themselves be known. There is not a clear reason why, since the batteries were ready to fire.

In addition to the batteries, the Confederate Navy had tucked the schooner *Mary Washington* behind the Possum Point peninsula at Quantico Creek. Early in the morning of Oct. 11, three U.S. Navy ships, USS *Union*, USS *Rescue*, and USS *Resolute*, sent a detachment of Sailors into the mouth of the creek. Rowing their boats with muffled oars, they searched for the vessel in the dark, found it, and torched it. Only one sentry guarded the schooner, who fled to sound the alarm. The flaming vessel lit the Sailors' way back out of the creek. It was a daring raid, made even more daring due to the fact that, other than the trees blocking the

cannons, the sailors had done this under the nose of very strong fortifications.

On the 15th, USS *Pocahontas* steamed past the batteries en route to the Chesapeake Bay. Having heard the rumors of the batteries on the river, the captain ordered his crew to fire into the hills. Figuring that they were compromised, the Confederates quickly chopped down the trees in front of their positions to fire back at *Pocahontas*. The U.S. Navy ran a few more ships up and down the river but soon banned all commercial traffic on the Potomac. Essential supplies, such as coal, firewood, and animal feed for the citizens and soldiers living in and around Washington, were cut off, which was going to make for a tough winter. Northern newspapers called the blockade an embarrassment.

All told, there were probably 37 heavy guns at the Evansport batteries. This was a mix of any big cannons that the Confederate government could spare and get into location. There was a mix of 32-pounder and 42-pounder naval guns. There were also IX-inch Dahlgren guns and at least one 7.5-inch Blakely rifle. To fool the prying eyes of the U.S. forces, the Confederates also installed several “Quaker guns,” large logs painted black and put into gun positions. Complete records of the batteries do not exist, but there are a few hand-drawn diagrams. The forces at Evansport had everything from a 38-year-old obsolete naval gun to a brand-new English Blakely rifle cast in 1861.

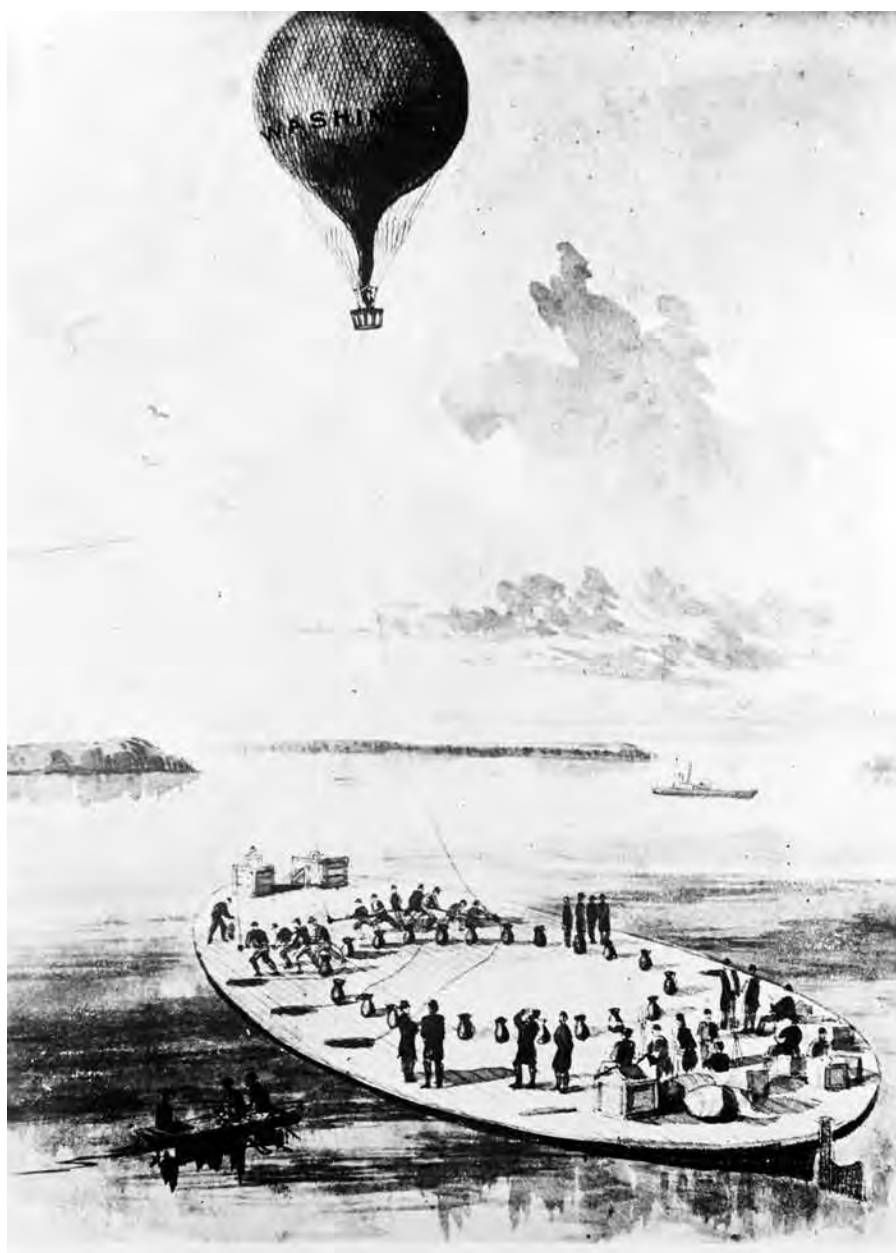
Apparently neither Holmes nor Beauregard trusted Trimble with the defense of

the location. Holmes felt that Trimble was an excellent engineer but that he did not have a lot of experience directing troops in combat at that level. Beauregard felt that there were not enough troops allocated to the vicinity of Evansport to fend off an armed amphibious landing. If the U.S. military crossed the river and took the batteries at Evansport and Cockpit Point, the Confederate army in Manassas would find itself cut off from Fredericksburg from the rear. Though feeling some trepidation regarding Trimble’s experience, Holmes thought that with the fortifications, pickets, and seacoast batteries, in conjunction with Whiting’s Brigade in Dumfries, they could put up enough of a defense. In any case, Holmes relieved Trimble and replaced him with BG Samuel French. He arrived in Evansport on Nov. 14.

Several historians agree that the blockade was basically administered by the U.S. Navy, not the Confederate cannoners. They were not very effective at firing their guns. The gun crews, mostly pressed from infantry units, had not been able to practice their craft before the batteries became operational. Their accuracy was poor. To make matters worse, French complained that he was running out of powder, and the powder he had was terrible. It was an inconsistent mix of blasting powder and gunpowder. Sometimes his crews fired at a vessel and the shot landed halfway across the Potomac. Sometimes the same amount of powder sent the same size shot well into Maryland.

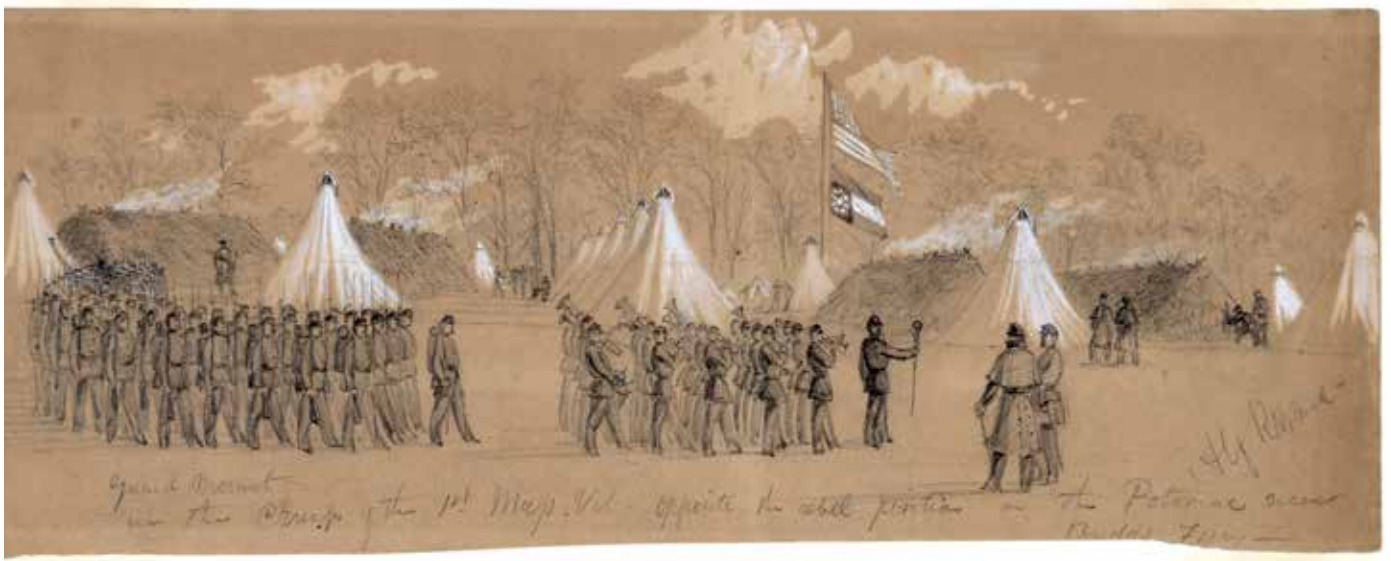
Now that the cat was out of the bag, the U.S. Army wanted to do something about the batteries in Evansport. Furthermore, the Confederates used the captured *George Page* to harass soldiers on the Maryland side of the river. Not only was river traffic on the Potomac halted but there was a concern that Confederate troops might cross the river and foment an insurrection in southern Maryland. GEN George McClellan ordered BG Joseph Hooker to take a division and three artillery batteries to counter the Confederate positions. Hooker took his troops opposite the batteries to construct gun emplacements of his own. He wanted to build a strong battery to reduce the Confederate positions in front of him. His engineers convinced him that it would be impossible because the Confederates were too well entrenched. That did not stop him from constructing several gun positions.

Hooker’s division also brought an observation balloon. From the balloon, the U.S. Army made detailed and accurate observations of the Confederate camp.

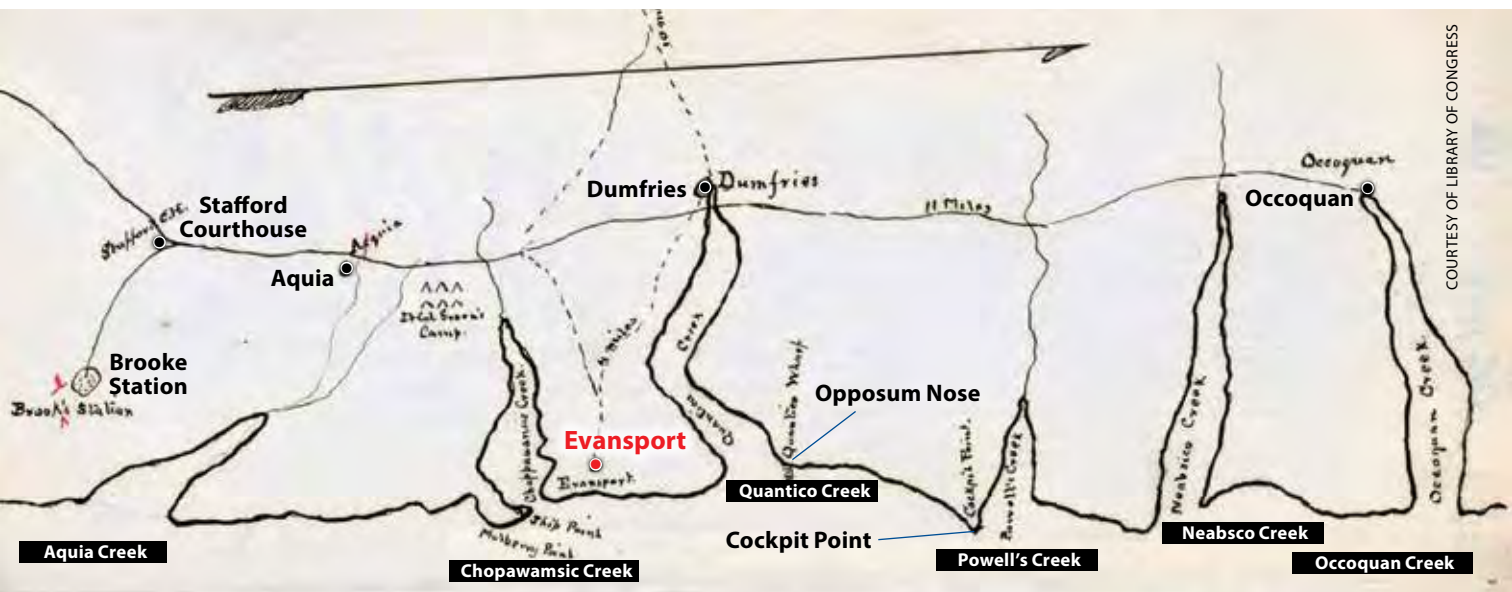


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This illustration depicts an observation balloon that was launched from USS *George Washington Parke Custis* to spy on Confederate camps.



Paintings by artist Alfred Waud show soldiers of the 1st Massachusetts Regiment overlooking the Potomac (above) while rebel batteries gather on the distant shore (below). (Courtesy of Library of Congress)



The sight of the balloon was nearly a daily occurrence, and Confederate gunners tried unsuccessfully to shoot it down. They could not elevate their cannons high enough to hit the balloon, which floated about 1,000 feet in the air.

The two belligerent sides shot artillery at each other. The arrival of Hooker's division concerned Johnston, and he wrote to Confederate President Jefferson Davis about the situation. The roads were

poor, his infrastructure was miserable, and he had to task his combat troops to build bridges across the many creeks of northern Virginia to facilitate an evacuation if it became necessary. He tried to procure enslaved labor to help with the task but was largely unable to do so. He further complained that his troops would be unable to defend the Occoquan-Aquia stretch of the Potomac River.

French ordered his troops to prepare

winter quarters. They built hundreds of huts on what is now MCB Quantico's Medal of Honor Golf Course. As the winter wore on, the disparity between the two cross-river camps became apparent. Illness rocked the troops in Camp French. They suffered tremendous death rates. They were poorly equipped, though they did have ample food, candy, and whiskey. They did not have enough food for their horses but happened to



REBEL BATTERY at BUDD'S FERRY, VA POTOMAC RIVER. February 1862.



BLOCKADE OF THE POTOMAC. Map showing Union and Rebel Batteries. January 1862 - The Rebels evacuated all their Batteries night of 4th March 1862.

COURTESY OF LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

capture two merchant schooners that did. As the camp filled up and winter approached, the Confederate Army did not have enough blankets to go around. A Maryland artillery unit, stationed at Evansport and newly attached to French's Brigade, requested blankets but were denied. Future journalist and historian Jonathan Thomas Scharf relayed in his memoirs that a regiment of North Carolina heard of their plight. The regiment marched to the Marylanders in parade formation, complete with a band, and the officers gave speeches and very showily bestowed blankets on the Marylanders. Scharf said, "[the officers] presented us with these blankets in the name of their regiment."

The two armies were close enough that they could taunt each other across the river. The Confederates had to suffer picket duty in the cold—they couldn't light fires because they did not want to present a target for their enemies' accurate guns. They were absolutely miserable as

the winter wore on. French complained that his troops could not walk from one battery to the next without being picked off with very accurate rifled cannon fire.

On the other side of the river, the U.S. troops enjoyed good roads, telegraph communications with Washington, and supplies provided by boat or road. They did not mind the Confederates seeing their fires, so they stood much more comfortable picket duties. The Confederate gunners were not accurate enough to matter.

Not only did the Confederates at Evansport have to fear an attack from the Potomac but the U.S. Army was also arrayed on the Occoquan at Pohick Church. Several times the troops at Evansport and Dumfries had to march north on the erroneous rumors of imminent attack.

Johnston understood that his Army was in peril if they did not withdraw from their position near Washington. McClellan had amassed a huge army, but Johnston

did not know where the attack would come from. President Lincoln wanted McClellan to attack the Confederates at Manassas again. McClellan favored making a landing at Urbanna on the south bank of the Rappahannock River for an overland march to Richmond. Johnston feared that he would be caught on the north side of the Rappahannock and unable to get south in time to save his capital city. If the U.S. Army attacked overland in the north, putting the Rapidan and Rappahannock Rivers in their way was a good strategy too. He ordered his army to make preparations to withdraw south of the Rappahannock.

The Evansport and Cockpit Point batteries presented a problem. In February 1862, Whiting, at Johnston's request, ordered French to work with CDR Frederick Chatard to study the feasibility of removing the cannons by boat to the railhead at Aquia Harbor. They determined that it was not possible. Worse, heavy rains in January and February rendered the roads nearly unusable. The guns were heavy and mounted in full view of the U.S. Army. Each carriage was nearly as heavy as each gun. Hooker's men would be able to see that the guns were being pulled out of position, which would invite an attack. The Confederates had the tiger by the tail. They could not move them; therefore they could not save them. They were forced to make plans to destroy all of the guns, ordnance and military equipment.

Scharf, as part of the group of volunteers, tried to save some of the Dahlgren cannons mounted at Shipping Point. They were able to dismount two of them and load them into a canal boat to await evacuation. Most of the cannons, they had decided, were too old or heavy to save.

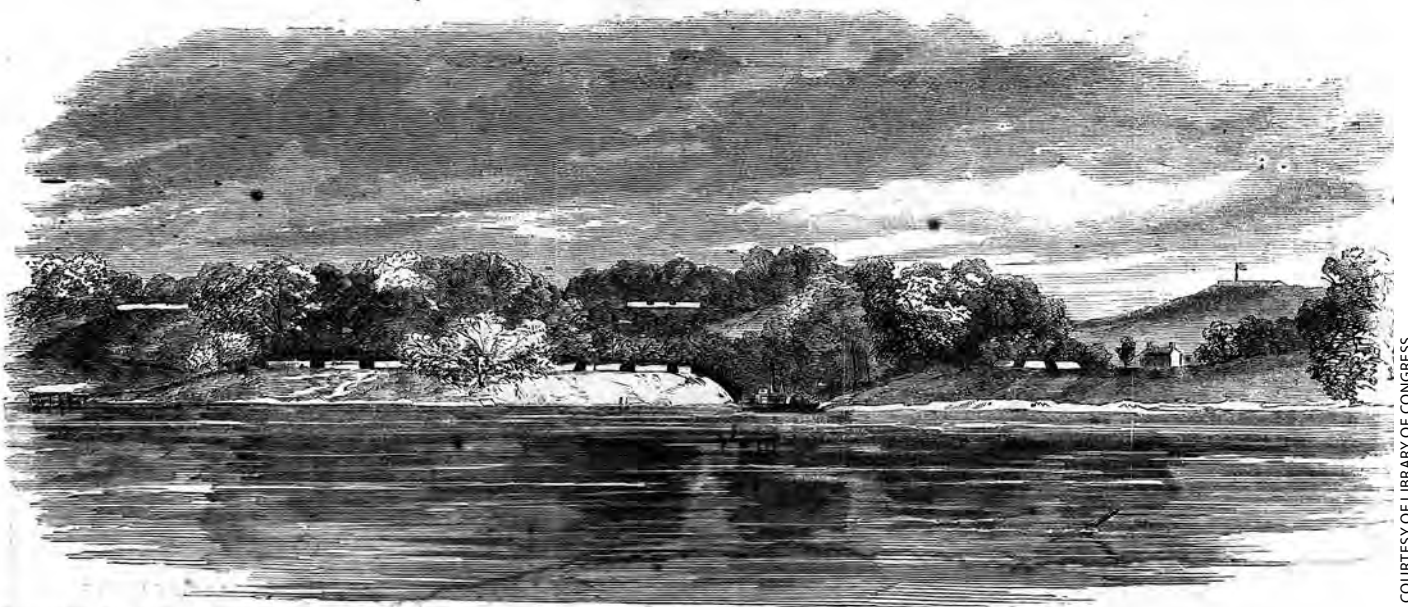
In early March, Johnston ordered the Confederate Army in northern Virginia to move south. He ordered Holmes to maintain a presence at Aquia Harbor, but everyone else was to retire south of the Rappahannock River.

French made plans to destroy all of the equipment Confederate soldiers could not remove. He left Chatard in charge of executing his orders. They attempted to destroy dozens of heavy guns, powder magazines, huts, and other military stores. On March 8, Chatard ordered all but two companies of the remaining force at Evansport to begin moving toward Fredericksburg. The remaining soldiers packed all of the carriages with combustibles. They overloaded the artillery with extra powder and shot and packed their barrels with mud. Once torched, the carriages would burn, and the heat would make the overcharged and packed barrels



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Above: A sketch by artist Louis Sands of USS *Seminole* during the attack against the Confederate batteries defending Evansport.



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An illustration that appeared in *Harper's Weekly* shows federal fortifications at Budd's Ferry in Maryland and Confederate fortifications on the Virginia side of the Potomac.

explode and render them unusable. He also ordered that, where practical, the working party should break the trunnions off of each gun with sledgehammers so that the weapon could no longer be mounted in a normal carriage. He ordered that each gun be spiked, a process in which an iron spike is driven into the touchhole. The captain of the USS *Powhatan* noticed the Confederates' efforts, steamed to the shore, and started shelling them.

March 9 at 10 a.m., Chatard's soldiers blew up a powder magazine. In a letter that he wrote at 11:30 that morning, Chatard recorded that the drummers of Hooker's division were drumming on the Maryland side. Then Hooker's batteries and USS *Pocahontas* joined the cannonading. The Confederates were unable to fire back

because all of the guns were spiked and stuffed with combustibles. In the letter, Chatard expressed his surprise and said that, "really, I don't know why the enemy doesn't come over." The few remaining defenders had no way to defend themselves.

At 2 p.m., Chatard left a supernumerary in charge and departed for Fredericksburg. He left orders that the carriages be set on fire at 4:30 p.m. or, if there was a Union attempt to take the position, beforehand. At the designated time, the Confederates set fire to the carriages, along with as many other things as possible on their way out. Quite a bit of materiel had been buried beforehand in fake gravesites. They left long-burning fuses and powder trains to the powder magazines and left camp.

Hooker's men, watching from across the river, had long suspected the evacuation. U.S. Navy ships watched for any movement of *George Page*. The Confederates burned it to the waterline. They apparently saw the canal boat that Scharf and his crew had loaded with the Dahlgrens and made their way to Quantico Creek to interdict them. Realizing that they had no way out, the crew of the canal boat scuttled it. (Brendon Burke, an underwater archaeologist, suspects that the crew chopped a hole out of the bottom with axes.) Upon seeing strange fires across the Potomac in Virginia, the Union sailors and soldiers knew that the Confederates were leaving.

Hooker had two newly delivered Whitworth rifles. He thought the new, state-of-the-art artillery would quickly



The British Blakely rifle, a Confederate cannon, was taken by men with the 1st Massachusetts Regiment and carried to the Washington Navy Yard where it has been on display ever since.

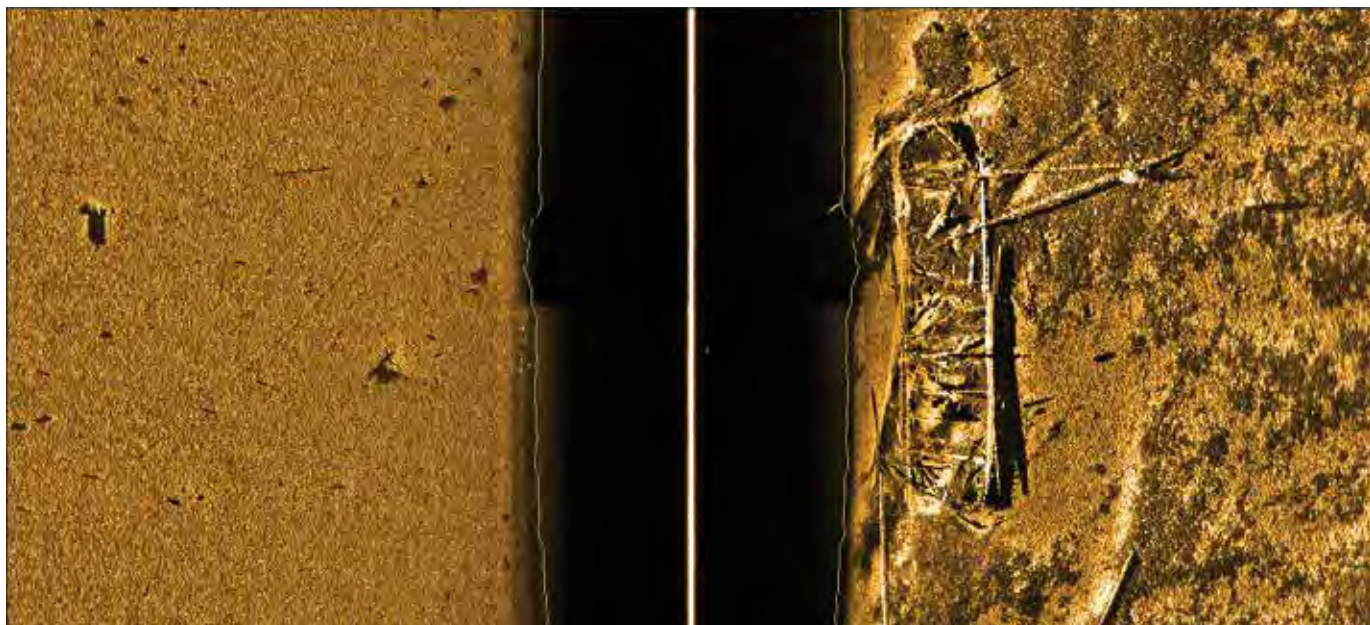
reduce Evansport. He also spoke dismissively of *CSS Virginia*. In a letter, in which he called the ship by its old name *Merrimack*, Hooker claimed the Whitworths would have no problems sinking the ship if its captain were foolish enough to try to float up the Potomac River.

Soldiers from the 1st Massachusetts Regiment rowed across the river and found some of the slow fuses and interrupted some of the powder trains. They also found hundreds of pounds of rations, candy, and whiskey, plus Confederate



A sideview of the British Blakely rifle currently on display at the Washington Navy Yard, Washington, D.C.

Sonograph image of the shipwreck of the canal boat off Shipping Point. Confederate soldiers attempted, unsuccessfully, to save two IX-inch Dahlgren guns by transporting them south to Aquia Creek.



COURTESY OF ST. AUGUSTINE LIGHTHOUSE ARCHAEOLOGY/MARITIME PROGRAM

record books. Some of the cannons that were overcharged, discharged their loads without damage. Once the fires were out, the regiment started rolling the cannons to the banks of the river for salvage. They did spike all of the guns in case the Confederates came back. One of the soldiers also wrote in his diary that they playfully spiked the Quaker guns too.

French was irritated that Chatard did not stay behind to ensure the destruction of the batteries as ordered. Chatard answered with a letter on the 10th saying that he made sure it was taken care of before he left, but he wanted to get to Fredericksburg before dark. He also said he wanted to get orders to the Navy, where he felt he could make a bigger impact to the war effort.

Meanwhile, Holmes wrote a letter to Johnston asking if it was true that Johnston had ordered a withdrawal from Evansport. Holmes's headquarters was at Brooke's Station. (The station still exists as Brooke Station and serves as a stop on the Virginia Railway Express commuter line.) He also asked for instruction on what to do about the Aquia battery and the defense positions around the wharf and railroad terminus.

Johnston's withdrawal worked to protect Richmond. It was tactically and strategically sound. However, he left behind millions of pounds of supplies as well as the meat-curing facilities set up near Manassas to support his army. The withdrawal also worsened a budding feud between Johnston and Jefferson Davis. Because he sent his army south of the Rappahannock, McClellan's plan to land at Urbanna was no longer feasible. In-

stead, McClellan took his army on the Peninsula Campaign and tried to approach Richmond that way. Johnston was able to redeploy his army quickly enough to slow McClellan's advance on the Confederate capitol.

Chatard's plans to destroy the cannons was not entirely successful. The soldiers from Massachusetts were able to save at least some of the guns, which were put back in service. Of the 37 heavy guns at Quantico, we know where five are. There are the two 32-pounder naval guns in the National Museum of the Marine Corps' collection. The Blakely rifle is on display at the Washington Naval Yard, and has been since 1862. The final two are the two IX-inch Dahlgren guns that Scharf's compatriots tried to take by canal boat to Aquia Harbor. They were both discovered in a series of underwater archaeology expeditions in and around Quantico Creek.

There are four Civil War-era ships sunk in or around Quantico Creek: *George Page*, *Fairfax*, *Martha Washington*, and the Scharf canal boat. Don Shomette first discovered the wreck of the *George Page* in the 1980s. An underwater archaeology expedition headed by the Institute of Maritime History (IMH) and the St. Augustine Lighthouse Archaeology Maritime Program in 2009 rediscovered the location of the *George Page*. In 2011, Dr. Gordon Watts and Joshua Daniel found a second wreck off of Shipping Point. John Haynes thought it might be the wreck of the boat mentioned in Jonathan Scharf's memoirs. Brendan Burke and David Howe dived the wreck in May 2016. In that dive, they found one

of the cannons that Scharf described in his memoir. Mr. Burke described the water as being so dark that he only had a few inches of visibility. He found the cannon when he bumped into the trunnion. Through the darkness, he was able to confirm that it was a IX-inch Dahlgren due to the distinctive shape of the gun, its distinctive cascabel, and the size of the trunnion. Since these shipwrecks are protected by the Naval History and Heritage Command under provisions established by the Sunken Military Craft Act, the crew needed permission from the U.S. Navy and IMH to continue their work. In October of that year, a crew returned and Dan Lynberg and Dan Hemminger found a second gun next to the wreck. The guns remain in their watery resting place.

These guns point to a time when Quantico was a strategic location during the most costly war in American history. They also show how the desperate militaries on both sides of the conflict used a mix of old, obsolete guns in conjunction with the most advanced guns to achieve their goals as they tried to expand their size and effectiveness in the early days of the war. The museum will keep preserving these guns to help to tell the story of the military forces at Quantico.

Author's bio: Kater Miller is a curator at the National Museum of the Marine Corps and has been working at the museum for 12 years. He served in the Marine Corps from 2001-2005 as an aviation ordnanceman. 🦁

Organization Offers Free Online Course for Veteran Entrepreneurs

Warrior Rising, a nonprofit organization launched by Veterans for Veterans in 2015, aims to transform veterans into “Vetpreneurs” by providing them opportunities to create sustainable businesses, perpetuate the hiring of fellow American veterans, and earn their future.

Warrior Rising offers free online courses for service-disabled veterans (SDVET). The program includes four weeks of web-based instruction, followed by participation in other programs offered by Warrior Rising: Warrior Academy, VETtoCEO, and virtual-live coaching/mentoring sessions.

Course information covers topics such as introduction and overview of starting a business, advantages to purchasing an existing business or starting a franchise, identifying opportunities in business, understanding markets and competitive

space, building your economic model, legal entity structuring and insurance, financing options, business plan creation, and veteran contract assistance programs.

The course is part of Warrior Rising’s SDVET Program, which is sponsored by the U.S. Small Business Administration.



It’s free to all verified service-disabled veterans. Attendees may be located anywhere throughout the United States. When signing up, a DD-214 or another VA-issued ID is preferred for verification purposes. Class attendees must also provide documentation from VA

showing a disability. Any disability rating is sufficient. Current or widowed spouses of qualifying veterans may also participate, but they must provide the required documentation. Veterans interested in this program must be pursuing a career as an entrepreneur/business owner at the concept or early stage of business development.

While this program is funded for service-disabled veterans, Warrior Rising has other programs available that any veteran can participate in: Warrior Academy, VETtoCEO, and coaching/mentoring. Warrior Rising is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit comprised of veterans. For more information on the organization and course registration, visit www.warriorrising.org.

Ken Vennera, Warrior Rising

Veterans Will Receive Another Cost-of-Living Increase To Their Benefits

On June 14, President Joe Biden signed into law the Veterans Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) Act of 2023, which directs the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide a cost-of-living adjustment for veterans’ benefits in 2024 equal to the COLA applied to Social Security benefits, as determined by the Social Security Administration (SSA).

The legislation, passed with bi-partisan

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support in the House and Senate, is an annual procedure for Congress but an important one, as it must be accomplished to ensure veterans receive a COLA, and that it keeps pace with inflationary costs.

The COLA will affect certain VA benefits, including disability compensation, clothing allowance, and dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) for spouses and children.

While the exact amount of next year's adjustment has not been determined, it is based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The CPI measures the average change in prices of goods and services to preceding years and is used by SSA to determine the annual COLA, which, by law, now applies to VA benefits as well. The last adjustment in January, which veterans are currently receiving, saw an 8.7 percent increase due to a second year of high inflation.

Based on the timeline of previous years, SSA is expected to announce its 2024 COLA early in the next fiscal year, which begins on Oct. 1. The VA will then set its compensation payment rates to match. Veterans can expect to see the new amounts starting with their January 2024 payment.

VA

Operation Homefront Distributes Backpacks of School Supplies to Military Families

National nonprofit Operation Homefront is finishing up its 16th annual Back-to-School Brigade program to support thousands of military families during a difficult time of the year. Military families often face deployments, and the summer frequently brings relocations and the challenge of adjusting to new communities. Operation Homefront's program reduces the financial burden of purchasing school supplies and provides local communities an opportunity to thank military families for all they do to protect the freedoms we enjoy daily.

Operation Homefront expects to provide backpacks filled with essential school supplies to 30,000 military children across the country for this school year. The organization is hoping to distribute its 550,000th backpack to a military child since the program launched in 2008, saving military families more than \$60 million to date.

"Many of our military families continue to face a variety of financial hardships as they work to protect our nation," said Brigadier General John I. Pray

Jr., USAF (Ret) President and CEO of Operation Homefront. "Thanks to like-minded partners like Dollar Tree and its loyal customers, and Southern New Hampshire University, we will not only be able to help this special group of our fellow citizens during the financially stressful back-to-school season, but we will be able to ensure our military children have the resources they need to succeed at school."

Southern New Hampshire University is the lead investor in this year's Back-to-School Brigade and has supported Operation Homefront since 2014. The school supplies that Operation Homefront will distribute across the country are thanks to contributions from Dollar Tree and its customers.

Dollar Tree is a longtime advocate of military families. Since its partnership with Operation Homefront began in 2006, the retailer and its generous customers have provided millions of dollars in cash and in-kind donations to the nonprofit's recurring support programs.

For more information about the Back-to-School Brigade, visit operationhomefront.org/back-to-school-brigade/.

Erin Burgy, Operation Homefront



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DPAA Identifies Tarawa Marine

The Defense POW/MIA accounting Agency (DPAA) announced recently that **Cpl Raymond R. Tuhey**, 24 of Chicago, Ill., killed during World War II, was accounted for. He was assigned to Company B, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, which landed against Japanese resistance on the island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and Sailors were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded. Tuhey died on the fourth day of battle, Nov. 23, 1943. He was reported to have been buried in Row D of the East Division Cemetery, later renamed Cemetery 33.

In 2009, History Flight, a nonprofit organization, discovered a burial site on Betio Island believed to be Cemetery 33, which has been the site of numerous excavations ever since. In March 2019, excavations west of Cemetery 33 revealed a previously undiscovered burial site that has since been identified as Row D. The remains recovered at this site were transferred to the DPAA Laboratory at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii. Tuhey's name is recorded on the Courts of the Missing at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific along with the others still missing from World War II. A rosette will be placed next to his name to indicate that he has been accounted for. Tuhey was buried on June 5, 2023, at Arlington National Cemetery.

DPAA

GySgt Virginia Almonte, 101, of Southborough, Mass. She enlisted in 1943. She served during WW II and throughout the 1950s and early 1960s worked for the Undersecretary of the Navy during two presidential administrations. She also served overseas at the NATO Headquarters in Naples, Italy.

Theodore "Ted" Bekich, 82, in Savannah, Ga. He served in the Marine Corps for 10 years and completed a tour in Vietnam. He later had a career in the Navy as a Seabee.

John "Jack" Bruggeman, 97, of Middletown, Ohio. He served in the Pacific theater during WW II and saw action on Iwo Jima.

CSM Chandler Caldwell, 98, of Trinchera, Colo. He began his 24-year military career when he enlisted in the

Marine Corps during WW II. He served in the Pacific and saw action during the fighting on Saipan and Okinawa. He was discharged after the war but returned to active duty in the Army. He served multiple tours in Vietnam as a Ranger.

2ndLt James Corr, 101, in Sandy Springs, Ga. He was a Marine aviator during WW II and flew the F4U Corsair in the Pacific. His awards include the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with three stars.

Thomas H. DeYager, 74, of Rochester, N.Y. He was a Marine who served during the Vietnam War from 1966 to 1969 as a UH-1H Huey door gunner. After the war, he became a licensed land surveyor. His awards include the Air Medal.

John S. Esposito Sr., 97, Bronx, N.Y. He was a Seabee during WW II and was attached to 3rdMarDiv. He saw action on Guadalcanal and Bougainville. He was a member of the Marine Corps League.

Joseph Leo "Joe" Galvin, 87, in Fullerton, Calif. He served in the Marine Corps after graduating from college and was stationed at Camp Pendleton.

Conrad A. "T-Bone" Gordon, 80, of Montpelier, Vt. He joined the Marine Corps after serving three years in the Army. He served in Vietnam as a tank commander and was wounded in Da Nang. After his discharge, he served in the Vermont National Guard for 28 years. He was an active member of the Vietnam Tankers Association. His awards include a Purple Heart.

Jeffrey M. Griffith, 76, in Scranton, Pa. He served two tours in Vietnam as a tank crewman. He was a member of the Gung Ho detachment of the Marine Corps League, and the Vietnam Tankers Association.

LeRoy R. Huntley, 78, of Colona, Ill. He was a Marine who served during the Vietnam War. He later had a career as a journeyman iron worker for 38 years.

Maj James L. Lewis Jr., 86, of Houston, Texas. He was a Marine Corps aviator who served a combined 20 years on active duty and in the reserve as a rescue and test pilot. After his service, he worked at NASA as an engineer while earning his Ph.D. in human factors engineering from the University of Houston.

Gary V. Lorenz, 87, Moline, Ill. He served during the Korean War as a clerk. After his discharge, he used the GI Bill to pursue a degree from Mason City Junior College and Northern Iowa University.

He later transitioned to a career in crane and heavy equipment sales.

George Lovato Sr., 93, of Albuquerque, N.M. He served in the Korean War and saw action during the fighting at the Chosin Reservoir. Upon his discharge, he studied business at San Diego State University. He later was appointed commissioner of the New Mexico motor vehicle department.

LtCol John "Jack" J. McDermott, 84, in Chattanooga, Tenn. In college he joined ROTC and was commissioned upon his graduation. He completed multiple tours in Vietnam. After his retirement, he earned a master's degree in human resources management at Pepperdine University and began a second career in waste management.

John "Ken" Middlebrooks, Jr., 80 of Fullerton, Calif. He served in the Marine Corps during WW II and saw action on Okinawa. He was later stationed at MCAS El Toro. He had a 29-year long career in law enforcement, retiring as a deputy marshal in Orange County, Calif.

Michael Moran, 77, of Moline, Ill. He was a Marine who served during the Vietnam War and later had a career in long-haul trucking.

PFC John J. Murach, 97, of Allentown, Pa. He enlisted in the Marine Corps at the age of 17 and served with Co I, 24th Bn, 4th Marines in the Pacific theater during WW II. He saw action on Roi-Namur, Saipan, Tinian and Iwo Jima.

Arthur L. Peterson, 96, in Sun City, Calif. He was commissioned in 1947 after being placed in the officer's training program during his enlistment in the U.S. Navy in 1944. He was elected to the Wisconsin Assembly in 1950 but volunteered for duty overseas during the Korean War where he served as an infantry company commander. He later taught political science for 20 years at the University of Wisconsin.

Betty Doris Prince, 90, in Sequim, Wash. She enlisted in the Marine Corps after graduating from business school and was a charter member of the Women's Military Service for America.

Barbara M. (Kinghorn) Pulito, 101, of West Hartford, Conn. She served in the Marine Corps during WW II and was stationed at Camp Lejeune.

Harlan T. Rosvold, 98, of Oak Park Heights, Minn. He was a WW II veteran who served in the Pacific and saw action in Saipan, Tinian and Iwo Jima.

Col James L. Sachtleben, 76, of Garrison, Texas. He spent 31 years in the Marine Corps and commanded the 5th Bn, 11th Marines during Operation Desert Storm. He was the head of the Naval ROTC program at Texas A&M University before retiring in 2001.

Jimmy Sanchez, 72, of Rio Communities, N.M. He was a Marine who served a tour in Vietnam.

Roland Scarinc, 100, of Philadelphia, Pa. He was a Marine who served during WW II in the Pacific with the 1stMarDiv. He saw action in Okinawa and later participated in the occupation of China.

Donald M. Smith, 98, in Cape Coral, Fla. He was a Marine aviator who served during WW II as a pilot and flight instructor.

Cpl Robert P. Snyder, 88, of Allentown, Pa. He was a Marine aviator who served during the Korean War with VMF-311. After his service he worked in management at PMI for 25 years.

Ben L. Spotts, 70, in Lakewood, Colo. He enlisted in 1970 and served for 23 years. During his Marine Corps career, he was an F-4 Phantom plane captain, aviation maintenance chief, and a drill instructor for two years while stationed at MCRD San Diego. After his retirement from the Corps in 1993, he became a

regular contributor to *Leatherneck* Laffs.

Bobby Stelman, 86, of Partlow, Va. He was a Marine who served during the Vietnam War, and with the Marine Security Guard detachment in Athens, Greece. He retired after serving 30 years, and later started a second career as a legal administrator.

Myron Stone, 97, of Swampscott, Mass. He was a Marine who served during WW II.


LtCol Bayard "Vic" Taylor, 84, in Steamboat Springs, Colo. He was known as the godfather of the Infantry Officers' Course, developing the training while he was an instructor at The Basic School. He enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1957; after a brief release from active duty, he returned to the Corps in 1966 to serve in Vietnam. He was a rifle platoon and company commander with 2nd Bn, 4th Marines.

He was the recipient of the Silver Star for his actions from April 30-May 2, 1968. "While participating in a battalion search and destroy operation in and around the village of Dai Do, 2ndLt Taylor fearlessly led his men in numerous assaults against a numerically superior enemy force located in several heavily fortified hamlets," according to the award citation. "Repeatedly exposing himself to hostile artil-

lery, rocket, ... and small arms fire, he skillfully directed and controlled effective fire on the enemy and offered words of encouragement to his men," the citation continues. After two days of fighting resulted in heavy casualties, including the company commander, Taylor assumed command of Co H and led the Marines during a counterattack by a reinforced battalion of North Vietnamese Army Regulars. While under heavy fire, he reorganized the unit, contained the counterattack and evacuated the wounded.

His other awards include two Purple Hearts and two Bronze Stars. He retired in 1985.

Carlos S. Trinidad, 76, in San Antonio, Texas. He was a Marine who served in the Vietnam War. His awards include a Purple Heart.

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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Col A. W. "Cougar" Kellner
 Marine Corps War College
 Academic Year 2022-2023

Reader Assistance

Edited by Briesa Koch

Reunions

• **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.

• **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.

• **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.

• **38th and 39th OCC and TBS 3/66 and 4/66**, Oct. 16-20, Quantico, Va. Contact Jack Sheehan, (401) 255-0387, jacksheehanjtown@me.com. All TBS classes of 1966 are welcome.

• **3rd Recon Assn.**, Oct 10-15, Myrtle Beach, S.C. Contact Cyndie Leigh, (702) 271-0365.

• **5th Marine Division Assn.**, Oct. 4-8, San Antonio, Texas. Contact Tom Huffhines, (817) 296-6487, thuffhines74@gmail.com.

• **2nd Bn, 4th Marines**, Sept. 14-15, Fort Lauderdale, Fla. Contact Pete Gannon, (954) 648-7887, Diverplus@gmail.com.

Wanted

• Michael Joy, (905) 648-5202, mjoy@bell.net, is looking to hear from **members of Plt 3053, Parris Island, 1957**, specifically **Ira King, John Karol and DIs SSgt Crosby, SSgt Long and SSgt Phillips**.

Sales, Trades and Giveaways

• Stanley Hanson, 631 W Briar Lane, Apt. 210, Green Bay, Wis., has a **cruise book from 3/3 when they landed at Chu Lai, May 1965**. Free to any Marine whose name is listed in the book.

• John J. Mitchell, masconomo@gmail.com, has a **graduation photo of Co D, 4th Platoon, Jr. PLC, 1957**.

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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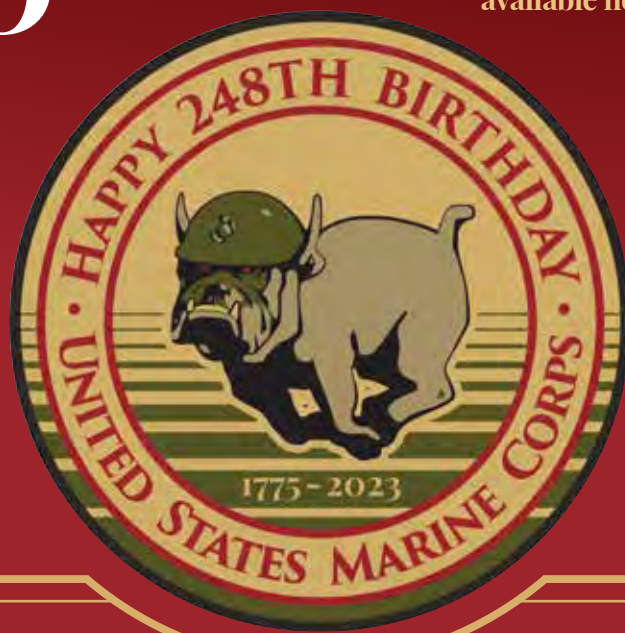
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Saved Round

By Owen L. Conner



COURTESY OF NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE MARINE CORPS

COURTESY OF NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE MARINE CORPS

A CIVIL WAR MARINE'S UNIFORM—Most of the uniforms donated to the National Museum of the Marine Corps are given by Marines or their family members. On rare occasions, however, exceptionally scarce artifacts are purchased. The funding for these opportunities is provided through the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation.

In early 2023, curators identified an extraordinarily rare grouping of Civil War artifacts identified as belonging to John E.C. Hammond. Born in Marblehead, Mass., in 1832, Hammond enlisted in 1861 and was discharged in 1865. He served at the Boston Marine Corps barracks and aboard USS *Santee*, which took part in several blockades. He was promoted to sergeant in late 1862 but was soon reduced to private after a four-month period of being absent without leave.

These full-dress uniform items, fatigue cap and knapsack were all used by Hammond during the Civil War. Artifacts are marked with his name, and in the case of his trousers, the ship in which he served. The enlisted dress uniform is heavily influenced from an earlier French infantry uniform design. It was worn for formal ceremonial duties on board ships or in barracks.

Hammond's fatigue cap (or kepi) is an unusual private purchase type. The undress cap was likely worn in combat off the coasts of Pensacola, Fla., and Galveston, Texas.

Perhaps the greatest highlight of the collection is his pre-1859 pattern U.S. Marine marked knapsack. Field equipment is often lost to history through over-use and governmental control. Early Marine marked equipment is even rarer as it was not intended for extended land campaigns. This knapsack with its "USM" marking on the flap is the only known example to exist in any collection.

The extraordinary collection of Hammond's gear is slated for museum conservation in 2023 with the intent of seeing it displayed in the museum's Civil War Gallery. See page 56 to read about the strategic importance of MCB Quantico during the Civil War.

Author's bio: Owen L. Conner is the uniforms and heraldry curator at the National Museum of the Marine Corps. 🦋

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A close-up, low-angle shot of a man in a military uniform, smiling broadly and looking upwards. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting.

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