

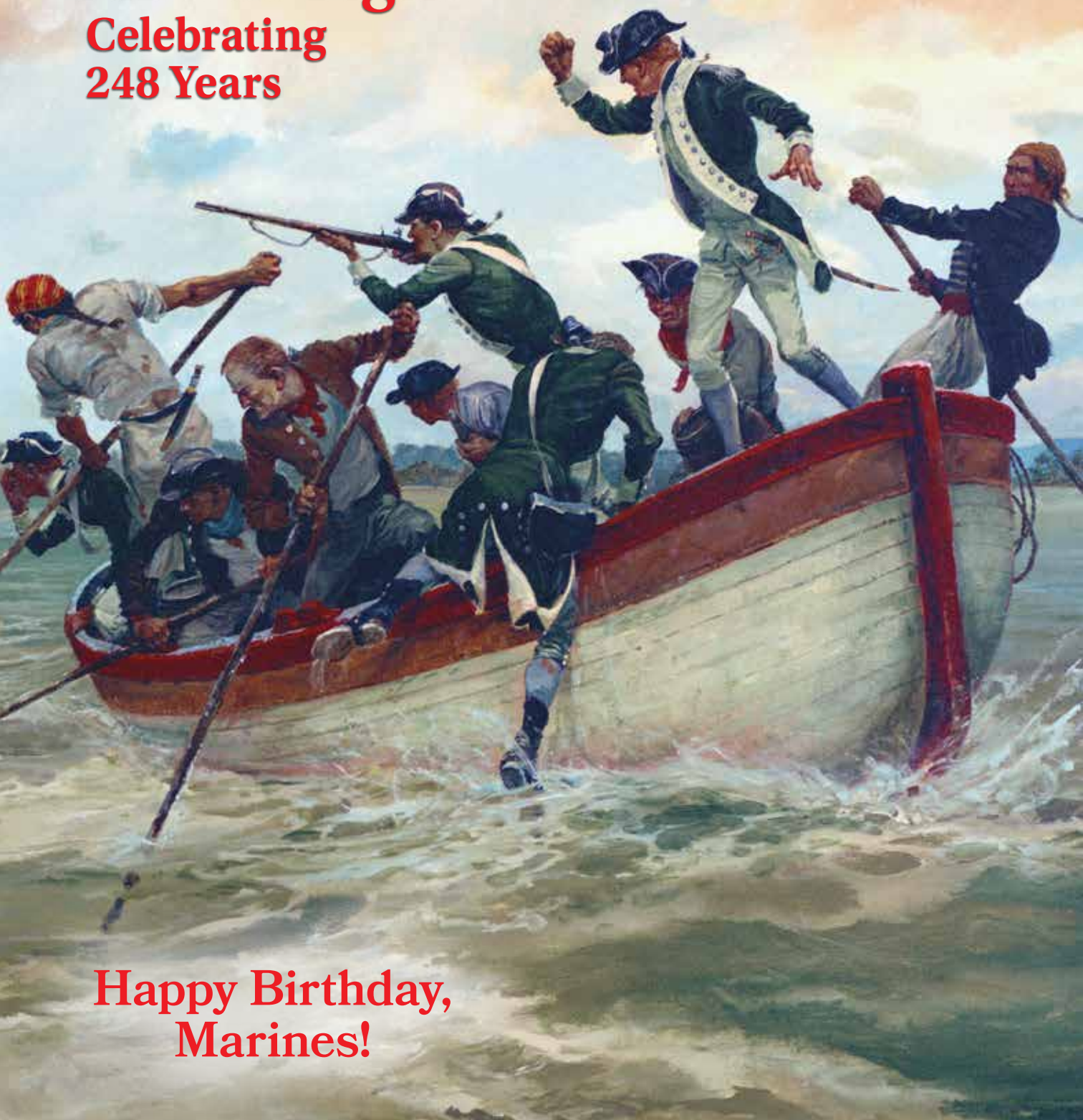
NOVEMBER 2023

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LEATHERNECK

MAGAZINE OF THE MARINES

First to Fight!
Celebrating
248 Years



Happy Birthday,
Marines!



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OR ARE CURRENTLY SERVING IN UNIFORM.

Spiritus Invictus



MARINE FORCES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

From the Publisher & Editor-in-Chief



NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE MARINE CORPS, TRIANGLE, VIRGINIA

Happy 248th Birthday, Marines!

Every year on Nov. 10, the anniversary of the founding of the Continental Marines in 1775, Marines all over the world, including today's Marines, veterans, family, and friends, behave in a manner that may appear bizarre to outsiders. People with different dates of birth and no family connection loudly wish each other "happy birthday," and gather for celebrations that take on the character of family reunions. Whether it's small gatherings and simple cake-cutting ceremonies, or expensively lavish formal Marine Corps Birthday Balls, we always observe the traditional birthday of the Corps. We cherish the memories of birthdays observed while deployed, in austere combat outposts, often under enemy fire, or at sea, sharing whatever cheer is available with the Marines and Sailors closest to us. Most importantly, we celebrate to remember and honor those who are no longer with us and to show the way to those who will carry on into the future.

This month's *Leatherneck* recognizes the birthday of our Corps with content celebrating what Major General Lejeune noted as our long history of "military excellence and soldierly virtue." Our cover highlights the Marines in the American War for Independence. One of our articles this month looks at the Battle of Tarawa in the 80th memorial year of Operation Galvanic and the actions on Betio in the Gilbert Islands (Kiribati) from Nov. 20-23, 1943. In "Surviving Tarawa: Veteran Reflects on 80th Anniversary of Operation Galvanic," author Patrick Reed highlights the journey PFC Lupe Gasca made when he and his fellow Marines battled fierce Japanese resistance

on Betio. In remembrance of more recent combat experiences, we present "Keeping the Heritage Alive: Museum Docent Shares his Experience With New Sergeants" on page 36 by *Leatherneck* Staff Writer, Kyle Watts.

I also call your attention to the letter on page 71, from MCA President and CEO, Lieutenant General Charles G. Chiarotti, USMC (Ret). For the first time, the MCA will be changing our membership structure and increasing the price of membership. Detailed information is available on our website and our MCA Support Center is standing by to assist. I encourage *Leatherneck* readers to take advantage of the opportunity offered to renew or extend your membership for three years at the current rates. In recognition of your years of loyalty, there will be no changes for our Life and Insured Members.

Finally, I must also point out that we are beginning a two-year journey to the Corps' upcoming 250th birthday. In addition to a historic national celebration planned for Philadelphia, Pa., in November 2025, you can expect to see more special features on the history of the world's finest fighting force in *Leatherneck*, and the MCA will continue to "pass the word" about additional commemorative events happening across the country in the coming months. Again, all of us here at *Leatherneck* and the MCA wish all Marines and friends of the Corps a happy birthday. Semper Fidelis.

Colonel Christopher Woodbridge,
USMC (Ret)

LEATHERNECK
MAGAZINE OF THE MARINES

MARINE CORPS
Gazette



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By Kyle Watts

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Full Distance Brewing has been a hit since founder, Capt Doug Meyer, USMC (Ret), opened its doors in May in Stafford, Va. Learn the secret to his award-winning beer and what recipe he has up his sleeve for the Marine Corps Birthday.

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COVER: The "Evacuation of Billingsport," by Col Charles Waterhouse, USMCR (Ret), perfectly illustrates the Marine Corps' mission since its inception in 1775. Read about the Corps' first Commandant, Maj Samuel Nicholas, and how the city of Philadelphia celebrates his legacy, on page 72. Prints of this painting are available at <https://marineshop.net/product/evacuation-of-billingsport-waterhouse-print-106799/>. 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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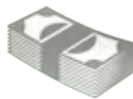


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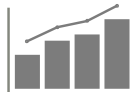
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10 NOVEMBER 2023

A Message from the Commandant of the Marine Corps

For 248 years, Marines have earned a reputation as the most disciplined and lethal warfighters in the world. This legacy of honor, courage, and commitment passed on to us was paid for in sweat, blood and sacrifice. From Belleau Wood to Inchon and Tarawa to Sangin, Marines have stepped forward to defend our Constitution when others either could not or would not. Our history is filled with heroes like Chief Warrant Officer 4 Hershel “Woody” Williams, Private First Class Hector Cafferata Jr., Sergeant Major Dan Daly, and thousands of others who performed acts of bravery, which went unseen in the heat of battle. We stand on the shoulders of these Marines, and we owe it to them to earn our title “Marine” each and every day.

Marines have given, and have been willing to give, their lives for Country and Corps in every fight our Nation has entered. Our actions turned back the tide of tyranny in Europe during the Great War, defeated fascism in Asia during World War II, fought for democracy in Korea and Vietnam, and offered the hope of self-determination in the Middle East. We go to war whenever our Nation calls, and in the interwar periods we train, we prepare, and we innovate. We have chosen a life of service and sacrifice—an honorable life that has meaning. We sacrifice so our fellow citizens don’t have to, and we seek nothing in return but a chance to be first to fight. Most will never understand why we choose to attack when others do not, why we revel in being covered in mud, why we snap to attention when “The Marines’ Hymn” is played, or why we say, “Ooh Rah.” We understand it, and this message is for us, for the Marines.

As Marines, we live on a war footing because someone must. This means that we ruthlessly adhere to our standards of excellence—Marine standards—as we know this will best prepare us for the wars of the future. Our high standards are a prerequisite of professional warfighting, and how we keep our honor clean in the cauldron of combat. They prepare us for the most difficult mission there is: fighting from and returning to the sea. Most importantly they shape our unique Marine culture, which is respected at home and across the globe.



Sergeant Major Ruiz and I are proud of all that you have done this past year to protect and enhance our reputation as America’s best warriors. We hope you know that we will be with you every step of the way as we prepare for the fights ahead. We ask that every Marine—active, reserve, and veteran—honor the legacy of those who went before us by continuing to uphold our high standards.

Protect your fellow Marines and our shared legacy. Happy Birthday, Marines!

Semper Fidelis,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric M. Smith".

Eric M. Smith
General, U.S. Marine Corps
Commandant of the Marine Corps

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.)

This is my first letter to the editor of *Leatherneck*. I am writing this because I just finished the article "Holding the Line: Marines Confront Abbey Gate Memories Two Years Later," by Kyle Watts, published in the August 2023 issue.

I have read numerous articles over the years about past combat operations, but this one struck me differently. I am impressed by the actions of the Marines assigned to this task. It was a task that seemed unachievable, but the training and leadership on the ground ensured that they did the best they could with the tools provided.

I think about when I joined. I was also doing something to help my country, but these Marines did something more. They

faced a humanitarian crisis in a hostile environment. They were forced to make life-changing decisions for people in need without any real direction. They put themselves in harm's way to try and make one last good thing happen for the people of Afghanistan.

I realize that the effects of combat carry their own everlasting wounds, but this will be different.

I am proud to read the stories of how our Marines tried to help the women and children during the crisis.

These memories, however difficult they will be to bare, are ones that make me, a Marine veteran, proud to call these men and women my brothers and sisters.

Lee Gautreaux
Lafayette, La.

Thanks for writing and joining the discussion in Leatherneck. I know all veterans of Afghanistan and Iraq share your sentiments and appreciate your support. Semper Fi.—Publisher

We Should Always Follow The Chain of Command

I read the writing contest article "There's a True Story Behind 'A Few Good Men'" in the August 2023 issue of *Leatherneck* and I wondered: Why was the chain of command not involved? I went to boot camp in September 1961 across the canal from MCRD San Diego, Calif. We were taught that if there was a problem, we should look to solve it through the chain of command. From an E-1 recruit to the President of the United States, everyone has to answer.

When I saw the movie, I thought it was an antimilitary movie against the Marine Corps. And when "Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C." came out as a television series, it was upsetting because I felt that the Marines that I worked with did not fit the narrative. While the demise of the Marine mentioned in the story [A Few Good Men] is a sad one, it was a homicide after separation from active duty.

The men and women I met during my service were good, hardworking folks

WARMEST
Birthday Wishes

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from different states and backgrounds whose only goal was the mission. They believed that any situation could be handled by the chain of command, at the lowest level if possible. Remember, any misdeeds conducted by any rank in the military must have consequences. No one is above the law. I think that the goal of any servicemember who enlists and graduates from boot camp and either decides to do one enlistment or 20 years or more, is to receive an honorable discharge upon leaving military service.

John Sanchez
USN, 1961-1966
Hanford, Calif.

You are correct, we have a chain of command for good reasons, and the chain works if people use it correctly. Often the things people do to cover things up are worse than the original crime or mistake.—Publisher

Staff NCO Ranks Come with Responsibilities

I once wrote a letter when I was sergeant major of the Marine Forces Pacific. Since that time, I have been asked for copies of it or been told it is still passed along in the ranks of our Corps. I think it is just as relevant as the day I wrote it. Here is an excerpt:

The Marine Corps has recognized that you are a leader and have given you the additional authority to exercise that leadership for our Corps. Joining the ranks of the staff noncommissioned officers is a major step not only for you, but for your families as well. As a staff NCO, you and your family will find yourselves becoming more and more involved in leadership roles in other parts of the Marine Corps family as well ... Your promotion affects your spouse and your family as well as you, and I would hope you take the time to sit down with your family and talk to them about your increased responsibilities to our Corps and our country prior to putting your rocker on ...

Let me be the first to tell you that, as of now, the Corps' tolerance for mistakes has just grown smaller with your selection to staff sergeant. Now, am I saying that because you now have a rocker on your sleeve or a collar, you must be perfect? Of course not. You will still make mistakes. But mistakes dealing with your honor or integrity will not be tolerated ... If you break the trust that the Commandant and commanders have given you, you will find your way out of the gate ... As a staff NCO, you must keep yourself in good physical condition, read military publications and actively participate in the commandant's reading program. As

a staff NCO, you must be proactive in your next level of professional military education, don't just check the box for your next promotion, do it because you want to learn something for the future.

As a staff NCO if you have not been on recruiting or drill instructor duty, I think it's about time you volunteered to do your part for your Corps now.

If you can do what I have mentioned above, I welcome you wholeheartedly to our ranks. Your Corps needs your leadership and your professionalism. You will lead our Corps into the next century. Take care of your Marines, learn your trade, support our corps the best you can, and you truly will be a staff NCO of Marines—not just an E-6.

SgtMaj Robert W. Holub
USMC (Ret)

Kaihanupa, Hawaii

Thank you SgtMaj. Wise words for all leaders.—Publisher

Questions About Battle of Tenaru

I especially enjoyed "Battle of Tenaru" by Eric Hammel in the August 2023 issue of Leatherneck. I have always been interested in articles relating to the island hopping campaigns of the Pacific. I was too young for World War II, but I did make Korea. I was an 0331 with H/3/1, 1stMarDiv.

I have a couple of questions about Tenaru. I am aware that the amphibious fleet bugged out, leaving the Marines alone and without critical supplies like ammo, chow and medical supplies. Was anyone ever held accountable for making that decision? And if not, why?

I also know that John Basilone was awarded the Medal of Honor on Guadalcanal. The story indicates there were over 871 KIA Japanese at the end of the battle. Could this have been partially due to the heroic efforts of Sergeant Basilone? Or were his exploits from a later battle?

Sgt C.C. Westlake, USMC (Ret)
Bozeman, Mont.

First, thank you for your service in Korea. Regarding your questions: The U.S. Navy's withdrawal after the landings on Guadalcanal is a tactical decision still questioned to this day. I recommend listening to General A.A. Vandegrift's own words on the subject in our "Corps Voices" podcast series here: <https://v.fastcdn.co/u/a272d010/32077206-0-Vandegrift.m4a>. The battle of Tenaru River was fought on Aug. 21, 1942. Sgt "Manila John" Basilone was awarded the Medal of Honor for action in the Lunga Area on Oct. 24-25, 1942.—Publisher



COURTESY OF CHARLES V. CURCIO



COURTESY OF CHARLES V. CURCIO

Charles V. Curcio's great-granddaughter was born on the Marine Corps Birthday. Briana can be seen in Charles' arms as a newborn wearing a USMC onesie. The other shows her standing beside Charles, wearing his combat helmet.

My Great-Granddaughter Shares Her Birthday with the Corps

This is my great-granddaughter Briana Franzone, who was born on the Marine Corps Birthday, Nov. 10, 2016. There is one photo of her and I the day she was born, and she is wearing her Marine onesie. The other photo is of Briana wearing my combat helmet. She will be 7 years old this November, which holds a

very special place in my heart as does the Marine Corps. I served in Korea. My two sons and two of my grandsons were also Marines. One of my grandsons was on active duty and served in Afghanistan. It would bring me great joy to be able to see the photos of Briana and me in the November edition of the magazine.

Sgt Charles V. Curcio
Commack, N.Y.

Happy birthday Marine, and to you too, Briana.—Publisher

Sound Off Poem Resonates With Reader

The poem "Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep" by Cpl Jerry D. Ennis in Sound Off in the August issue of *Leatherneck* tore my heart out and reminded me of my husband, Sgt Daniel Sharkey, who

**MARINES HELPED YOU
BECOME A MARINE.
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TO CIVILIAN LIFE, TOO.**



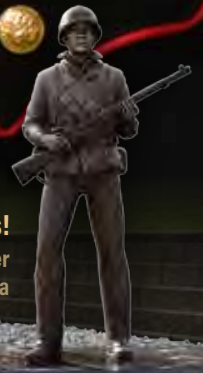
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WHERE THINGS START TO GET BETTER.

HAPPY 248TH BIRTHDAY, MARINES



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Happy Birthday, Marines!
from the Harold "Pie" Keller
Memorial Brooklyn, Iowa



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JOHN POOLE



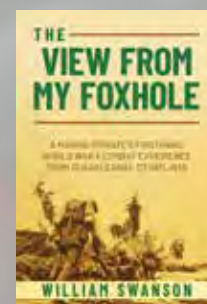
CHRISTOPHER BUONANNO



A.S. KYLE



MATTHEW WEISS



WILLIAM SWANSON

served with 2/5 and the [Royal Marines] and was one of the Chosin Few. They said that prayer every night. In the poem, the conditions seem the same as they were in Korea in the 1950s except it lacks the freezing temperatures.

Marge Sharkey
Brick, N.J.

The withdrawal from Chosin Reservoir remains one of the Corps' "Touchstone Battles." We're grateful this poem recalled memories of your Sgt Sharkey and that desperate battle.—Publisher

The Honor of Being a Marine

Here is a poem I wrote about what an honor it is to be a Marine:

We the few, the proud, the fearless,
We the band of brothers, and sisters,
For he or she who this day,
Sheds their blood in battle with me,
Shall be my brother or sister for eternity.

That is the honor, of being a Marine.

Cpl John Messia
USMCR, 1952-1954
Brockton, Mass.

Shakespeare himself (Henry V, Act IV) couldn't say it better! —Publisher

Well Wishes for Colonel Reinwald

Congratulations on your retirement and your many years of service to our Corps. You have done extremely well. As you know, dealing with the confusion over the Marines involved in the flag raising on Iwo Jima was not easy, but at the end of the day it was well handled.

I have had nine Marine officers go on to make general who worked for me. A couple got three stars, and most of them I was proud of. However, few of them had the long-term impact on the Corps that you did in your retirement job. I consider you a 10th general officer equivalent. I wish you the best!

Col Charles O. Skipper, USMC (Ret)
Folly Beach, S.C.

I have been away from home for some time and have only recently opened my July issue of *Leatherneck*. I was saddened at the news that you will no longer be our editor. I have read *Leatherneck* since my discharge in the 1960s and have been a life member since the 1980s. During those years, the magazine had many capable editors. However, with your tenure, the bar for the magazine's future editors has been set exceedingly high. To the reader, you have always communicated in a clear, concise, open-minded manner.

Most important to me, your written responses to members have never sounded condescending or rude. I hope the level of civility and understanding you have put in place will continue.

I wish you the very best in your next assignment. As you must already know, you will be sorely missed.

George Collias
Venice, Fla.

Again, thanks to our readers for their farewell wishes to Col Reinwald. I know she appreciates you all.—Publisher

Reader Enjoys Mosquito Bowl Companion Article

The December 2015 article "The Football Classic," republished in the September Extra Ration email as a companion article on the Mosquito Bowl in the September 2023 issue, is a wonderful article. I could not help but notice the name Jack Castignola on the 29th Marines' roster from the December 1944 football game.

"Coach Jack" was a legendary high school football coach in Michigan, coaching Trenton High School as head coach from 1964 to 1985. He passed away in 1986 and was inducted into the Michigan Sports Hall of Fame in 1988. While the
[continued on page 67]



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LtCol, USMC (Ret.) + Partner at Fluet

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usaa.com/VeteransDay



Face the Fight™ is a coalition to prevent veteran suicide by breaking the stigma
of seeking help, increasing awareness and supporting our partner organizations.



10 NOVEMBER 2023

A Birthday Message From the Marine Corps Association President & CEO



Today, as we look toward the future, we see the complexities, challenges, and global turmoil which will be faced by countless generations of men and women who earn the title Marine. These seemingly insurmountable barriers will require men and women of character, grounded in the fabric of our nation and shaped by the ethos, values, and commitment demanded of Marines. I remain comforted as I look around our Corps today to witness firsthand the magnificence of our Marines, and I am assured that we, who have served, are in good hands and will continue to be guided by this generation and the next of Marines who are equally up to the task of being our nation's finest fighting force.

As day follows night, and weeks follow days, we stop each year to celebrate the birth of our Corps. Young or old, private to general, and regardless of where we find ourselves, in garrison, on the high seas, or forward deployed throughout the globe, Marines take time to celebrate the Birthday of our Corps.

As we gather to celebrate our beloved Corps, I ask that you take time to remember our brothers and sisters who have come before us, given of themselves to the fullest

measure and whose legacy we stand on and enjoy today. Their indomitable spirit and readiness to face adversity head-on inspired generations of Marines. Their legacy of honor, courage, commitment, sacrifice and hardship, places us above all others in the annals of history. It is this legacy that on 10 November, we take time to celebrate.

I wish all Marines Happy Birthday!

Semper Fidelis,

Charles G. Chiarotti
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)
President & CEO

STATEMENTS OF MILITARY PRIDE

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In Every Clime and Place

Compiled by Kyle Watts

Twentynine Palms, Calif.

HMH-361 Refuels

MQ-8C Unmanned Helicopter For First Time in History

A first in U.S. Navy and Marine Corps history, Marines delivered fuel to a Navy MQ-8C Fire Scout unmanned autonomous helicopter from a Marine Corps CH-53E, at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif., on July 31. The innovative trial was the first time a manned aircraft has provided fuel for an unmanned rotary wing aircraft.

Marines with Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron (HMH) 361, Marine Aircraft Group 16, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, led the aerial delivered ground refueling (ADGR) trial with the MQ-8C Fire Scout from Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 21, during Service Level Training Exercise (SLTE) 5-23.

The MQ-8C is a sea-based, vertical lift unmanned system that traditionally operates from a littoral combat ship

(LCS), a relatively small surface vessel designed for operations near shore. The MQ-8C supports the LCS in and around littoral waters through data collection and assessment. The Navy and Marine Corps seized the opportunity to test the tactical application of operating a shipborne integrated intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance platform for extended time ashore in a simulated littoral environment.

Marines leveraged the CH-53E's ability to provide fuel to air and ground vehicles in austere environments to maximize the range of the MQ-8C. The CH-53E transferred approximately 700 pounds of fuel, just under the maximum payload of the MQ-8C, which supports an estimated range of 150 nautical miles. By comparison, the CH-53E has a maximum 23,450-pound fuel payload and supports an estimated range of 540 nautical miles.

"Coming to Twentynine Palms was an opportunity to showcase that the MQ-8C

can be a valuable platform in support of a Marine Air-Ground Task Force," said Lieutenant Commander Brian "Freq" Paskey, the HSC-21 training officer. "By conducting ADGR, in addition to using a mobile control station, the MQ-8C can be operated to support Marines in nearly any environment."

This iteration of SLTE ended in August, but lessons from this trial were captured by the Navy and Marine Corps.

"For the MQ-8C, the U.S. is exploring the tactical application of an asset with expanding capabilities—they need to know what is working, and what they need to work on," said Lieutenant Colonel Nathaniel Griggs, Director of Aviation Combat and Integration at Marine Air-Ground Task Force Training Command. "We are in the desert, but the logistical, administrative, and most importantly, the tactical lessons learned here are applicable to any clime and place."

2ndLt Madison Walls, USMC



CPL RICHARD PEREZGARCIA, USMC

Marines with HMH-361, MAG-16, 3rd MAW and Sailors assigned to Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 21 (HSC-21) conduct a ground refuel for an MQ-8C Fire Scout during Service Level Training Exercise (SLTE) 5-23 at Camp Wilson, Marine Corps Air-Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, Calif., on July 31.

A KC-130J Hercules assigned to VMGR-153, MAG-24, 1st MAW is loaded with equipment at Marine Corps Air Station Kaneohe Bay, Marine Corps Base Hawaii, on Aug. 22. At the request of Joint Task Force 50, VMGR-153 provided inter-island transportation of personnel and equipment from Oahu to Maui.



CPL LOGAN BEENY, USMC

Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii VMGR-153 Assists in Maui Wildfire Response Efforts

Marines with Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron (VMGR) 153, Marine Aircraft Group 24, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, answered the call on Aug. 14 and Aug. 22, to assist Joint Task Force 50 (JTF-50) in its efforts to provide relief to Hawaiians after the devastating Maui wildfires on Aug. 8.

VMGR-153 facilitated the transport of personnel and equipment with its KC-130J Hercules in support of Maui response efforts. VMGR-153's flight on Aug. 14 transported Hawaii National Guardsmen with JTF-50, the command-and-control element that will coordinate Department of Defense response efforts. The Aug. 22 flight transported personnel and equipment with the U.S. Navy's Mobile Dive and Salvage unit.

VMGR-153 is a relatively new squadron in Hawaii, having been formally activated less than a year ago. However, they have quickly demonstrated dedication to service and professionalism with adept pilots, aircrew and maintainers.

"Our squadron was on standby, and when we heard that JTF-50 requested



CPL LOGAN BEENY, USMC

Marines with VMGR-153, MAG-24, 1st MAW load equipment bound for Maui into a KC-130J Hercules at Marine Corps Air Station Kaneohe Bay, Marine Corps Base Hawaii, on Aug. 22.

our support, we were excited to help. Times like this are why we work and train so hard, to excel in both combat and humanitarian missions at a moment's notice. We are always happy to help when needed," said Captain Ezekiel Cary, who piloted the Aug. 14 flight. "Joining the Marine Corps, that's one of the things that I wanted to do, is to be able to be

ready to support in any way that I can during humanitarian and disaster relief events. I was glad we could answer the call because we were here and ready."

VMGR-153's recent assistance highlights the importance of unified joint force efforts and how they can be critical in disaster response.

2ndLt Hannah Venables, USMC

An MV-22B Osprey with VMM-163 (Rein), MAG-16, 3rd MAW is offloaded by U.S. Marines and Filipino citizens in support of emergency relief efforts in the wake of Typhoon Egay on Fuga Island, Philippines, on Aug. 3. During three days of relief efforts, VMM-163 (Rein) delivered approximately 64,000 pounds of food and water.



SGT SEAN POTTER, USMC

Philippines

3rd Marine Aircraft Wing Conducts Typhoon Egay Relief Efforts

Within 24 hours, 35 Marines and Sailors, four MV-22B Ospreys, and four CH-53E Super Stallions transitioned from preparing to return home from the Philippines to supporting relief efforts and lifesaving assistance in the wake of Typhoon Egay during the last week of July. Following the conclusion of Marine Aviation Support Activity (MASA) 23, and at the request of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 163 (Reinforced), Marine Aircraft Group 16, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, was tasked to support relief efforts in the northern Philippines.

Typhoon Egay made landfall near remote northern Fuga Island, Philippines at approximately 3:10 a.m., on July 26. The super typhoon, which had a 435-mile band of rain and wind with gusts up to 146 miles per hour, battered 15 municipalities, affecting more than 500,000 individuals and driving local governments to declare a province-wide state of calamity.

The detachment was preparing to return to home station following MASA 23 when they were dynamically re-tasked on July 30. Within 24 hours, all eight air-



SGT SEAN POTTER, USMC

A Filipino child runs to stack emergency relief supplies delivered by Marines in support of relief efforts in the wake of Typhoon Egay on Fuga Island, Philippines, on Aug. 3.

craft were airborne from Antonio Bautista Air Base, Puerto Princesa, Palawan, to Subic Bay International Airport to begin loading and delivering relief supplies, provided by the Government of the Philippines.

“The opportunity to help our Philippine allies in time of need, especially after

training together during an exercise, is a privilege,” said Lieutenant Colonel David G. Batcheler, the commanding officer of VMM-163 (Rein). “There is no better way to express our commitment here in the Philippines than to respond at a moment’s notice in time of need.”

The Marines worked alongside Filipino

servicemembers and first responders in Basco, Batanes Province, who eagerly lined up at the rear of the aircraft to pass boxes of food and water into staging areas for further distribution.

“The capability of a reinforced squadron is truly powerful. The combination of the range of the medium-lift MV-22 and the heavy-lift capability of the CH-53, plus the ability of both platforms to take off and land in austere environments, is a force to be reckoned with for this type of challenge,” Batcheler said.

Due to severe flooding, aerial supply and assistance was the only option for many locations throughout the region. The Ospreys flew supplies 800 miles round trip from Subic Bay International Airport to the Batanes Islands, north of Luzon in the Philippine Sea. The Super Stallions delivered supplies around northern Luzon. During three days of relief efforts, VMM-163 (Rein) delivered approximately 64,000 pounds of relief supplies across 3,900 nautical miles to affected communities.

On the final day of relief efforts, Philippine Secretary of National Defense Gilberto Teodoro, and Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Romeo S. Brawner, visited the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) site at Lal-lo Airport in Cagayan province, Philippines, where the relief efforts were concluding. EDCA sites facilitated rapid and efficient response from U.S. forces supporting the

mutual mission of joint crisis response, combined training, exercises and interoperability.

The forward presence and ready posture of I Marine Expeditionary Force assets in the region facilitated rapid and effective response to crisis and capitalized on coordination capabilities and relationships built with the host nation during the just-completed exercise MASA 23. This reinforced the value of such exercises and demonstrated U.S. commitment to allies and partners.

2ndLt Madison Walls, USMC

Norway 26th MEU(SOC) Concludes Bi-Lateral Training With Norwegian Soldiers

Marines and Sailors of the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) (MEU (SOC)), serving on USS *Mesa Verde* (LPD-19) with attached elements of Italian Marines, concluded a successful bilateral training exercise with Brigade North Norwegian Soldiers on Aug. 21. The 16-day exercise was aimed at enhancing their warfighting lethality and interoperability with our allies and partners above the Arctic Circle.

“The Norway bilateral training was a great opportunity to learn, integrate and operate with our valued NATO allies and partners in an Arctic environment,” said Lieutenant Colonel Josef Wiese, the executive officer of the 26th MEU (SOC) and the officer in charge of the MEU

An MV-22B Osprey, assigned to the 26th MEU(SOC) Bravo Command Element, conducts flight operations in Bardufoss, Norway, on Aug. 7.



CPL AZIZA KAMUHANDA, USMC



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CPL MICHELE CLARKE, USMC

Sgt Keegan Green, a machine-gunner with the Battalion Landing Team 1/6, 26th MEU(SOC) Bravo Command Element, relays information to his Marines during a live-fire range as part of a Norwegian Bilateral Exercise in Setermoen, Norway, on Aug. 9.

(SOC) Bravo Command Element aboard USS *Mesa Verde*. “The Marines with the 26th MEU (SOC) showcased their ability to integrate and interoperate with our Norwegian and Italian counterparts, strengthening the relationship and trust to work alongside our allies and partners in the USEUCOM area of responsibility.”

“The Marines had a great opportunity to learn how to train and survive in an Arctic environment from the Norwegian soldiers,” said First Lieutenant Timothy Mara, Executive Officer, “Charlie” Company, BLT 1/6. “They showed us how to make campfires with wet materials, set up tents, stay dry in a cold and wet environment and how to maneuver in an Arctic environment. For the Marines, we had the opportunity to demonstrate how we conduct Military Operations in Urbanized Training (MOUT), immediate action drills and battle drills.”

The Marines and Norwegian soldiers from Brigade North transitioned into an integrated force-on-force as the culminating event of the bilateral training exercise.

“Training with the Norwegian soldiers

continues to strengthen relationships with our NATO ally and partner at all levels of leadership,” said Mara.

“After this training, we have a better understanding how the Norwegian soldiers train and operate, allowing us to be able to effectively plan, communicate and execute any future exercises or operations together.”

While the Marines and Sailors of the 26th MEU (SOC) and BLT 1/6 were conducting training in Setermoen, the MV-22 Aviation Detachment from the 26th MEU (SOC), made up of Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 162 (Reinforced), conducted advanced high-altitude, mountainous flight operations out of various training sites in northern Norway. VMM-162 (Rein) provided critical air support during the exercise, to include simulated tactical recovery of aircraft and personnel events, confined area landings, low altitude tactics, mountainous area terrain training, and reduced visibility landings within a tactical scenario to increase overall proficiency in MEU (SOC) Mission essential tasks and cold weather operating environments.

“Norway has provided the aviators and aircrew from the MV-22B Detachment a great opportunity to conduct quality training in a unique operating environment,” said Maj Matthew “Poof” Piston, the 26th MEU (SOC) MV-22B Detachment officer in charge. “The training and bilateral integration we have experienced here has made us a stronger and more capable force and has afforded us the opportunity to demonstrate our ability to operate effectively while distributed in locations far away from the core of the 26th MEU (SOC) ACE.”

The 26th MEU (SOC) serves as one of the United States’ premier crisis response forces, capable of conducting amphibious operations, crisis response and limited contingency operations. Coupled with the USS *Bataan* Amphibious Readiness Group, the 26th MEU (SOC) serves as a premier stand-in force with a full complement of all-domain capabilities to operate persistently within the littorals or weapons engagement zones of any adversary.

1stLt Stephanie Downing, USMC



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Into the Breach:

How a Good Leader Becomes an Outstanding Leader

By SSgt Michael Montesanto, USMC

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.

It's a wet and early morning for the Marines of Company A, 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment. With weary eyes and nervous bodies, they are crammed into their landing craft with their Frog Skin helmet covers peeping above the bulkheads. It's Sept. 15, 1950, and the assault on Inchon has begun. In the face of adversity, it can be easy to defer to a Marine of lower rank to be the first one "over the top." However, a 25-year-old platoon commander, First Lieutenant Baldomero Lopez, does the best thing he can do—lead by example. When the landing craft halts, 1stLt Lopez jumps out and moves toward the gunfire, inspiring his Marines to do the same. Moments later he is shot while attempting to throw a hand grenade. Instead of allowing it to wound his Marines, he pulls it under his body and absorbs the blast.

This selfless act and the moments leading up to it set the standard that all Marines should emulate if given the privilege to lead. When identifying a good leader, one could begin by looking at a Marine's MOS proficiency, physical fitness, or ability to manage subordinates. Although these traits are crucial, they are not what make a good leader an outstanding leader. Outstanding leaders in the Marine Corps can inspire, develop their subordinates, and practice humility.

The most potent form of motivation for an individual is that of inspiration. It is easy for leaders to keep their subordinates on task with the looming threat of reprimands and paperwork. However, this form of leadership promotes an unproductive work environment that inhibits growth and encourages high-performing Marines to exit the Corps.

Platoon commander 1stLt Baldomero Lopez (inset) leads his men over the top of a seawall (right) shortly after landing at Inchon during the Korean War. Lopez died moments later and was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.



Leaders must understand that to keep the Corps in the highest state of readiness, we must lead through inspiration. Outstanding leaders are passionate about their craft and look for every opportunity to improve their performance. When you set the example and encourage your subordinates to grow with you, instead of below you, it fosters a healthy work environment of hard chargers who are willing to go above and beyond what is expected of them. In the Marine Corps, you can't only "talk about it"—you have to "be about it." And when your Marines see that you are sleeping on the ground, digging that fighting hole, and running drills alongside them, they will be inspired to do better every day.

When Marines are in leadership billets, regardless of rank, the expectation is that they will put the professional development and well-being of their Marines above their own. We demonstrate this through small practices like "leaders eat last" or through large practices, like 1stLt Lopez being the first one "over the top." Leaders

need to understand that the center of gravity for a unit is the very Marines who are putting in the work, and they need to be looked after. Outstanding leaders do not rest on their achievements or excuse themselves from hard work because it is "below them." Leaders need to find a balance of involvement without being intrusive and practice decentralized command without being absent. Most Marines desire leadership roles, and it is up to the NCOs, SNCOs, and officers to allow them to take charge and grow, especially in training environments.

The deadliest of traps for someone to fall into is that of complacency. As time-in-service accumulates, so does the chance of a Marine getting comfortable with their success. Outstanding leaders possess the ability to look inward and identify their weaknesses without taking offense to what they uncover. Regardless of rank or billet, Marines are required to maintain proficiency in all small unit warfighting tactics and skills. General Alfred M. Gray, the 29th Commandant

of the Marine Corps, said it perfectly when he noted: “Every Marine is, first and foremost, a rifleman. All other conditions are secondary.” This is a standard, not a title. Leaders are expected to hold themselves accountable and go outside their comfort zones at every opportunity. However, if leaders are not humble enough to realize their deficiencies, the institution becomes weaker from the top down. Outstanding leaders can humble themselves and be with their Marines—patrolling in the field or running gun drills at the armory. When you train alongside your Marines, you send them a message that you care and hard work is not beneath you. In some cases, you may run into an NCO, SNCO, or officer who will try and justify a personal lack of knowledge instead of fixing it. These leaders tend to have difficulty accomplishing tasks outside of their comfort zones and have difficulty developing their subordinates. It is said that your Marines are a direct reflection of yourself, and if you have the humility to admit when you need to work on something, your Marines will be that much more inclined to do the same.

Marines win battles! Not because of technology, but because of outstanding leaders like 1stLt Lopez and Gen Gray who take initiative and lead by example.



CPL ADAM MILLER, USMC

Marine 1stLt Dylan R. Buck, right, leads a combined anti-armor team to the firing line, June 3, 2013, at the North Training Area at Combined Arms Training Center Camp Fuji. Like 1stLt Lopez, exceptional Marine leaders should take initiative, accountability, and lead by example.

Practicing the qualities of what makes someone an outstanding leader will grow your Marines to be lethal and ready for any challenge that comes their way. As NCOs, SNCOs, and officers, we must be willing to mentor our subordinates in a healthy work environment that encourages free thought and strikes down complacency at every level. Look in the mirror and ask yourself, “What is my biggest weakness, and how can I attack it?” Only through these actions can the Marine Corps stay lethal and solidify its place as our nation’s force in readiness.

Author’s bio: SSgt Montesanto was born and raised in New Haven, Conn., and enlisted at the age of 18. He attended boot camp in 2015 at Parris Island. Following training, he reported to 1st Bn, 11th Marines aboard MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., as a field artillery fire controlman. He deployed with BLT 1/1 in 2017 and BLT 1/4 in 2020. SSgt Montesanto currently serves as the course chief for Marine Corps Field Artillery Fire Control Marine Course aboard Fort Sill, Okla., where he trains entry-level 0844 Marines. 🇺🇸

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Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

Battles Won Award Presented to Kentucky Wrestling Coach

Marine Corps Recruiting Command recently presented the Battles Won Award to Taylor County High School (Ky.) wrestling coach Spencer Adams during the National Wrestling Coaches Convention in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. The award was presented to Adams for his commitment to the personal and professional development of his student-athletes.

During the July 29 award presentation, Master Sergeant Christopher McComb, Communications Chief for 3rd Force Reconnaissance Company, 4th Marine Division, explained how athletes have experienced success on and off the wrestling mats under Adams' guidance. McComb also highlighted how Adams' unwavering commitment to his athlete's development as wrestlers and individuals has fostered a culture of discipline, determination and camaraderie within the team. Through this tireless effort, Adams has instilled in his wrestlers the values of hard work, perseverance and teamwork.

The presentation of the Battles Won Award is a reminder of the



LCPL PAYTON GOODRICH, USMC

transformative power of dedicated coaching and mentorship. Through his unwavering commitment to his wrestlers' personal growth, Adams has left an impact on the Taylor County High School wrestling program and the community.

Submitted by LCpl Payton Goodrich, USMC

MacDill Air Force Base, Fla.

Tampa Native Recognized as Honorary Marine

Longtime Florida native Mark Van Trees recently received the title "Honorary Marine" for his many years support for the Marine Corps and many Marine Corps-related units, activities, events, and causes. Major General Paul J. Rock Jr., Commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Central Command, presided over the July 17 ceremony in which Van Trees received the "Honorary Marine" designation, which was accompanied by a formal declaration citation and the much-coveted flat-black eagle, globe and anchor emblem.

Explaining the significance of the event, MajGen Rock stated, "You are the 72nd honorary Marine in the whole world and you join the ranks of a distinguished group of individuals. It is really an honor and a privilege to be a part of this. For almost everyone here, this is a once-in-a-lifetime event."

For nearly two decades, Van Trees has volunteered on behalf of Marines and their families, in the Tampa area and overseas. He has provided large quantities of care packages and other items. He has also supported events such as Marine Corps Birthday Balls and reunions.

Marine Corps officials estimate that the Marine Corps honors fewer than five individuals with the "Honorary Marine" title annually.

Submitted by LtCol Lyle Gilbert, USMC



GYSGT ALISA HELIN, USMC

Pinnacle, N.C.

Annual Mud Run Raises Funds for Military-Connected Charities

On June 3, the 13th annual Percy John Fulton Marine Corps League Mud Run was held in Pinnacle, N.C. The 5K course consisted of more than 15 obstacles including: four mud pits, an ice hole pit, "Ho Chi Minh Trail," "Mount Suribachi" rope climb/walk of shame, slip and slide, logs and tires, meat grinder, wooden walls and "A" frames, cargo net climb and grenade throw. During the six-hour event, 904 participants (41% increase from 2022) between the ages 4 and 76 and from across the U.S. navigated the obstacles and got "dirty" for a good cause.

Funds generated from the event are used to support a wide range of charities including Wounded Warrior Battalion East/Semper Fi-America's Fund, located at Camp Lejeune, N.C.; Toys for Tots; Veterans Helping Veterans Heal; Young Marines Youth Program; N.C. State Veterans Home in Salisbury, N.C.; Wreaths Across America; the Hero Center, and others.

Submitted by Warren Boyer



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"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. 📷

The All Saints' Day Massacre



A sharp fight for a nameless ridge and a ravine led to a bloody sacrifice for the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines.

By Geoffrey W. Roecker

October 1942 was a bleak and terrifying month for the 1st Marine Division on Guadalcanal. Nearly three months of combat—exhausting patrols punctuated by ferocious pitched battles—left men weakened, wounded and riddled with tropical disease. They were short of food, short of ammunition, short of everything to the point where they dubbed the campaign “Operation Shoestring” and themselves the “First Maroon Division.” Yet, despite these hardships, they managed to hold their perimeter around an airfield whose existence was their sole reason for invading the Solomon Islands. And when they took the tallies at the end of the month, the Marines appeared to come out ahead of their Japanese adversaries.

“On the Matanikau [the Japanese garrison] appears to have lost about 500 killed by artillery fire in addition to a total of 13 tanks,” noted the D-2 (Intelligence) report. “Total enemy losses along the Matanikau during this period can be conservatively estimated at 1,200 killed. Most of these were from the 4th Infantry and the Oka Unit. On the other front, 1,200 bodies were buried after the battle. A partial count of additional bodies lying in the woods indicates total losses of 2,200 killed The 29th and 16th Infantry Regiments and the Kawaguchi Detachment had been annihilated.” Reconnaissance patrols led by Lieutenants William “Holly” Whyte and Harold “Ramrod” Taylor revealed disorganized and demoralized defenses west of the Matanikau. While these positions could still fight—Lt Taylor gave his life

to obtain this information—evidence suggested that a concerted push might break the Japanese lines.

Augmenting this pleasantly bloody news was the anticipated arrival of the 8th Marines, fresh from garrison duty in Samoa, plus additional Navy firepower. These “riches beyond the dreams of avarice” led the Division commander, Major General Alexander A. Vandegrift, to green-light a new offensive across the Matanikau River. The ultimate goal was to annihilate any remnants of the beaten Japanese regiments, capture the base at Kokumbona, and “give them a sense of futility” preventing further reinforcement of the Guadalcanal garrison. Furthermore, Vandegrift hoped to capture or destroy the artillery pieces dropping shells on Henderson Field. For this mission, he tapped the relatively rested 5th Marines;



USMC

Above: This footbridge built across the Matanikau River was installed by Marine engineers under the cover of darkness.

Opposite page: A view of the front lines near the Matanikau River where 1st Bn, 5th Marines fought the Japanese on Nov. 1, 1942. (USMC photo)

the 2nd Marines and a battalion of the Army's 164th Infantry would follow in reserve.

Crossing the Matanikau was a daunting endeavor. Marines made repeated forays to the western bank, starting with the ill-fated Goettge Patrol in August 1942 and the aptly named "First Battle of the Matanikau." Subsequent efforts resulted in temporary control or outright repulse. In the 1st Marine Division, it was said that a man was only a man after crossing the Matanikau three times. By this standard, the 5th Marines was one of the most mature regiments on the island.

Private Leonard Anthony Baumann, a 25-year-old from Queens, N.Y., was an assistant machine-gunner in Company D, 5th Marines. He knew enough about what lay beyond the river to take note of the preparations. "One heavy cruiser and four destroyers came in and sailed up beach to Kokumbona and shelled [Japanese]," he noted in a makeshift diary. "Ships went up and down six times continuously throwing shells." The following morning, Baumann's squad moved out of their defensive positions and down to a coconut grove "to start the push." Lieu-

tenant Herbert Merrillat, a Marine public relations officer, watched the flow of military might moving into position. "Long lines of men in green and trucks full of ammunition and food crowded the road west of Kukum in a steady stream," he wrote. The assault troops learned their

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objectives, duties, and the designated signals for success or support. Through the pattering rain, they could hear the *whump* of Japanese artillery rounds falling elsewhere in the regimental area.

Rain and artillery dampened the already muffled sounds of activity along the Matanikau. Under cover of darkness,

Co L, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines crossed the sandbar at the river's mouth and set up a defensive perimeter on the western bank. A thousand yards upstream, a platoon from E/2/5 slithered to the water's edge and boarded small boats, rowing across to establish a foothold in the jungle. Three companies of the 1st Engineer Battalion went to work deploying sections of pontoon bridges across a slow, lagoon-like stretch of the river. Previous crossings relied on the sand bar and "One Log Bridge"—sites well-known to both sides and "inadequate, in any case, for the number of men involved" in the coming operation. The engineers withdrew before dawn, having secured three footbridges across the Matanikau. A fourth, strong enough for vehicles, would be deployed if the attack went well.

For 1/5, Nov. 1—All Saints' Day, began with a 4:30 a.m. reveille and an uninspired breakfast of coffee, jam, and "slum"—C-ration hash, eaten cold from the can on the front lines. As they wrapped up their repast and shouldered their weapons, an artillery barrage—nine batteries of the 11th Marines—ripped through the air overhead. Wildcats and Warhawks winged

by, strafing the ground ahead with machine guns and cannon fire. A flight of 19 B-17s droned westward to drop bombs on Kokumbona. As the last shells rumbled overhead at 6:30 a.m., the first 1/5 Marines stepped onto the sturdy pontoon bridge, tramped across, and disappeared into the foliage on the other side. Within an hour, the entire regiment, from lead scouts to command post, was west of the Matanikau with all hands heading for their assigned sectors. The Japanese, shocked or strategically silent, did not contest the crossing.

Major William K. Enright, two weeks into his tenure as skipper of 1/5, had a 1,500-yard front to cover en route to Kokumbona, wide enough for two companies to advance abreast. He sent Captain William Kaempfer's Co A to the right flank along the beach—making them the rightmost Marine unit of the operation—and assigned Capt Robert Shine's Co C to cover his left flank. Co B, under Capt Walter S. McIlhenny, constituted the battalion reserve. In keeping with standard operating procedure, each of Enright's rifle companies had a platoon of heavy machine guns—personnel from Co D—attached for the operation. These Marines sweated and struggled under the weight of water-cooled M1917 Browning machine guns and their requisite parts: weapon, tripod, water can, and as much ammunition as they could carry. Private Vincent Tortorici recalled how, on the morning of the assault, his section leader “added about eight new men from Co C to our squad to help carry the ammunition boxes.” With close contact anticipated, combat efficiency outweighed company loyalty.

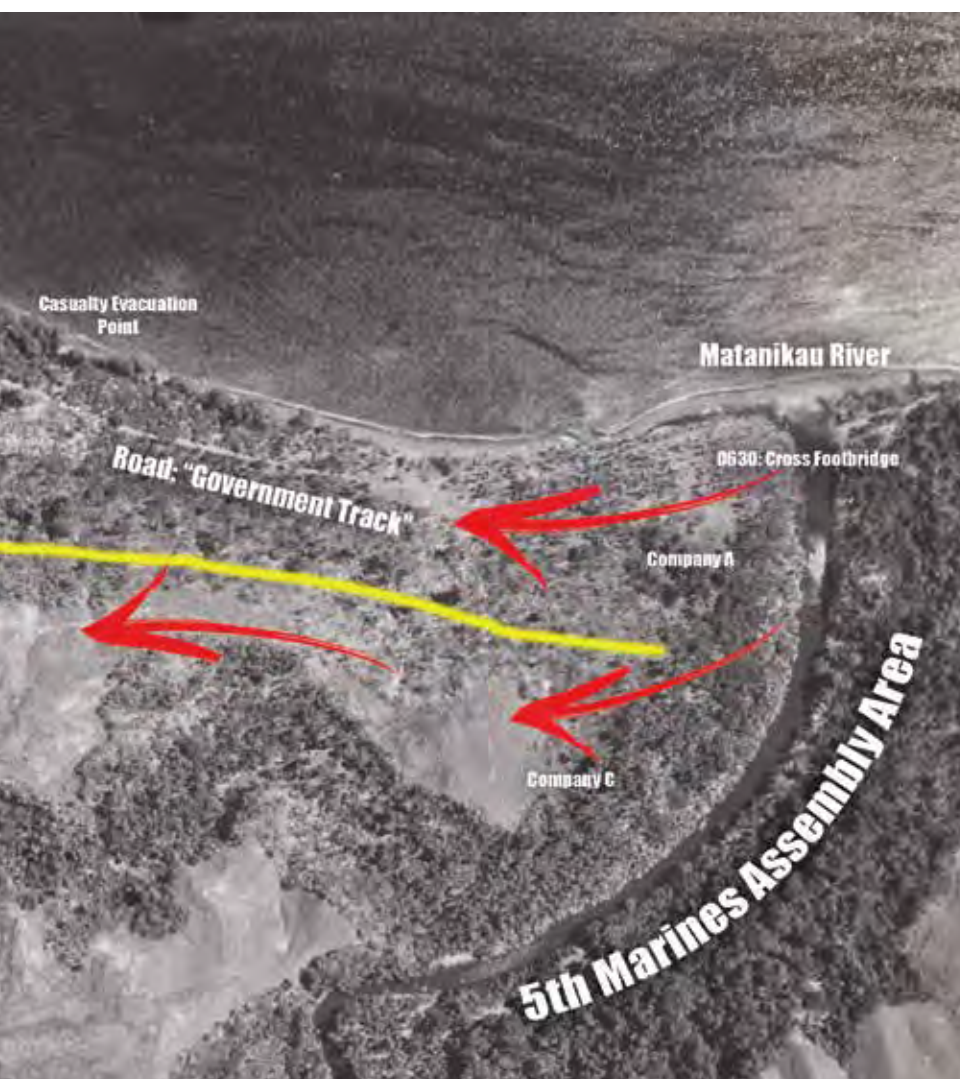
Tortorici's section leader, Corporal Anthony Casamento, was known for solid thinking under fire. The native New Yorker, still two weeks shy of 22, had two years of service under his belt; with this experience, he could lead multiple machine guns in a billet technically above his grade. Today, Casamento had two squads led by Corporals Lewis R. Robarts and Michael E. Shaner under his command. He did not concern himself with the larger tactical picture. “The Japanese had a big gun up on a hill. We called it ‘Whistling Pete,’ and it was giving us hell,” he related. “We had a job to do.”

Although focused on the task at hand, a premonition weighed on Casamento's

Japanese dugouts were almost undetectable for the Marines of Co A due to the brush and debris from the surrounding jungle.



CPL ERNEST A. MATTHEWS, USMC



U.S. NAVY SOUTH PACIFIC PHOTOGRAPHY INTERPRETATION UNIT, WITH MODIFICATIONS BY AUTHOR

mind. “Somehow, just as we cross over the bridge, something comes into my mind. It’s the funniest feeling. My time’s up, I think. Right now, today.” He confided in Shaner. “Nuts,” declared Shaner, “you wait and see. You’re too lucky.” Casamento’s section fell in with Co C and began scaling the slope of a long ridge designated Hill 78.

To the right, Co A passed the burned-out hulks of Japanese tanks and moved through what little remained of Horahi, commonly called “Matanikau Village” by Marines. It was a familiar sight to the veteran outfit. “We called it a village, but Matanikau wasn’t more than eight or a dozen native huts, each with a thatched roof and walls of palm fronds and branches woven together,” commented Ore Marion of L/3/5. “This cluster of huts sat on the landward side of a little dirt road no wider than a good-size kitchen table.”

This path, known grandly as “Government Track” or “Beach Road,” passed for a main thoroughfare on Guadalcanal’s northern coast and was heavily used by both sides during the campaign. By November, “between the trucks, the tanks,

Although focused on the task at hand, a premonition weighed on Casamento’s mind. “Somehow, just as we cross over the bridge, something comes into my mind. It’s the funniest feeling. My time’s up, I think. Right now, today.”

and the artillery fire that had crunched over the area, there was no longer a village of Matanikau, and there never would be again. It had been pulverized.” The way ahead looked no better, torn as it was by weeks of fighting and freshly cratered by the morning’s bombardment. Still, it was “slow going,” according to Pvt Baumann, whose squad accompanied Co A. “Seen plenty of dead Japanese on the way.”

For the time, fortune seemed to smile on the 5th Marines. The 2nd Battalion

maneuvered through some complicated terrain but managed to reach their assigned section of the first objective (O-1) line right on schedule. Farther to their left, the Whaling Group—a conglomerate of 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines, and Colonel William J. Whaling’s hand-picked scout snipers—covered hundreds of yards of thick foliage without notable incident, positioning themselves to protect the assault and advance on the Japanese flank if needed. A handful of defenders broke cover to snipe at Co A, but the preparatory bombardment effectively neutered opposition along the beach. Private Baumann deployed his machine gun “about 1,000 yards” from the Matanikau, secured after a brief exchange of fire, then continued westward for another thousand yards. Here, the Japanese had better positions. “We were in jungle along river [probably a stream just west of Point Cruz], came across Japanese emplacements made of coral rock,” he wrote. “Natural camouflage couldn’t see them until about 5 feet from them. Little firing here, not much. Moved over across road and artillery opened fire on us. Some of the fellows were wounded here.” Nevertheless, Co A secured its position on O-1 by 10 a.m.

The Massacre

Co C was making good time along the open ground atop Hill 78 when everything fell apart. Second Lieutenant David Harold Crosby Jr., had command of the point platoon of C/1/5. The 24-year-old Pennsylvanian was one of the best-educated men in the regiment, if not the Marine Corps: in addition to a bachelor’s degree from Juniata College, Crosby had earned a master’s in sociology from USC. He had a reputation as a calm, intelligent, and considerate leader who could “dreamily contemplate upon man and woman, the sea, the sky, or on the soft fragrant night air” in one moment and accompany his platoon scouts on patrol the next. Crosby was the only son of a widowed mother and had been married for just over a year; his thoughts naturally trended toward “home and peace,” according to fellow officer Gerald Armitage. Yet Crosby was not content to send his scouts anywhere he would not go himself.

Armitage recounted the scene:

“The position of the line assigned to [Co C] extended across a stretch of grassy hills, thick matted ravines, and jungle . . . Dave was—as usual—at the head of his platoon with his scouts and runners. They came down the nose of a grassy hill and started to work their way through the deep undergrowth of the flatlands below [where] a man camouflaged cannot be

seen a half dozen yards away. The ... Japanese, masters at concealment, had organized a defensive line in the wild, tangled undergrowth, expecting a solid line of men to advance against it into an ambush without even realizing the presence of the line. But Dave, wise to their deceptions, was carefully feeling his way, with his capable scouts, to prevent such an ambush to his own men and the hundreds of men behind him."

A Japanese sniper fired too soon; one of Crosby's Marines returned fire and scored a killing hit. As if on signal, the Japanese line opened up with "a withering barrage of fire." Although outnumbered and outgunned, Crosby "began to coolly direct" his scouts into a position where they could fight back but was killed as he rushed a camouflaged antitank gun. "David's men, berserk with sorrow at the loss of the leader whom they idolized, managed in the face of that hell to drive past the spot where he was slain so that they could recover him," wrote Lieutenant Armitage. "They immediately attacked the enemy position but could not get close enough to assault it. These boys were also killed; the only man who safely returned was the runner Dave had sent back."



COURTESY OF TONY CORRIGGIO

PFC Joseph Corriggio

As Crosby's men fought to extract their fallen leader, 2ndLt David Claude Cox hurried to report to Captain Shine. The operations order for the assault provided—unusually, according to historian John Zimmerman—for officers to direct artillery and mortar fire on ravines or streams suspected of harboring the enemy. Shine instructed Cox to take charge of a mortar section firing on the Japanese

For two hours on the morning of Nov. 1, 1942, C/1/5 endured a hell of fire the likes of which few other American units experienced on Guadalcanal.

emplacements. Cox, a South Side graduate of the University of Chicago, sought a vantage point to spot his targets and was killed moments later. Another platoon leader, 2ndLt John Wisdom Holland, was shot through the shoulder and severely wounded but refused medical treatment while his men were under fire. Three key officers were out of action in minutes; all received Silver Star Medals for gallantry, though only Holland lived to wear his.

Corporal Casamento, meanwhile, was getting his guns into the fight. Hill 78 appeared as a bisecting ridge to the advancing Marines; Casamento sent Shaner's squad to the left while he accompanied Roberts' squad on the right. "We were to meet up together again when we cleared the ridge we were on, before advancing to the ridge [Hill 84] directly in front of us," recalled Private Tortorici. "Corporal Shaner's squad wasn't out of sight more than five minutes when our squad came under heavy machine-gun and rifle fire." Casamento sighted a spot for the gun, directed Roberts to deploy, and ran directly into a crossfire from two Japanese positions. The assistant gunner, Pvt Michael Ciavarelli, was severely wounded; Roberts and gunner Pvt Joseph Seymour received mortal wounds, and PFC Joseph Corriggio died instantly. Japanese mortar rounds sang down, flinging Private Tortorici 30 feet in the air. The temporary ammo carriers borrowed from Co C were all killed or wounded. An entire machine-gun squad was hors de combat—and a heavy Browning could mean the difference between survival and defeat.

Shrapnel dug into Casamento's leg; "it burns like anything—but I'm so excited I hardly notice it." He flung himself down behind the Browning. "I picked up [Roberts]. He was sure hit bad all right. He'd been shot right through the stomach. I picked him up: he tried to say something to me, then he died right in my arms. His mouth suddenly began to gush blood, his eyes started to



1STSGT ABRAHAM FELBER, USMC

Marine mortarmen drag a "Cole cart" along a narrow trail near the Matanikau River. During the attack on Nov. 1, 1942, the Marines of Co A bombarded Japanese emplacements with mortar fire.



USMC

A Marine mortar team camps a few feet in front of where this photo is captured. Thick vegetation offered excellent concealment for Co A Marines and Japanese enemies.

stare, without winking, and I knew he was dead.” He could hear his buddies pleading, “Help me, Tony, oh God, help me,” but crawled to the machine gun instead. “I didn’t give a goddamn. I lost my head, I guess; all my friends were shot, and I was going to take revenge. The shells were booming and kerplunking all around, the shrapnel was whistling, the Japanese were yelling, and it was a plain madhouse.” Firing all but blind, Casamento took out one of the enemy positions, but “they stitched a design of bullet holes in me.” Figuring he was as good as dead, Casamento ordered Pvt Ciavarelli to head for the rear to report the situation and get corpsmen for the wounded. “Casamento told me he was done for anyway because he was so badly wounded and he would try to hold on long enough to cover my retreat to the rear,” recalled Ciavarelli. With Tortorici’s help, the wounded messenger reached the relative safety of the lines. Casamento was left all alone.

The 5th Marines’ message center lit up at 8:40 a.m. with a simple notice: “C/1/5

receiving MG fire.” Twenty minutes later, a report noted “heavy MG and mortar fire,” followed by “hit hard from front ... request help from 1st Bn.” At 9:45 a.m., a breathless runner arrived with a written note from Captain Shine: “Hit hard. Many casualties. Need assistance. Right front in woods MGs. My position on ridge—also woods to left front MGs. Request directions of assistance.” Colonel Merritt Edson dispatched halftracks and 37 mm guns to assist his beleaguered 1st Battalion, but these weapons could not reach Co C on the steep slopes of Hill 78. Edson sent 1/5 a message giving coordinates of the regimental aid station and simultaneously directed the 1st Battalion’s reserve—Co B, with attached machine guns—to Shine’s position.

For two hours on the morning of Nov. 1, 1942, C/1/5 endured a hell of fire the likes of which few other American units experienced on Guadalcanal. The 7th Company of Major Masao Tamura’s 4th Infantry had planned their defenses well, digging sturdy bunkers out of coral rock and expertly camou-

flaging their positions. Any Americans who approached would be trapped in a jungle-choked ravine: relief or retreat could only happen by crossing the steep, bare western slope of Hill 78, exposed to flat trajectory fire from Hill 84. Japanese mortars and artillery dropped along the ravine and ridge, and concealed field pieces ripped through foliage and flesh at point-blank range. Their patience and preparations paid off as Crosby’s platoon melted away.

By order or by general assent, Co C recoiled from the vicious positions in the ravine. Crosby’s survivors fell back to the ridge, bearing the body of their fallen leader. Pvt William Frank Seiverling of Drexel Hill, Pa., staged a one-man counterattack and charged down the barren slope, blazing away with his Browning Automatic Rifle to cover the platoon’s reorganization and withdrawal. Seiverling then ran a gauntlet of fire to assist Holland’s platoon, “killing several Japanese before he, himself, was hit by machine-gun fire.” Bleeding heavily, Seiverling opened fire on the enemy gun

and silenced it before heading for safety. He was too late: another Nambu chattered, and the 22-year-old Marine fell to the ground, never to move again.

Not far away, Corporal Terrence Joseph Reynolds Jr., another Pennsylvania Marine, was writing his name in the history books. "Terry" was a fanatical athlete, and his buddies all knew his dearest ambition was to get his name on the sports page of a major newspaper. He came close on the baseball diamond and closer still as a boxer but never quite clinched a championship. On Nov. 1, 1942, the sportsman showed his true mettle. As Co C made its "temporary organizational withdrawal," Reynolds picked up a light Browning machine gun and waded into a Japanese attack, firing from the hip and blunting the enemy thrust. He was shot down moments later, still well forward of friendly lines. Seiverling and Reynolds were both posthumously decorated with the Navy Cross.

These heroics bought time for Co C to withdraw and reorganize about 250 yards short of the O-1 line. Sensing an opportunity, Tamura's men counterattacked through the ravine. Sergeant Carl Weiss, who had already knocked out an enemy emplacement with a grenade, directed the fire of his machine guns against "the infuriated Japanese" who charged up the hill with fixed bayonets. When a wounded Marine rolled down the slope into the crossfire, Weiss crawled through the spitting bullets and dragged the man to safety. The sergeant would also receive the Navy Cross—posthumously, as he was killed in action the following day.

On the northern slope of Hill 78, Tony Casamento clung to his position. Bullet wounds ran from his instep to his ear; a round passed through his neck, and the corporal used his shirt as a makeshift bandage. Japanese troops crept towards the gun and began throwing grenades and insults. "Retreat, Marine!" they shouted. "Tojo says you must die!" Casamento, "mad as hell," jumped up and danced "like a crazy man," challenging the Japanese to get him. His curses came out as a breathy whistle: the bullet through his neck clipped his vocal cords. "I know if I pass out, those goddamn Japanese will rush up, grab my gun, turn it around, and start mowing down our own men about 100 yards behind me." Grenade shrapnel smashed his right hand. Unable to load his machine gun, Casamento first tried to pick up a rifle, then Robarts' sidearm, but his strength failed. Finally felled by concussion "like the kick of a mule," the corporal began to lose hope.

"I can't budge. Every time I try, it hurts all over. It's getting so I can't see

"It's getting so I can't see things very well. I'm waiting to die, but I don't want to die. ... but what worries me is that gun. Any minute they'll be here and train my own gun on the fellows behind me ..."

—Cpl Tony Casamento

things very well. I'm waiting to die, but I don't want to die. I keep thinking of my mother and father, and how close it is to Christmas ... Any minute I figure the Japanese will be there and stick me, but what worries me is that gun. Any minute they'll be here and train my own gun on the fellows behind me, and they'll raise hell with us, and our boys won't know what it's all about—one of their own guns shooting at them."



CPL ERNEST A. MATHEWS, USMC

Japanese dugouts on Guadalcanal were made from coral and cocoa palm leaves.

Casamento could barely make out a figure moving toward him, bayonet at the ready.

It was a Marine. Co B had arrived.

Second Lieutenant Maurice Raphael was appalled at the carnage atop Hill 78. Japanese fire had ripped a hole in the line between companies C and A; Raphael's platoon of Co B filled the gap. "As we were moving across this hill that was covered with dead and dying men, I came across this body all covered with blood," he said. "My men had bayonets on their rifles and were ready to bayonet this 'thing,' when all of a sudden, I recognized Casamento. I cried out, 'My God, Casamento, what have they done to you?' He

was a bloody mess, and he did a lot of jabbering about the Japanese and his men, crying about losing all of them. Empty rounds of MG ammo were all over the place." Raphael pulled out his aid kit and bandaged the worst of Casamento's many wounds, helplessly muttering, "Don't you worry, fella, don't you worry." Incredibly, Casamento survived his ordeal; in 1980, he received a long-overdue Medal of Honor.

Raphael tried to make sense of the slaughter as his men carried Casamento to the rear. He recognized many of the battered bodies personally: Raphael had served as a Co C platoon leader for months and led some of these men in combat before transferring to Company B on Oct. 1, 1942. Each fallen figure was like a punch in the gut. "Saw Ausili die," he wrote in his diary. "Louis Kovacs was dead but still warm, Harland Swart, Carlson, Potocki, Doucette, Waterstraw ... everyone was dead ... shot to hell and back. It was the saddest and most awful

sight I've ever seen in my life. I saw Jack Holland, leader [of] 2nd Platoon, shot in the shoulder. Henry Loughman was shot in the groin and died ... I found Crosby's body ... poor fellow, he never knew what hit him."

Second Lieutenant Richard F. Nellson commanded the machine-gun platoon attached to Co B. "I went forward to reconnoiter for suitable machine-gun positions," he reported. "I saw Casamento at his gun position. All of his men and those of C Company in his sector were dead or wounded. Casamento was riddled by small arms fire but was still at his gun." It was evident that Casamento's courage prevented Japanese troops from



COURTESY OF DAVE HOLLAND

An observation post atop Hill 78 near where Cpl Casamento's squad fought on Nov. 1, 1942.

scaling the ridge and dropping flanking fire onto Co A on the flats below. Next, Nellson and his runner found Cpl Shaner's machine gun. "It was in a shell hole, but both [the] gunner and his assistant were dead," Nellson continued. "We put the gun out of action and returned to our lines. Shaner's gunner had not had time to fire a full belt before he was killed." As Co C treated their wounded and calmed their nerves, Captain "Tabasco Mac" McIlheney's men pushed forward down the ridge and into the ravine, finally securing their section of the O-1 line at 11:30 a.m.

Impatient officers at Division Headquarters wasted no time in issuing new orders: in one hour, all units were to press on to the O-2 line, a half-mile beyond Point Cruz. By now, it was clear that the Japanese facing 1/5 had no intention of retreating to Kokumbona; instead, they were determined to defend a strong position near the base of the Point. This "pocket" was soon surrounded by Marines, but, unfazed by the prospect of death, the defenders contested every step with the massive arsenal at their disposal. Companies B and C crossed the stream marking the O-1 line, but Major Tamura's men fought so desperately that the Ma-

rines made no more headway. The two sides traded blows in a bloody jungle brawl, fighting each other to exhaustion while trying to gain a tactical advantage.

Co A had slightly better success along the coast and managed to advance about 800 yards. They also ran into determined defenders—in this case, Japanese artillery positions supported by entrenched infantry. As the machine gunners deployed, Private Baumann saw his buddy Private Thomas C. White moving out ahead of his squad, pistol in hand. "Seeing [a] trap, he turned to get back to his gun," recalled Baumann. "Was shot then. Bullets went in [White's] back and came out chest. White died in about two minutes. No aid available." Minutes later came the order to withdraw—just a hundred yards back, giving mortars room to fire. Baumann, the assistant gunner, was responsible for carrying the dismounted Browning. "I picked up [the] gun, put it on my shoulder and start[ed] back, suddenly I got a terrific whack on the back of my head, knocked me down," he wrote. "MG went flying. Didn't know what hit me. Placed my hand on back of head and saw it was full of blood." Pharmacist's Mate Wesley Haggard bandaged the wound and sent Baumann toward the

beach to await evacuation by boat. He was shocked to see so many men from his company "in a bad way" on the beach. "Bonin, Kapanoske, Whalen, Wells, and others . . . Few of our boys were killed. In all, D Company caught hell." Co A fought on until catching the sound of vehicle motors approaching along Government Track. Fearful of a tank attack and with their left flank in the air, Company A gave up its gains and returned to the O-1. Despite all the chaos, only two A/1/5 Marines—Privates Charles H. Ludwig and John Monaco—died during the day's fighting. The exact number of casualties among the attached machine-gunners is not known.

There was little sympathy for 1/5 at Division Headquarters. As early as 10:30 a.m., senior officers debated replacing the battalion on the front line with a unit from the 2nd Marines, but Lieutenant Colonel Merrill Thomas (D-3) resisted; he would not molycoddle what he considered a sub-par outfit. "They've had too much of that," he grumbled. That evening, "it was learned that 1/5 has not yet even passed O-1," noted Lieutenant Herbert Merillat. "Much disgust at headquarters . . . 1/5 will never get anywhere, D-3 officers say, and 3/5 wouldn't



Corpsmen bring back a wounded Marine from the front lines on Guadalcanal. Forty-one Marines from 1st Bn, 5th Marines died during the fight on Nov. 1. (USMC photo)

do any better.” In reality, the battalion had given a good account of itself on a challenging assignment. On Nov. 1, 1942, Major Tamura’s battalion “vanished.” The 7th Company, which caused so much havoc at Hill 78, could muster barely a dozen men by nightfall, and his other companies were in tatters. It would take two more days and five Marine companies to wipe out the Point Cruz pocket. Three hundred and fifty Japanese soldiers were killed, and Marines captured three field pieces, a dozen antitank guns, and 30 machine guns. “Impatience at the CP with the performance of the 5th Marines shows the gulf that often divides a division staff from officers and men on the front line,” admitted Merrillat.

The Body Count

While it seems that 1/5 gave better than they got, their casualty report was staggering. Twenty-five Marines were wounded on Nov. 1 alone, while 41 were either killed outright or died of wounds suffered in action. The unusual ratio of killed to wounded speaks to the close-up savagery of the fighting. Twenty-seven

of the dead were from C/1/5: no other Marine company suffered so many fatal casualties in a single action during the entire Guadalcanal campaign.

Among the dead were Robert M. Eastburn and Matthew J. Kirchner, high school classmates and neighbors from Riverside, N.J., who enlisted, trained, and fought side by side. Pvt Frank W. Lawton of Springfield, Mass., joined up with two buddies from Technical High School; Robert Burdick and Edward Gray were left to mourn his loss. Pvt Austin W. Pollock Jr.’s demise made the Kentucky newspapers: he killed five Japanese soldiers, reports claimed, before running into the line of fire to cover his sergeant. Pvt Anthony Antonoglou endured years at an infamous Florida reform school; he attacked an abusive teacher and opted to join the Marine Corps to avoid prison time. Privates Theodore Potocki, William Zeigler, William Hall, and Arthur Doucette died before reaching their 18th birthdays.

Nov. 2 was a day of dramatic action at the Point Cruz pocket, culminating in a series of bayonet charges by 3/5—

the only such attack by Marine units on Guadalcanal. Meanwhile, 1/5 faced the unwelcome challenge of disposing of dozens of dead men. Extreme heat exacerbated the problem: temperatures reached the triple digits, straining American ability to supply their fighters and evacuate the wounded, let alone arrange transport for the fallen. As a result, 30 of the 41 men killed in action were buried in the field at a point “about 400 yards west of Point Cruz [and] about 600 yards inland from the sea.” The Marines had every intention of returning for the bodies—but two days later, American forces withdrew to the Matanikau in response to a perceived threat from Koli Point, far to the east. All of the ground taken was back in Japanese hands. It would take another few weeks of hard fighting to regain the territory—and the front lines would freeze along the Nov. 1 O-I line until the very end of the campaign.

It is surprising, therefore, that 23 of the 30 field burials are still unrecovered. No other battle on Guadalcanal resulted in so many field burials in a relatively

small area—and American troops occupied the location for months—yet there are no known reports of Marine or Army personnel even noticing the graves, let alone making attempts to retrieve remains, even after the battle ended. The first graves were rediscovered in March 1944: Pvt Pollock (Co B), Cpl Reynolds (Co D), Sergeants Louis Kovacs and Harland Swart Jr., and Pvt Albert Ausili (Co C) were exhumed by Army Graves Registration and reburied in the island's military cemetery. Cpl William F. Wheeler (Co C) was discovered in 1945, and Pvt Lawrence Keane (Co C) was found in an isolated grave during a post-war search. The rest have vanished.

The story of Merton Taylor provides a clue to the others' whereabouts. As a member of C/1/5, Taylor survived the All Saints' Day debacle but saw four friends cut down around him. He witnessed their burial, which "necessarily consisted simply of placing the fallen comrades in foxholes, covering them with stones, and marking the graves with tiny sticks and bayonets." Taylor swore to make sure his buddies got "a decent burial," but malaria forced his evacuation from the island days after the battle. After attending intelligence school at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, he returned to the island in September 1944 as a member of the

29th Marines. Naturally, Taylor visited the cemetery—where he was evidently told in error that his buddies were not there.

According to the Marine Corps *Chevron*, Taylor went looking for the spot where he thought the graves to be. "It wasn't as easy as he expected. The ridge, bare of growth when he was there before, was now covered with dense brush," reads the article. "For two days, he searched

While it seems that 1/5 gave better than they got, their casualty report was staggering.

every inch of the ridge. Then he found a rusty bayonet splitting a stick to form a crude cross ... then a second cross, the third, and finally the last."

A press photographer snapped Taylor pointing out a marker to an Army Graves Registration officer, 1stLt John L. Stewart. The story is moving, but problematic: Taylor and Stewart arrived on Guadalcanal months after Kovacs, Swart, and Ausili had been reburied in the cemetery, and no other 1/5 remains were found while either man was on the island. Whomever Taylor found was not his

combat buddies; indeed, the photograph may have been staged and the story enhanced. A compelling kernel of truth remains, though. It is highly likely that the missing dead were initially buried in foxholes where they fell instead of a regulation field cemetery.

Today, the National Parliament of the Solomon Islands sits atop the site where Tony Casamento's squad fought their final battle. Roads and residences run through the ravine, and the creek marking the O-1 line has vanished beneath the city of Honiara. Under these buildings, singly or in small groups, lie the remains of the 1st Bn, 5th Marines—forgotten victims of a hard-fought victory.

Author's note: Special thanks to Dave Holland for his contributions to this article, and Colonel Pam Baumann, USMC (Ret) for permission to publish extracts from her father's diary.

Author's bio: Geoffrey W. Roecker is a researcher and writer based in upstate New York. His extensive writings on the WW II history of 1st Battalion, 24th Marines, is available online at www.1-24thmarines.com. Roecker is the author of "Leaving Mac Behind: The Lost Marines of Guadalcanal" and advocates for the return of missing personnel at www.missingmarines.com. 🇺🇸



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Leatherneck Laffs



"Sounds like 'The Marines' Hymn.' "



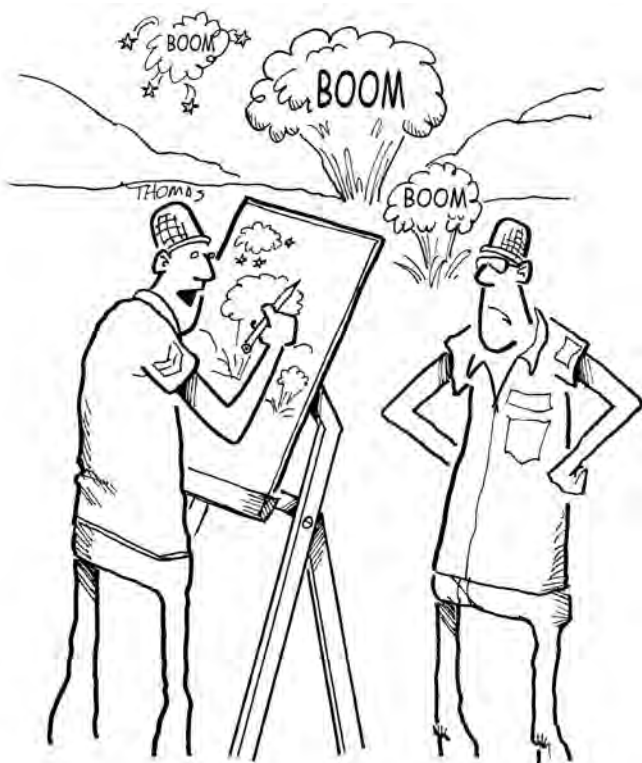
"On the bright side,
I can use the same target tomorrow."



"Here's your 24-hour duty excuse, Marine."



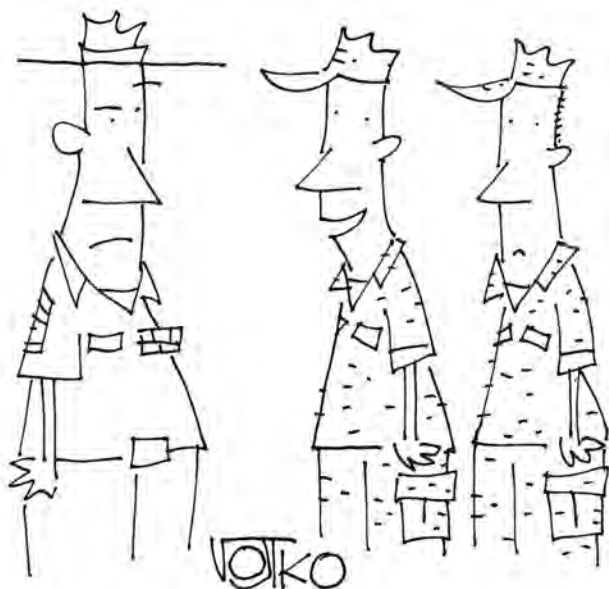
"I left you some hair on top
so you don't scare your mom."



"But Sir, you're the one who said to draw enemy fire."



"I don't think I'm yelling enough."



"So, Gunny, what did the Halls of Montezuma look like?"



MARSOC strongly objected to Maj Remington's use of "Raiders" in naming his efficient group of clerk typists.

Keeping the Heritage Alive:

Museum Docent Shares His Experience With New Sergeants

By Kyle Watts

Noncommissioned officers (NCOs) perform one of the most critical functions of the Marine Corps. They serve as the first line of leadership in every small unit and can make or break the officers over them. In combat, the significance of their role expands greatly as they make decisions with immediate impact on the lives of their Marines.

Active-duty personnel and civilians on Marine bases around the world dedicate their full-time efforts to the professional military education (PME) of up-and-coming NCOs. In Quantico, Va., the College of Enlisted Military Education enjoys the benefits of their proximity to the National Museum of the Marine Corps and all the resources it can offer.

One of the most important resources comes from the experience of docents who volunteer their time to help preserve the history on display and educate the public. Ronald Echols has served as a docent since 2008. He left the Marine Corps as a second lieutenant in 1968 after four years of service. At first glance, his lowly rank and time in service may seem unremarkable, but for those who know him, Ron's time on active duty proved an action-packed whirlwind of combat, leadership challenges and, ultimately, a battlefield commission. As a result, today he helps lead a portion of the PME for new sergeants during their four-week primary course.

"I try to explain to them that caring for the Marines under them is the most important thing they've got to do," Ron said. "It's like being a parent. All of them are now in charge of somebody and they've got to take care of them. I have the students for about 45 minutes, and it always makes me feel good to feel like I'm giving something to these young Marines."



REBECCA JACKSON

A docent at the National Museum of the Marine Corps talks with an active-duty Marine during one of the numerous PME's conducted at the museum by the volunteer staff.

Baptism by Fire

Ron joined the Marines in 1964 at the age of 18. He received selection for sea duty and spent two years aboard ship before joining the 2nd Marine Division rifle team at Camp Lejeune, N.C. He made sergeant in less than three years, and in June of 1967, deployed to Vietnam. Assigned to "Mike" Company, 3rd Battalion, 26th Marines, Ron endured his baptism through fire in short order. The battalion operated in the northern part of South Vietnam along the Demilitarized Zone. Through the summer, several Marine units were bloodied and nearly wiped out by the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) near Con Thien. 3/26 arrived in September for their turn in the melee.

The battle opened on Sept. 7. Ron's company witnessed their heaviest action three days later.

"We had four tanks, two Ontos, and a battalion of Marines," Ron remembered.

"Who is gonna mess with a battalion of Marines and all that armor? Well, the 324th NVA Division attacked us. Within 15 minutes, we had one Ontos left, and the tanks were blown all to crap. It was raining artillery on us. For seven and a half hours, it was on, with hand-to-hand and everything."

At one point during the battle, Ron pushed forward with his Marines. A punch to his face temporarily stunned him before he surged ahead again.

"He's hit!" screamed one of Ron's Marines.

"Who's hit?" Ron yelled.

"You're hit!"

Ron discovered a splash of blood across his flak jacket increasing in size. He put his hand to his face and lowered it covered in red.

"Well, give me a bandage then!"

He continued fighting until the next day when he could be evacuated to the



KYLE WATTS

Above: This immersive exhibit at the National Museum of the Marine Corps allows visitors a glimpse into the world that SSgt Ron Echols and other 3/26 Marines faced during the siege at Khe Sanh.

Below: SSgt Ron Echols, left, and one of the Mike Co Navy corpsmen on Hill 881S during the siege at Khe Sanh. (Photo courtesy of Charles McCarty)





JOE DARRELL

As seen in a view from Hill 881S, this ridgeline several hundred meters away from the Marine positions proved a source of continuous enemy fire. Accordingly, it became the target of friendly airstrikes and artillery fire. The initial plume of an explosion can be seen bursting up in the center of the photo.

hospital ship. Doctors discovered a bullet entered his cheek near the mouth and exited the other side of his face in front of his ear. Miraculously, no bones or nerves were hit. A plastic surgeon went to work, and less than a month later, Ron returned to the front lines. He counted as one of 434 Marines from the battalion wounded in the fight around Con Thien where 55 had been killed. Due to the attrition his company suffered, Ron was appointed the platoon sergeant. He would hold the responsibility for his platoon for the rest of his time in Vietnam.

The remainder of 1967 proved mercifully less eventful for Company M as a whole. October and November held several significant events for Ron, however. He received a second Purple Heart during one patrol when an ambush caught them with mortar rounds. Shrapnel peppered his leg, but Ron completed the mission without evacuation from the field. Later, on another patrol around a U.S. Navy Seabees gravel operation called “the rock crusher,” Ron further increased his reputation as a bold and decisive leader.

Ron volunteered one morning to take

out a recon patrol of eight Marines, in place of a squad leader who typically led the daily tours around the perimeter. As they moved down a dirt road, friendly mortars suddenly exploded nearby over the crest of a distant hill. Ron grabbed the radio as the patrol found cover.

“What the hell is going on?”

“We’ve got a large group of Viet Cong in the open!” Replied a voice on the other end.

“Well, you’re almost on top of us!”

Sprinting figures appeared over the top of the nearby hill, holding AK-47s and heading directly toward Ron’s patrol. More followed behind the lead group. Even more sprinted up and over the crest behind them. Ron moved the radio back to his face.

“I see them! They’re coming over the hill right in front of me!”

“Act as a blocking force!”

Ron laid eyes on the seven other Marines of his patrol. At least five times their number of VC were already over the hill and coming on fast.

“Do you know who you’re talking to?”

Ron asked, presuming the voice believed

Ron was at the head of a company, or even a full platoon.

“Yes! Now act as a blocking force!”

Ron dropped the radio and ordered the Marines into a ditch alongside the road.

“Stay down! Nobody shoots until I do!”

The first group of enemy stopped alongside the road less than 20 yards away. They waited in the open as more VC poured over the hill. Within minutes, a group nearly 50 strong gathered by the road catching their breath.

“I swear to God, I do not know what made me do this,” Ron remembered recently. “I jumped up and shouted, ‘Stop!’ in Vietnamese and every one of them threw their hands straight up in the air. The only thing I can figure is that they had just gotten through being mortared like crazy and they thought they had run into some big unit, so they surrendered.”

The Marines led the group of prisoners to an open spot in the road and surrounded them as they lay on the ground. Ron radioed for immediate help. The closest available unit was a group of Australians.

“I don’t care who they are,” Ron advised. “We need help now!”

Mike Company veteran Charles Martin carried an 8 mm video camera during his tour in Vietnam, capturing incredible footage from Hill 881S, the Khe Sanh airstrip and various other locations. This screenshot from the video depicts a machine-gunner returning fire at NVA soldiers. "That wasn't some training evolution, that was a real firefight," SSgt Ron Echols said recently. "If I would have known at that time he was taking a video, I'd have grabbed that camera and stuck it where the sun don't shine!"



COURTESY OF CHARLES MARTIN



COURTESY OF CHARLES MARTIN

Left: In another screenshot from the video taken by Charles Martin, SSgt Ron Echols is shown carrying his favored pump-action shotgun. This portion of the video was shot immediately after Ron saved Martin's life by cutting down several NVA with his signature firearm.

A dust cloud soon formed in the distance as a convoy of Australian vehicles approached. The Aussies tucked prisoners into every nook and cranny of their trucks to transport their haul away. The Marines moved aside as the convoy sped off. As the engines faded into the distance, Ron turned to his stunned men.

"This patrol is OVER!"

They returned to base safely and found the platoon commander and company commander waiting for them inside the wire.

"Sergeant Echols," said the captain, "You come with me."

The officer immediately filed paperwork for Ron's meritorious promotion to staff sergeant. Less than three weeks later, with just over three years total in the Marine Corps, Ron received his promotion to staff sergeant. After Ron's elevation to platoon sergeant, several new lieutenants cycled through. Some were wounded, some were fired, but either way, the end result left Ron ultimately responsible. He excelled in his role as acting platoon commander to such an extent that existing and incoming officers deferred to him, and left Ron in charge of his platoon.

By the end of December 1967, 3/26 received orders to support the looming conflict at Khe Sanh. Ron and the Marines of Company M occupied a front-and-center role in the siege, positioned west of Khe Sanh Combat Base on Hill 881 South.

Marine defenses on 881S spread across two distinct hill tops, separated by a low saddle in between. Company I, 3/26, occupied the higher hilltop. Two platoons from Mike took over the lower side. Ron arrived with his Marines and found basic defensive positions carved out of the hill by its previous occupiers. He immediately ordered his Marines to dig deeper. They placed multiple layers of concertina wire outside the trench line, designed to funnel any oncoming enemy into the Marines' machine guns. Ron directed his platoon to complete their defensive barriers with a tall, barbed wire fence immediately outside of their trench line, preventing any approaching enemy from jumping into the trenches. The Marines spaced mines and claymores around the entire perimeter. When they ran out of claymores, Ron found an abundance of detonators remaining. He improvised by filling empty ammo cans with spent rifle brass and explosives lining one side, then connected a detonator as a homemade anti-personnel device. Ron directed his men to save their empty C-ration tins and place several small rocks inside. The lid was then bent over a strand of the perimeter wire, creating a noise-making early warning device.

"I don't even remember who our platoon commander was, but I remember Ron" said Charles McCarty, Ron's radio-man for the duration of the siege at Khe Sanh. "He was doing everything a platoon commander would do. There was this old comic book character called, 'Sgt Rock,' and that's what we used to call Ron, because he was hard as a rock."

As days turned into weeks on the hill, the trench line surrounding Mike Company evolved from a shallow ditch to a six-foot-deep channel, lined with sandbags and bunkers dug underground. Ron insisted on underground shelters, as their position proved a favorite target of NVA artillery and rockets.

Incoming of some sort hit 881S every day. Snipers kept the hill continually under fire and observation. Another hill less than a mile away, designated 881 North, acted as a NVA stronghold and observation post. Nobody knew exactly what enemy strength 881N housed. Marines patrolling that direction suffered numerous casualties without successfully reconnoitering the hill, included a com-



DOD

Above: Air Force B-52 bombers routinely conducted “Arc Light” strikes around Hill 881S during the siege at Khe Sanh. The power and devastation of these attacks left the Marines on the ground in awe.

Below: Bombs from a friendly airstrike throw up dirt in a valley between Hill 881S and a nearby ridgeline. Bomb craters can be seen across the ridge as well, from which NVA soldiers harassed the Marines on a daily basis.



JOE DARRELL

pany-size movement by Company I on Jan. 20, 1968. The Marines on 881S became increasingly exhausted under the constant threat of attack.

U.S. air power afforded the garrison its best chance of survival. The Marines called in air strikes on any suspected enemy position. On one occasion, a sniper harassed Mike Co for several days. Finally, Ron had enough. He grabbed a pair of binoculars and kept watch over the area where the rounds originated until, finally, incoming shots gave away the sniper's position. He found the sniper perched high in the fork of a tree branch.

"Ron saw him and he says, 'well, I can take care of that,' " remembered Charles Martin, a squad leader in Ron's platoon. "Ron called in jet. That thing circled the tree one time and came in from the back side. The sniper was climbing down when a bomb hit the base of the tree and blew it in a million pieces."

A ridgeline several hundred meters away from 881S proved a continual source of incoming NVA artillery and rifle fire. The ridge was close enough that individual enemy soldiers were easily seen moving around. Despite its close proximity, B-52 "Arc Light" strikes rained down continuously across the ridge.

"Have you ever seen video of an arc light?" asked Charles McCarty. "To this day, when I say the word, 'arc light,' I get chills."

Marines who knew what to look for might spot contrails high in the sky, signaling the coming devastation. For those unaware, the bombs fell out of nowhere. A line of explosions suddenly plumed up at one end of the ridge and worked their way across. As the explosions continued, the sound of the falling bombs, followed by their explosions, reached the Marines in a deafening roar. Shockwaves tossed the hill beneath the Marines like an earthquake. Finally, after three B-52s emptied their bomb bays of nearly 30 tons of ordnance per aircraft, nothing but a barren landscape remained.

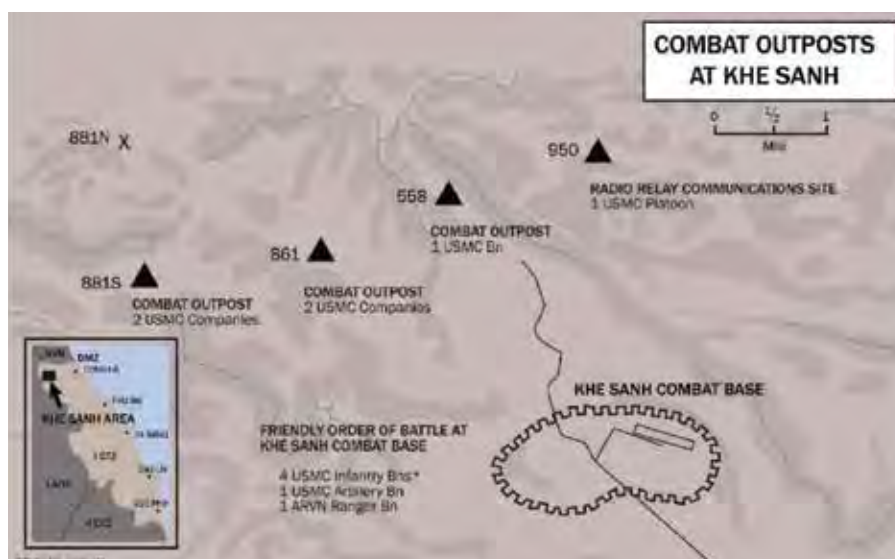
"B-52s hit that ridgeline every day," remembered Ron. "They told me on the radio to have the men get in the bunkers, put their fingers in the air, and hold their mouths open. They hadn't dropped one that close to friendly troops before. I cannot begin to describe the noise. The whole hill was shaking like we were on a ride at the fair or something. There were big rocks falling out of the sky and I thought someone would be killed. It was just unreal."

Despite the impressive show of air power, the NVA dominated the hills and



JOE DARRELL

Above: A CH-46 touches down at Hill 881S, delivering critical supplies and extracting wounded. The "Purple Foxes" of HMM-364 provided much of the support for Marines on the hill.



USMC HISTORY DIVISION



COURTESY OF CHARLES MARTIN

In this screenshot from Charles Martin's video, a stream of Marines can be seen rushing into the back of an aircraft still running on Khe Sanh airstrip. In the video, immediately after the plane is loaded and takes off, an artillery round strikes the runway.



JOE DARRELL

Left: Marines from SSgt Ron Echols' platoon made the most of their time on Hill 881S. They expanded the trenchline surrounding the hilltop from a knee-deep ditch to a World War I-style passageway, taller than most of the Marines and with shelters dug into the side of the hill.

Below: SSgt Ron Echols on Hill 881S near Khe Sanh in February 1968.

Below: This view from Hill 881S shows the edge of Mike Co positions leading down the hill. Note the barbed wire placed as a last line of defense to prevent approaching NVA from jumping into the trenchline. The Marine standing outside the trench would not remain there for long, lest he become the target of enemy sniper or mortar rounds.



JOE DARRELL

jungle surrounding Khe Sanh. Hill 881S was inaccessible by land and could only be resupplied by helicopter. The NVA shot down several choppers attempting to resupply the Marines on 881S. Even so, the brave helicopter pilots, primarily from the "Purple Foxes" of Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 364, continued coming. Eventually, a "super gaggle" of jets and attack helicopters proved necessary to strafe and bomb the surrounding jungle to cover the resupply choppers.

The enemy threat, combined with daily fog and inclement weather, often prevented the Marines from obtaining the critical supplies they needed.

Harry W. Jenkins arrived at 881S as the new captain in charge of Company M, in March 1968. Jenkins, who later retired as a major general, was shocked by the conditions on the hill yet impressed by the level of morale and preparedness maintained. Dirty and bearded Marines in tattered clothing filled the trenches.



JOE DARRELL

He found several Marines with visibly decayed teeth.

"I asked the Marines where their toothbrushes were," MajGen Jenkins said. "They told me they were using them to clean their rifles. Under the circumstances, I couldn't argue. That's just one minor example, but things like that led to emergency resupply orders for any number of things. I just couldn't believe it. We had astronauts in space going around the moon, but we couldn't get toothbrushes to 881 South."

Ron rationed food and water among his platoon as critical supplies ran short. At one point, the Marines ran out of C-rations and went for nine days without food before a resupply finally made it into the hill. They spread tarps out over the ground each night, capturing the morning dew to save as drinking water. A mountain stream north of the hill tantalized the Marines. The flowing

sounds carried up the slope, but an unknown number of enemy in a parallel trench line stood between Mike Company and the water.

One day, while walking the perimeter, Ron heard movement outside the line, coming up the south slope. He shouldered his shotgun and prepared to fire. At the last second, three Marines appeared through the brush carrying full canteens. After Ron scolded them for being outside the wire and almost getting themselves killed, the Marines explained that they discovered a spring in a gully down the hill, where they had filled their personal canteens. Ron informed them the following day, they would be going back down to the spring with the rest of the platoon's canteens to draw water for everyone else.

By April, Marines on the hill grew exhausted. Lack of sleep, lack of supplies, and isolation pushed them to the brink. Continual bombardment by the NVA, without real opportunity to retaliate, created a high level of aggression. On April 14, 1968, Easter Sunday, the Marines of 3/26 got their chance to let their aggression out. The order arrived to finally oust the NVA from 881N. Ron's platoon advanced alongside Marines from Company K, down 881S to the base of 881N. A furious bombardment preceded their attack. Direct fire from 106 mm recoilless rifles on 881S soared overhead as the Marines advanced up the hill. Ron prayed none would fall short into the advancing Marines. The fight ended quickly. Six Marines died in the effort to take the hill. More than 100 NVA bodies littered the abandoned enemy emplacements. An American flag flew over 881N long enough to signal the victory to those observing from 881S, before the Marines backed down the hill once more and choppered out to Khe Sanh Combat Base. This Easter assault marked the end of the siege for Mike Co.

The battalion received a short respite following Khe Sanh. All too quickly, though, they returned to the front lines, attacking into a place ironically called, "Happy Valley," deep into the mountains Southwest of Da Nang during Operation Mameluke Thrust. The enemy remained determined to send Ron home in a body bag.

During one patrol in their new area of operation, Ron's platoon walked through chest high elephant grass. They spotted movement in the grass and Ron called the Marines to a halt. As everyone took cover, Charles Martin moved slowly around to a hill on the other side of the suspicious area and began working his way back. Ron gave hand signals directing Martin



COURTESY OF CHARLES MCCARTY

Cpl Charles McCarty arrived in Vietnam just days after the battle at Con Thien in September 1967. He became SSgt Ron Echols' radioman at Khe Sanh and remained by Ron's side in that capacity for the duration of the siege.

down the hill toward the area as he crept up from the opposite direction.

Throughout his time in Vietnam, Ron's weapon of choice was a pump-action shotgun. He shouldered it now once again as he approached Martin. Three Vietnamese soldiers suddenly popped up out of the elephant grass between Ron and Martin. One took off sprinting away from the Marines. Another opened fire at Martin. Martin unloaded a few rounds before a bullet knocked him off his feet. He fell to the ground gasping for breath.

Ron squeezed hard on the shotgun's trigger and pumped the forestock as fast as he could, instantly emptying seven shells into the grass. He rotated the gun on his shoulder and loaded more shells into the magazine tube. As he slid in a third shell, an enemy soldier appeared out of the grass with rifle raised. Ron shot him down, then continued up the hill.

"I could hear Ron running up the hill after he shot two or three more times saying, 'Marty, don't die on me, damn you! Don't you die on me!'" Martin remembered today. "He came up there and rolled me over and slapped me and said, 'Are you OK?'"

A quick evaluation revealed the bullet tore a hole through Martin's flak jacket but missed his abdomen. One enemy soldier escaped, and one lay badly wounded in the leg. The Marines found the third soldier dead in the grass, ripped apart by Ron's initial volley of shotgun blasts.

On May 29, Company M choppered into a newly cleared landing zone (LZ) in the mountains. Ron boarded one of the last CH-46s to depart with 11 Marines from his platoon.

"Once we land, ya'll need to get the hell off here!" the crew chief screamed to

Charles Martin displays his flak jacket, punctured by an enemy round, following the incident where SSgt Ron Echols saved him from three NVA soldiers.



COURTESY OF CHARLES MARTIN

The mural in the 881S exhibit at the National Museum of the Marine Corps recreates the view from the hill with stunning accuracy. From the India Co positions on the higher side of the hill, visitors can look down to Mike Company's side of the hill, where Ron can still point out his old bunker's location.



KYLE WATTS

Right: Active-duty Marines attend several professional military education events (PME) throughout the year at the National Museum of the Marine Corps. The museum tour and PME that Ron and other docents conduct for the Sergeants Course at Quantico has expanded to include other groups of active duty or reserve Marines, and even other branches of service.

Ron over the noise of the engines. "We've been taking heavy fire up there all day!"

As the helicopter approached the LZ, enemy bullets punched holes through the aluminum skin. Hydraulic cables across the entire roof of the interior caught fire and the bird plummeted towards the ground. Tons of small arms and mortar ammo brought in by previous flights remained staged in the LZ. The doomed chopper crashed directly into it and rolled on its side. Ammo began cooking off around the burning wreck. One Marine on the ground near the LZ was killed by flying pieces of the helicopter. Shrapnel stung across Ron's back, but miraculously, he and all seven of his Marines survived the crash and exited the chopper before it exploded.

Well-Deserved Commission



REBECCA JACKSON

Official recognition of Ron's role as a platoon commander finally came through in the last month of his deployment to Vietnam. In the weeks following Khe Sanh, Capt Jenkins submitted the paperwork for Ron to receive a battlefield commission. This distinguished achievement proved exceedingly rare during the Vietnam War. Numerous outstanding NCOs

were plucked from combat and sent home to attend Officer Candidates School and The Basic School as part of the Meritorious NCO Program. Others received a temporary commission that reverted at the conclusion of their deployment. An incredibly select few, however, skipped these training steps of the commissioning process, remained in combat, and re-

Veterans of 3/26 reunited at the National Museum of the Marine Corps in 2007. From left to right: Capt John J. Gilece, CO of Mike Co, 3/26, at Khe Sanh until he was shot by a sniper; 1stLt John T. "Tom" Esslinger, Executive Officer, then-CO of Mike Co following Gilece's wounding; SSgt Ron Echols; MajGen Harry W. Jenkins, USMC (Ret).

tained their commission as a permanent rank. Some famous names, such as the legendary Force Recon Marine Major James Capers Jr., are included in this tally. The rest are Marines such as Ron Echols, whose names, reputations, and combat exploits are known only to the Marines with whom they served.

In June 1968, Ron was called out of the field to receive a physical. Wondering why a physical was so important to call him away from his platoon, Ron was informed a physical was necessary for his promotion. In short order, the officers over Ron removed his staff sergeant chevrons and replaced them with the gold bars of a second lieutenant. The fact that Ron's date to leave Vietnam drew near mattered little. The promotion formally recognized the position he had held all along, through all the trying times his Marines endured.

Ron arrived back in the States the following month. Just four years earlier, he stood on the yellow footprints at Parris Island as a recruit. Now, he faced the end of his enlistment as a battlefield-commissioned officer with a combat distinguished Bronze Star and two Purple Hearts. A third Purple Heart for injuries received in the helicopter crash never came through. With a lifetime of experience far greater than his age of 22 might let on, Ron elected to leave the Marine Corps. Mentally, he had had enough.

Like many Vietnam veterans, Ron dove into civilian life after leaving the military and it was years before he reconnected with the Marines he fought beside. In the early 1990s, Ron began attending 3/26 reunions, and continues to this day. As he reflected back to his time in Vietnam, Ron realized his biggest regret; through all the combat and harrowing situations he and his Marines faced, he had never found the time to recommend any of his brave men for the awards they deserved for their heroism.

In 2007, the reunion group met at the National Museum of the Marine Corps shortly after it opened the previous November. The veterans of Khe Sanh found themselves transported back in time and airlifted to their old positions in the immersive exhibit dedicated to 881S. The mural surrounding the CH-46 ramp



COURTESY OF RON ECHOLS

recreated the hill with stunning accuracy, and Ron could immediately look down to Mike Company's side of the hill and point out where his bunker had been, and where some of his comrades had died.

"There is no question that there are Marines alive today thanks the superb leadership and attention to duty displayed by Ron Echols under the most trying conditions," said MajGen Jenkins today, who also attended the 2007 reunion. "He clearly is one of the best combat leaders I ever served with. Some of that experience is passed on today, as he is often called upon to speak to classes of NCOs and enlisted Marines in various courses at Quantico."

A Lesson in Leadership

Ron began volunteering at the museum in 2008. He and other docents began their work with the Sergeants Course at Quantico several years ago.

"Going to the museum is not technically a part of our curriculum, but by proximity, we take advantage of the museum and take the students over there," said Master Sergeant Christian Tetzlaff, the staff noncommissioned officer in charge of the sergeant's course in Quantico. "The docents are always energetic to help, and they take the opportunity to tell the students about events from their experience and background. Students are pretty impacted by them. It's real stories from real people who are from their heritage."

The museum tour comes during the "heritage" portion of the four-week long course. The curriculum covers battlefield case studies on places like Inchon and the Pusan Perimeter from the Korean

War. The trip to the museum provides students with a more tangible understanding of the events covered in the classroom. Anywhere between 30 to 70 new sergeants reap the benefits offered through museum and the docents' class. They begin with Ron in the theater, where Ron walks them through his time on 881S, and what it looks like to work "tirelessly to ensure the safety and well-being of his men," as is stated in his Bronze Star citation read aloud to the class. The students then proceed to other docents stationed around the museum to learn more from their experiences.

"For sergeants, this course is really about reinvigorating their core values," said MSgt Tetzlaff. "They are still sponges, trying to figure out what the Marine Corps is really all about and if they're staying for the long haul. They see representatives like the docents who have no real reason to keep coming to the museum and volunteering their time, other than the fact that they are proud of what they are a part of. Demonstrating that to these young Marines, they're going to look at these guys and think, 'they are so passionate, and so thankful for all their experiences,' knowing that they have experienced tough times," Tetzlaff said.

"These interactions at the museum are not little things. They are profound moments that embody our culture of, 'once a Marine, always a Marine.' A lot of young Marines might look at that and think it's just a cliché, but then they see it in action and see these docents volunteering their life to serve the betterment of the Marine Corps and keep our heritage alive. There is a lot of opportunity for reflection."



SGT RAMON GARCIA, USMC

Friends and family members of Cpl Charles McMahon Jr. and LCpl Darwin L. Judge attended the dedication of the Marine Security Guard Security Augmentation Unit's facility on MCB Quantico, Va., on July 28, 2023. McMahon and Judge were the last Marines killed in action during the Vietnam War.

MSAU Building Dedication Honors Marines Killed in Vietnam

On July 28, the Marine Corps Embassy Security Group named its Marine Security Guard Security Augmentation Unit (MSAU) building in honor of the last two U.S. servicemembers killed in ground combat during the Vietnam War.

On April 29, 1975, Marine Security Guards (MSG) Corporal Charles McMahon Jr., and Lance Corporal Darwin Lee Judge, from the MSG Detachment Saigon, were killed while

defending the U.S. Defense Attaché Office (DAO) at the Ton Son Nhut Airbase. Family members of both Marines were present for the ceremony, along with many Vietnam veterans and officials from the Department of Defense and Department of State.

"Charlie would always talk about how he wanted to join the Marines," said George Holland, Cpl McMahon's close friend, who addressed the audience during the ceremony. "You figure junior high, you'll have a lot of different op-

portunities, but Charlie stuck with it. That is what he wanted to do, and soon after he joined the Marines."

McMahon graduated from Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island. He then completed training at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., and became a military policeman. Holland talked about how McMahon wanted to be an MSG, the cream of the crop. McMahon applied for the MSG program, went to the school, and graduated in September 1974.

Lori Desaulniers, LCpl Judge's sister,



U.S. Ambassador Ted Osius speaks to the audience during the dedication of the Marine Security Guard Security Augmentation Unit memorial at the McMahon-Judge Annex at MCB Quantico, Va., July 28, 2023.

also spoke at the ceremony. She conveyed how much her brother loved scouting, starting out as a Cub Scout, and reaching scouting's highest level of Eagle Scout. Judge joined the Marine Corps and attended MCRD San Diego in 1974. After boot camp, he completed training at the School of Infantry Camp Pendleton and was designated a mortarman.

Desaulniers said, "During high school, he wanted to join the military. He wanted something tough, so he was debating on the Army Rangers or the Marines. In his short time as a Marine, he was glad to be one of 'The Few. The Proud. The Marines.'"

Ken Crouse, a former MSG of Detachment Saigon who trained with Judge at the MSG School in Class 4-75, also spoke at the ceremony. Crouse said, "their combined time in country was only 46 days; two young Marines serving their country, still being integrated into the detachment, and then killed."

McMahon and Judge died during Operation Frequent Wind, while defending DAO members as they coordinated the massive air evacuation from South Vietnam as Saigon fell into the hands of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA).

McMahon and Judge had been assigned to a two-man outpost situated at the northwest corner of the compound. They maintained this position under constant threat from harassing fire and infiltrators, as NVA divisions advanced. Their actions allowed the DAO to concentrate on coordinating the successful evacuation of thousands of people to safety on U.S. vessels offshore. During the pre-dawn

hours of April 29, the NVA launched an artillery attack, during which McMahon and Judge's position took a direct hit, killing them instantly.

The following day, after Operation Frequent Wind was completed, the U.S. presence departed. It was realized that McMahon and Judge had been mistakenly left behind. Diplomatic negotiations ensued, and in 1976, McMahon and Judge were brought home for burial. In their small hometowns in Massachusetts and Iowa, respectively, these two Marines

were honored by grateful families, friends and fellow townspeople.

Naming the MSAU building in honor of McMahon and Judge ensures their bravery and dedication to duty are also honored by today's Marines. This represents a fitting and lasting tribute that shares their legacy with future generations of Marines who will follow in their footsteps as MSGs.

Sgt Ramon Garcia, USMC

Navy Christens Ship Named After Marine Medal of Honor Recipient

The Navy christened the future USS *Harvey C. Barnum Jr.* (DDG-124) during a ceremony at General Dynamics Bath Iron Works in Bath, Maine, on July 29. Colonel Harvey C. Barnum Jr., USMC (Ret), received the Medal of Honor for heroism displayed during an action outside Ky Phu, Quang Tin Province, Vietnam in 1965.

The Honorable Carlos Del Toro, Secretary of the Navy, delivered the christening ceremony's principal address.

"I have always looked to Harvey Barnum as a personal mentor, someone whose judgement I value in all of my decisions and considerations, including in my current role as Secretary of the Navy," said Del Toro. "This man is among the most distinguished and accomplished public servants alive today. May we all be a bit more like him—and may the future USS *Harvey C. Barnum* carry forth his spirit and his story forever."

Serving with Company H, 2nd Battalion, 9th Marines, Barnum assumed



Col Harvey C. Barnum Jr., USMC, (Ret), namesake of the newly christened USS *Harvey C. Barnum Jr.* (DDG-124), was a veteran of the Vietnam War and recipient of the Medal of Honor. Barnum (middle right) attended the July 29 christening ceremony with Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro (middle left).

The USS *Harvey C. Barnum Jr.* (DDG-124) in Bath, Maine, at the christening ceremony on July 29. The ship was awarded on June 3, 2013, named in 2016, and the keel laid on May 21, 2021.



MCC SHANNON E. RENFROE, USN

command after the rifle company commander was mortally wounded. Grabbing the radio off the dead operator, Barnum strapped it on his back, called the battalion commander, and declared, “The company commander is down. I have the fight.” Rallying his troops, Barnum organized the defeat of the enemy force and the successful evacuation of the dead and wounded.

“What strikes me as Harvey’s most remarkable character trait is his humility—all who know him know there isn’t an ounce of self-importance in him,” Del Toro said. “He is kind. He is generous. He is down-to-earth. He is a true friend, a good man, and a Marine’s Marine. His whole life, he ‘has had the fight.’ And we are all better for it.”

Arleigh Burke-class destroyers are the backbone of the U.S. Navy’s surface fleet, providing protection to America around the globe. These highly capable, multi-mission ships conduct various operations, from peacetime presence to national security, and provide a wide range of warfighting capabilities in multi-threat air, surface and subsurface domains. These elements of sea power enable the Navy to defend American prosperity and prevent future conflict abroad. This is the

first U.S. Navy ship named after Barnum.

“I stand here before you today as a grateful American,” said the 83-year-old Barnum during the ceremony. “I’m grateful that I was born, grew up, and still live in the greatest country in the world. I’m grateful that I had the opportunity to serve this great country and wear the cloth of a United States Marine, as an officer of Marines.”

USN

SgtMaj Troy E. Black Appointed Senior Enlisted Advisor

Sergeant Major Troy E. Black was named as the next Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (SEAC). SEAC is the most senior enlisted rank in the U.S. military and serves as the chairman’s direct tie to the enlisted force.

Black will be the fifth SEAC and the second Marine to hold the rank. The transfer of responsibility ceremony is scheduled for Nov. 3. Black spent 35 years in the Marine Corps, attending recruit training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot

Parris Island, S.C., in April 1988. Most recently, he served as the 19th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps from July 2019 to August 2023.

Black served in Operation Just Cause, Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm and deployed numerous times to Afghanistan and Iraq. He began his career in the fleet as an infantry machine gunner serving in units from a fleet anti-terrorism security team company, to the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines, to the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit. He successfully completed tours as a drill instructor at MCRD Parris Island

(where he met his wife, Stacie), and at the Officer Candidates School, Quantico, Va. As a sergeant major, Black served with 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines, Combat Logistics Battalion 5, 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit, 1st Marine Logistics Group, and at Marine Corps Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

Black’s wife, Stacie, served nearly 21 years in the Marine Corps. She enlisted on Aug. 24, 1992, and retired as a first sergeant July 31, 2013.

Jim Garamone, DOD News



USMC

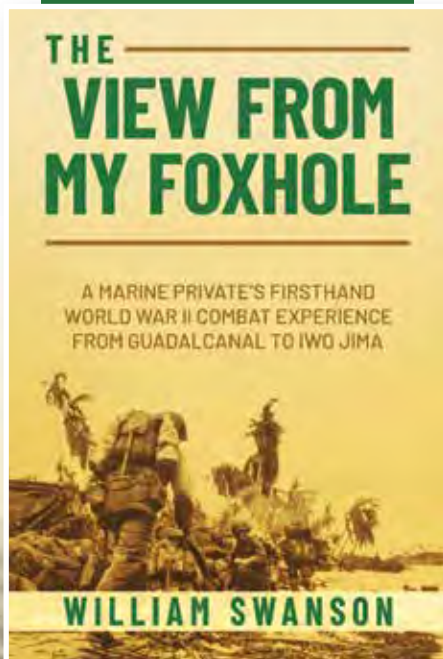
SgtMaj Troy E. Black

**STANDING TALL
DESPITE HIS STATURE—**
Standing at just 4-foot-7,
PFC Nathaniel Laprade was
a source of inspiration
for other, much taller
Marines during his time
at boot camp. Laprade
was chosen to wear the
Lead Series guidon for
“Hotel” Company, 2nd
Recruit Training Battalion,
Recruit Training Regiment,
Marine Corps Recruit Depot
Parris Island. Regarding
the training obstacles,
Laprade said “It showed
me that mounting the
obstacles wasn’t really
a challenge because of
my height, it just meant
I needed to push myself
to jump a little higher.”
Laprade graduated
from boot camp in
September and was
scheduled to go through
combat training at
Camp Geiger.



LCPL COLIN HARPER, USMC

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IF YOU LIKE WORLD WAR II MEMOIRS, **THE VIEW FROM MY FOXHOLE** BY WILLIAM SWANSON IS A MUST READ!

IT IS A MARINE PRIVATE'S FIRSTHAND WORLD WAR II
COMBAT EXPERIENCE FROM GUADALCANAL TO IWO JIMA.

The View from My Foxhole tells William Swanson's story of fighting in the jungles of Bougainville and Guam and the ash heap of Iwo Jima. Through it he maintains his sense of humor and thanks his lucky stars for every day he survives.

The book has received many great reviews including this one by Cynthia Kraack, award-winning author and co-writer of *40 Thieves on Saipan*:

"Twenty-seven months and three bloody Pacific Operation campaigns changed a young man excited about the adventure of foreign places to an experienced combat Marine survivor relieved to claim a seat on a magic ship stateside. William Swanson's firsthand account of life in jungle foxholes and ship bellies tells of the real life of those lucky enough to make it through another day of WWII in the Pacific: lack of food, water, safety, any kind of comfort. A combat Marine doesn't ask why, just does his job well. A good read written with a rare blend of practicality, authenticity, and humanity."





COURTESY OF KURT BARICKMAN

PFC Lupe Gasca



COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES

PFC Lupe Gasca (left) was assigned to a machine-gun team with Co B, 1st Bn, 2nd Marines, which was stationed near the coast of Betio Island, Tarawa Atoll, (above) during World War II.

SURVIVING TARAWA

Veteran Reflects on 80th Anniversary Of Operation Galvanic

By Patrick Reed

In November 1943, 21-year-old Private First Class Lupe Gasca waded slowly through chest-deep water, toward the small strip of coral clouded by dark gray smoke. Japanese bullets smacked the water to his left and right as he picked his way toward the only structure that looked as though it might offer some protection—a pier jutting out into the lagoon.

Eighty years later, the memories of that afternoon and the rest of his time at Tarawa remain fresh. His eyes fix on a scene that he still sees clearly in his mind. “I remembered two things I forgot to mention last time we talked,” Gasca said one afternoon in his Minnesota living room. “The heat, and the smell. The smell of death ... I can still smell it right now. I’ll never forget that.” Now 101 years old, Gasca is one of the

very last who remembers the battle for Tarawa.

Gasca joined the Marine Corps in 1942 from Albert Lea, Minn. The son of tenant farmers, Gasca’s young life was characterized by manual labor on farms during the Great Depression. He went to school on a part-time basis but frequented the local library and was especially enthralled by its collection of images of the First World War.

In the summer of 1934, Gasca had a chance encounter that would change the course of his life. While shocking wheat for a farmer, the farmer’s son returned home on leave from the Marine Corps. “He was wearing the khaki shirt with the blue trousers with the red stripe, and the white cap. And he sat and talked to us,” Gasca recalled. The Marine was serving on guard duty in Washington, D.C., and showed Gasca and the other children photos of himself in his dress blue

uniform. Gasca had also seen photos of trench warfare in the library’s collection. “I had seen these guys fighting in the mud and everything. So, when World War II broke out and they started talking about recruiting, I said ‘well, I’m not going to join the Army, I’m going to go in the Marine Corps, because I’ll get the easy job. I’m not going to be crawling in the mud like those other guys.’” Gasca did join the Marines, and after completing his training, was assigned to 1st Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, refitting in Wellington, New Zealand.

In November 1943, 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines moved from New Zealand to the New Hebrides to practice beach landings, and then finally into position a few miles off the coast of Betio Island. Gasca had been assigned to a machine-gun team of 1st Battalion’s Company B, under the command of Captain Maxie Williams. The 1st Bn was assigned to

Marines cross the seawall, moving in from the beach. Shortly after arriving for duty with B/1/2 in Wellington, New Zealand, Lupe Gasca boarded a landing craft to support the beach landing on Tarawa.



COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES

be the regimental reserve. Even so, at about 2 a.m. on Nov. 20, Gasca and the other Marines of B/1/2 filed into the ship's galley for their pre-invasion breakfast. Then they geared up, and after a long wait, Gasca climbed down the cargo nets and into the landing craft idling in the water below.

"It was just pitch dark as could be," he remembered. "I could see the shadows of the other ships, and some Higgins boats already making their circles. And just as I got down on the Higgins boat, I heard this funny whistling noise, right over the top of us. It was a shell! I'd never heard anything like that." As dawn broke, Gasca and his fellow Marines continued their long wait offshore in their landing craft, "circling and circling," as Gasca recalled. The plan was for the brand-new amphibious tractors, of which there were precious few, to create a shuttle service, taking waiting Marines from Higgins boats across the reef to the beach. If all went according to plan, 1/2 would follow close on the heels of the Regiment's 2nd and 3rd Battalions. "They said, 'they're landing and they're going to come back,' and so we were waiting for that 15 minutes it was supposed to take." Gasca

said. "It was hours before I finally got there."

As they waited, the water rough from the wakes of the other craft, Gasca heard more artillery. "The Japanese got our spot, and they were concentrating on our group" he recalled, imitating the noise of the incoming fire. "To my left—and I could almost see the shell!—their coxswain was hit and just disappeared." Gasca watched helplessly as the Marines in that landing craft were thrown about, becoming casualties before even reaching the island. Even when the tractors finally did appear to complete the shuttle process, loading from the Higgins boat proved chaotic. In the confusion, Gasca and his gunner, Alfred Lewis, were left behind in the Higgins boat while their ammunition carriers went ashore aboard the amtracs, separating them and leaving the two gunners with all of the ammunition,

in addition to the gun and tripod they were assigned to carry.

By this time it was about noon, and the lieutenant in his boat ordered the coxswain to take the Marines ashore instead of waiting for another amtrac. "The guy took off and went, but pretty soon, the thing hit coral. And then, the ramp went down. We were still about 200, maybe 300 yards from the beach. And we were very lucky that when the ramp went down and we started walking, the water was only up to here," Gasca remembered, drawing a line with his hand in the middle of his chest. "There were no holes. But what happened to some other people [and] tanks completely even—the ramp went down, and the unit went down. The Sailors dropping us off were just as green as we were, they didn't know." With their feet on solid coral, Gasca and Lewis began their long trek to shore. "When

"To my left—and I could almost see the shell!—their coxswain was hit and just disappeared." Gasca watched helplessly as the Marines in that landing craft were thrown about, becoming casualties before even reaching the island.

Marines had to maneuver through a beach littered with tin roofing material and other debris.



we got so far, Lewis and I looked at each other, and we headed for the pier.” The pier, a pre-war construction extending 1,000 yards into the lagoon to allow for commercial shipping, divided Red Beach 3 from Red Beach 2, and was neutralized in the morning by a scout sniper platoon under the command of First Lieutenant William Deane Hawkins, one of Tarawa’s Medal of Honor recipients. It offered slight protection for Marines on their harrowing journey ashore.

“We were walking, and we finally got along the pier. And every so often, they would spot us. But then they’d stop again, and they’d concentrate where there were a lot of guys coming in. So, we kept walking,” Gasca recalled. “At that time, I’m just hoping I don’t get hit. When I got off

of the Higgins boat into the water, there was no reason to be scared because there was nowhere to go but forward. Lewis and I weren’t even talking, we operated just on instinct.” The two Marines picked their way along the pier, careful on the rocks made slippery with the bodies of small fish killed by the concussion of the pre-invasion bombardment. Having made it to the beach, Gasca found chaos. “Finally at the end of the pier was this coconut wall. All I could see was the wall and the sand, and in the open area a bunch of junk. You could see fire, smoke and everything, and there were maybe 150, 200 guys there,” Gasca recalled. “Who they were, I don’t know. Lewis and I didn’t know anybody. But we knew that our unit was supposed to be to the

right, so we started heading that way.”

The two began to move along the wall, when suddenly Lewis was grabbed by an unknown Marine sergeant. “He said, ‘where the hell do you think you’re going? You can’t go over there! Look!’ and he pointed. And sure enough, there was just a layer of Marines, dead in what they call no man’s land.” Unable to locate anyone from their unit, Gasca and Lewis joined a platoon of Marines fighting from a section of Red Beach 2. “There was a bunch of debris, and I could see to the left the big bunker. I couldn’t see any of the enemy. They were underneath this debris and tin, and they could see us, and they were close,” Gasca recalled. “There must have been buildings there, because there were tin roofs on the ground, with



USMC

“ ... It was just like being in a pile of junk. And we just kept firing at the tin.” The two Marines remained there, only about 30 feet inland, firing at an unseen enemy until night fell.



USMC



COURTESY OF KURT BARICKMAN

Above: Machine-gunners fire on Japanese positions while fighting on Betio.

Left: Lupe Gasca draws a map of his path across Betio. The memories are still vivid for the 101-year-old veteran of the Battle of Tarawa.

coconut trees fallen over on top of them. It was just like being in a pile of junk. And we just kept firing at the tin.” The two Marines remained there, only about 30 feet inland, firing at an unseen enemy until night fell.

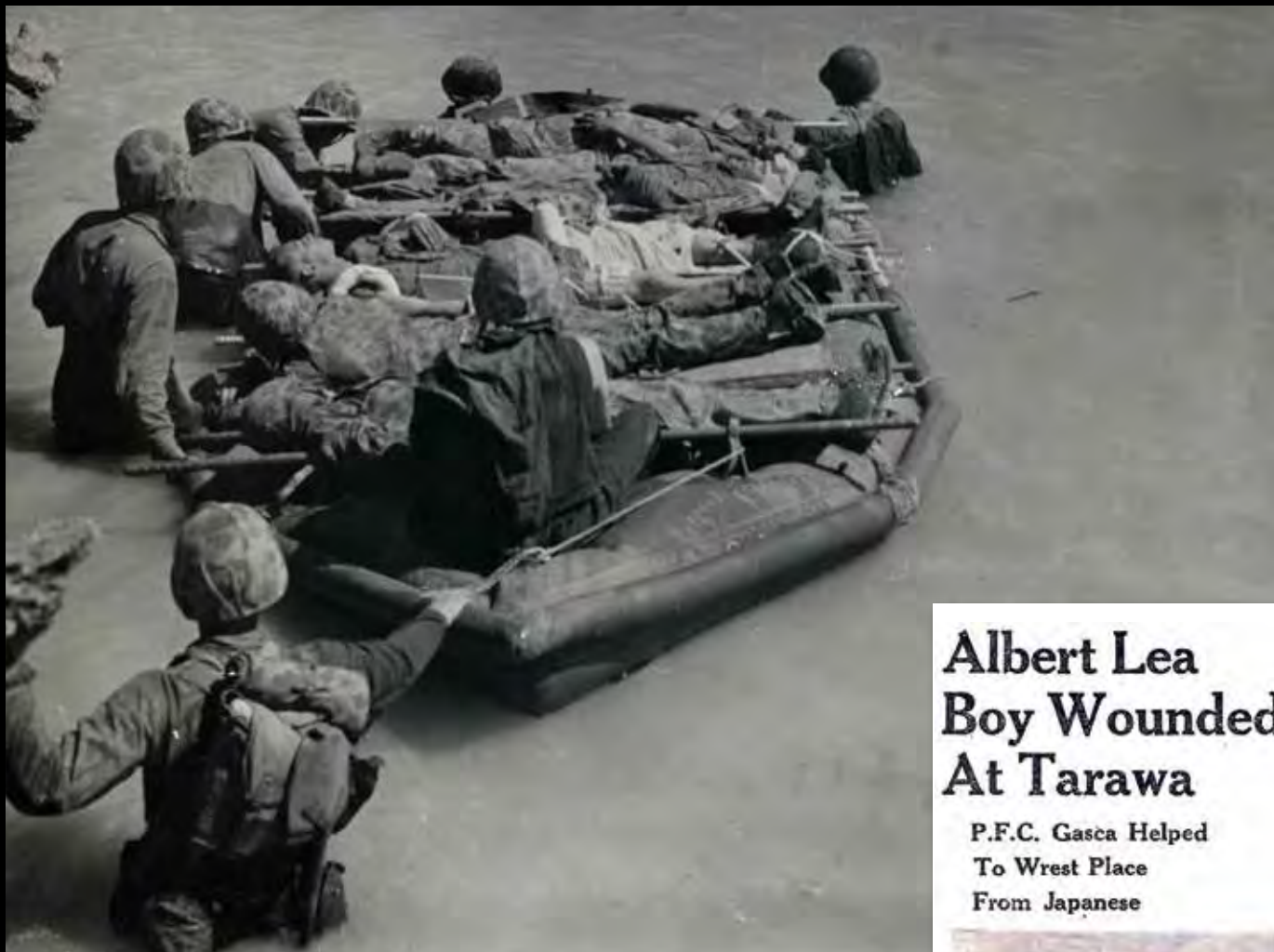
When daylight came, Gasca and Lewis continued moving towards where they believed Co B to be. Finally, at about midday, they found a Marine from their company, Wayne Barr. He told them that B Company was in a tank trap, located on Black Beach, across the narrow island. After waiting for an opportune moment to cross the gun-swept terrain, Gasca noticed four planes circling in the sky above. “Just like in the movies, the sun would hit the wings, and flash silver. And then they started coming down, they were

dive bombers. And I can recall telling Lewis, ‘when the other plane comes strafing, we’re going to take off,’ and so we did. We ran across, and I jumped into the tank trap and just about landed on top of Maxie Williams.”

They were greeted by laughter from the Marines in the tank trap, who told them that as they ran, Japanese bullets were hitting the ground right behind their feet. Barr, however, was not so lucky. “As he got up and took his first step, a bullet hit him right in the neck,” Gasca recalled. “We didn’t know what had happened to him, just that he had probably gotten hit, because he never came back.”

At long last having rejoined Co B, Gasca continued to fight his way across Betio. He and Lewis spent the day providing

suppressing fire for riflemen attempting to capture well-camouflaged and heavily defended fighting positions. “We couldn’t see anybody. They’d just tell us to fire, to pin them down while they were trying to go around a bunker,” Gasca recalled. “In one of those instances, the only guy that was there was our squad leader, by the name of [Private First Class] Arthur Wende. He was the only one from our squad, so he was directing us. There was a crater to the left of this bunker, and Wende said, ‘we can’t do anything here. I’m going to go to that crater, you keep an eye on me and I’ll give you the signal to move the gun to the crater, to fire on the other bunker.’ And he took off and ran to the crater,” Gasca said. “Just as he gets there—I can just see him—he



COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Above: Wounded Marines are evacuated from Tarawa via rubber boat. Lupe Gasca was one of the many wounded Marines transported from the atoll this way.

Right: A clipping from a local newspaper announces Lupe Gasca's wounding at Tarawa. (Courtesy of Kurt Barickman)

Albert Lea Boy Wounded At Tarawa

P.F.C. Gasca Helped
To Wrest Place
From Japanese



P.F.C. LUPE GASCA

Mrs. Marie Gasca of South St. Peter avenue received a message yesterday that her son, P.F.C. Lupe Gasca, 21, of the U. S. marines, was thrice wounded in the terrible battle of Tarawa in the Gilberts, where more than 3,000 marines were killed before they could exterminate the Japanese who were so thoroughly fortified in every conceivable place, on top of the ground as well as under the ground.



USMC

Corpsmen treat wounded Marines during the Battle of Tarawa. Lupe Gasca can't forget the sight of so many Marines lying on the beach.

“Just as I fired on top of the bunker—which was high and covered in sand and debris—about 20 guys came over the top! They were firing at us, and I spun my machine gun around and opened up.”—PFC Lupe Gasca

gets his head up above the ground. And I can see the bullet hit his forehead. He stayed like that momentarily, and then fell, and was killed. Just like that ... and I think that's the only time I didn't see Lewis grinning looking at me. And so we didn't budge, we didn't go. Otherwise, I wouldn't be here.”

The Marines continued fighting. An hour later, the two had another close call as a Japanese grenade landed next to their gun. It exploded, bending the receiver, but leaving the two Marines remarkably unscathed. The second day of battle continued for Gasca much as the first had. Even as incremental advances were made, the enemy was largely unseen and well-fortified. Occasionally, enemy emplacements would be passed with the thought that they were neutralized, only to present active resistance again later in the day from occupants who had survived previous assaults. Night fell on the second

day, with Gasca and his fellow Marines still inside the tank trap.

On the morning of the Nov. 22, the Marines in the tank trap again made plans to neutralize the bunkers in their area. Gasca provided suppressing fire, enabling the riflemen to locate the source of the Japanese returning fire and successfully neutralize the position. The tenor of the fight had changed, advances were being made. “People were more relaxed, some of them were walking around” (as opposed to crawling for fear of being hit), Gasca remembered. But the island was far from secure.

Co B continued their advance along the island's southern shoreline. “So now, it gets dark,” Gasca recalled. “We headed towards this other bunker, but there was no activity. Nobody shot at us. And so we got there, and made our dugout for the third night.” Gasca was standing watch, with his machine gun facing the water to

guard against possible infiltration from the sea. “At about 11 o'clock, I thought I saw some movement at this bunker. Now before it got dark, I hadn't seen any door there. But pretty soon, I saw a couple of other guys moving. I had a rifle right next to my machine gun, and I picked up the rifle and I fired. And I hit him.”

At once, it all broke loose. “Just as I fired on top of the bunker—which was high and covered in sand and debris—about 20 guys came over the top! They were firing at us, and I spun my machine gun around and opened up. I didn't even fire a belt, I probably only fired about 15 seconds. All the other guys opened up with rifles and BARs and everything,” he recalled. “And about the same time that I was doing this, a hand grenade landed to my left and killed some of the guys, and that's when I got hit. I felt warm from my legs, and tried to move, and I fell down. So that's when I got wounded. I'll never forget that.”

Gasca was taken to an aid station back by the tank trap, where he was patched up by corpsmen. The next morning, he was evacuated. “A jeep came over with a stretcher to take us, and they brought me back towards the beach, almost where I came in,” he recalled. “And the Higgins

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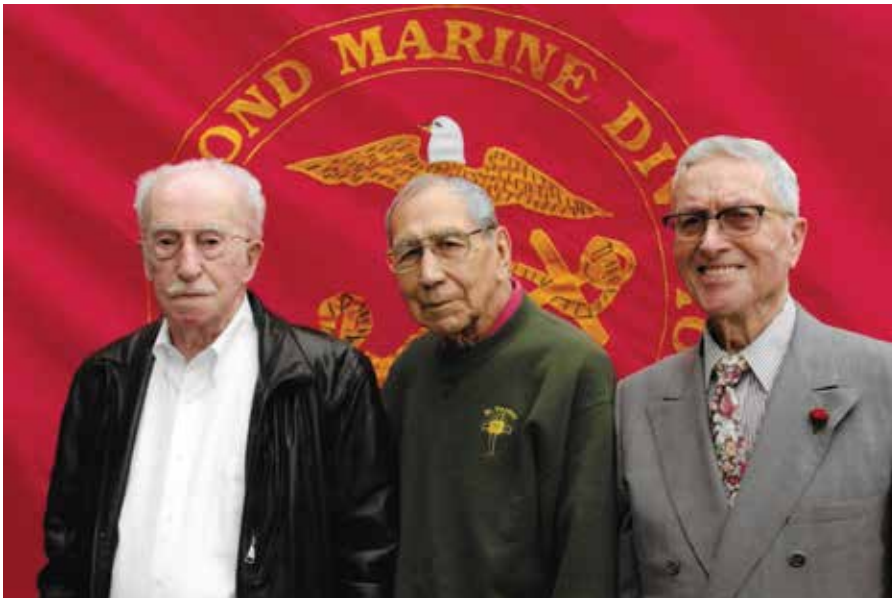
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COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES

To Gasca, the legacy of his involvement doesn't seem to loom large. "It's a long time ago, and you know, over the years I never talked about it. I came home and got married and raised a family, and we never talked about it."



COURTESY OF KURT BARICKMAN

Lupe Gasca, center, stands with other Tarawa veterans Tom Glynn, left, and Bud Benoit. Gasca maintained active memberships with multiple reunion organizations through the years.

boats still couldn't come in because there wasn't enough water. So they put me on a rubber boat and took me out to where it was deep enough for the Higgins boat." From there, the Higgins boat transported Gasca to the waiting ship. "The winch came down from the ship, and the guys in the landing craft put me in the wire basket. And I was just thinking 'gee, I hope these baskets don't drop.' It happened, you know, and you would sink."

Gasca made it aboard without incident and began his nine-day voyage back to Hawaii. Arriving at the hospital in Pearl Harbor, Gasca was greeted with a pleasant surprise. "The day I arrived in the hospital, I got into the [ward], and there he was, Barr! He was already walking, with a bandage around his neck. The bullet had gone through his neck, but he survived."

Gasca underwent procedures to remove

Left: Marines are loaded onto a troopship using a wire basket. Lupe Gasca was evacuated with others and treated for the shrapnel wounds in his leg before returning to fight in later battles in the Pacific.

the shrapnel from his legs—without anesthesia—and slowly regained the ability to walk. He recovered in time to rejoin B/1/2 and fought with them for the rest of the war, surviving the campaigns on Saipan, Tinian and Okinawa. As a part of the occupation forces, he witnessed firsthand the devastation in Nagasaki. Finally, in late 1945, he returned home to Minnesota.

The Battle of Tarawa remains a defining moment in the history of the Marine Corps. The brutality of the battle shocked the American public, and the images produced caused scandal. Nearly 3,500 casualties in just 76 hours was a bitter pill to swallow. Admiral Chester Nimitz, the commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet during World War II, said the battle, "knocked down the front door to Japanese defenses in the Central Pacific," and influenced American doctrine in amphibious operations to come. Eighty years on, remnants of the battle are abundant on Betio, and efforts continue to recover the remains of Marines still buried in lost graves on the atoll, PFC Arthur Wende among them.

To Gasca, the legacy of his involvement doesn't seem to loom large. "It's a long time ago, and you know, over the years I never talked about it. I came home and got married and raised a family, and we never talked about it. In fact, even when I got back to B Company right after the battle, we never talked about it," Gasca said. "But after so many years, I wondered—why did they do it like that?"

Eight decades later, Gasca is one of only a few left who fought on Tarawa. He doesn't see himself as a hero. "I just went and joined the Marine Corps because I didn't want to join the Army," he laughed. "But later on, I was proud."

Editor's note: Special thanks to Kurt Barickman for his assistance with this article.

Author's bio: Patrick Reed is a historian and graduate of Abilene Christian University. He has a particular interest in the Marine Corps and Marine Corps history, and travels to speak with World War II veterans about their experiences.





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SEA STORY OF THE MONTH

Marines in the “South Pacific”

In the late summer of 1957, I was serving as a platoon leader in 2nd Bn, 4th Marines, which was engaged in a 1st Marine Brigade training exercise on the island of Kauai, Hawaii. At the same time, a Hollywood studio was filming the movie “South Pacific.” At the end of the exercise, our battalion, along with several Sailors, acted as the audience while the film’s star, Mitzi Gaynor, sang and danced to the song “Honey Bun.” We were instructed to applaud, shout and whistle while she performed. We were there most of the day as the scene was shot and re-shot several times. Afterward, we were treated to beer.

When we returned to Kaneohe Bay, Gaynor spent an afternoon visiting the battalion. Her visit, complete with photos, was the subject of an article in the newspaper on base. The movie was released in 1958 and became a box office hit.

I suspect many other “extras” bought tickets hoping to be able to spot themselves in the movie. This proved to be a near impossible task. Although our scene was filmed in broad daylight, the cameramen took few close-ups of the audience and used filters which made it very dark on the movie screen. It was difficult to identify individuals, but at least we didn’t end up on the cutting room floor.

Col Richard H. Stableford
USMC (Ret)
Dumfries, Va.

Drunk on Duty

I was told that I had made a hilarious spectacle of myself, which at the time I didn’t think was at all funny. Now, all these many decades later, I have to agree. I *had* made a hilarious spectacle of myself. I had been in Korea for 14 months, six months as a battalion surgeon with the 5th Marines and eight months as the CO of a forward Navy/Marine hospital, “Easy” Medical

**“C’mon, Dib, cheer
up and have a drink.”**

**“You know I don’t
drink, Frank.”**

**“I won’t tell either
your wife or your
God!” So, I had a
drink. And a second
one—drank it like it
was soda pop. And
then as many more
as it took for me to
pass out.**

Company. I should have gone home after 12 months, but I was told that all the arriving Navy doctors were trained surgeons and were sent to Mobile Army Surgical Hospitals “because their need for surgeons was greater than the Navy’s. The same thing happened the next month, “For sure, next month,” Commander Ayres, CO of the four medical companies in the 1st Medical Battalion, told me! So, I was sitting in the officers’ mess on the second floor of a half-ruined farmer’s house, feeling very

sorry for myself. Dr. Frank Spencer sat down beside me, handed me a mug of sparkling Burgundy and said, “C’mon, Dib, cheer up and have a drink.”

“You know I don’t drink, Frank.”

“I won’t tell either your wife or your God!”

So, I had a drink. And a second one—drank it like it was soda pop. And then as many more as it took for me to pass out. When I awoke hours later, I was on my cot downstairs in my command post, a corpsman sitting on an artillery-shell packing box across the room. When he saw I was awake, he stood up, jammed his cover on his head, saluted smartly, and marched out without a word. I have no doubt that he burst into laughter when he was out of earshot! Laughing uncontrollably, three or four corpsmen had carried their drunk CO down to his command post where he would have been totally ineffectual if the Chinese had chosen that time to mount an offensive in our sector! I deserved at least a Captain’s Mast but either no one reported the incident to CDR Ayres, or he also got a good laugh.

LT Birney Dibble
Eau Claire, Wis.

A “Real” Marine

My introduction to Tehran, Iran, on my ride from the airport to the Marine quarters in April 1959 changed me forever. On the jammed streets, donkey-drawn carts waited side-by-side at stop lights next to fancy Jaguars; street vendors sold Kodak cameras, French cigarettes, Colgate toothpaste and Butterfinger candy bars from the same kiosk. The

Shah was still in power; Western goods were in vogue. Iranian women scrubbed clothes and washed vegetables in the jube—an open ditch of water—in front of penthouse apartments.

The Marine quarters, a two-story building shielded by an 8-foot-high wall, featured a swimming pool with tables and chairs under green awnings. Each of the 16 Marines in the detachment had private rooms.

The annual Marine Corps Birthday Ball was a highlight of the Tehran social season. Saturday nights, our well-stocked bar, large dance floor and continuous screening of American movies drew U.S. Army personnel; oil men and women from Aramco, the Iran-American oil company; and pretty, college-educated, idealistic young ladies employed by various American agencies.

We Marines provided security at five American facilities, working seven days a week, with shifts ranging from eight to 16 hours with one free day every two weeks. Logistics demanded we ensure our two Iranian cooks provided meals five times a day. Classified material burns took up five to six hours weekly. Personnel evaluations and inventory reports were required monthly. My tour was originally for 24 months, but the attachment and noncommissioned officer in charge had turned over three times, with my relief delayed. It was 42 months since my last leave.

June 15, my birthday, I was working a shift at the U.S. Embassy and I had

already had a very full day of tasks and duties. Wearing my dress blues, I greeted a woman who arrived at the embassy and seemed distraught.

"I'm an American citizen and taxpayer. I've got a problem. You speak English?"

"Yes, ma'am. I'm an American Marine."

She looked me up and down. "We have Marines in my country, too," she said.

I smiled, listened to her story, and escorted her to the appropriate office. Later, after her problem was solved, I wished her well.

She tapped my chest. "You want to see some real Marines? Come to Washington, D.C."

"A great suggestion. I plan to take you up on that real soon."

I meant every word.

Pete Peterson
Escondido, Calif.

A Nickname Not Understood

We Marines have numerous nicknames for people, equipment and other things. One I like is the nickname for the rifle: "Smoke-pole."

We all have served with Marines who lacked a bit of common sense. On Okinawa in 1975, a new second lieutenant checked into our unit. He was compared to a "rocket scientist" but lacked common sense.

One afternoon, the battalion commander called for an all officer and staff noncommissioned officer meeting. We all attended the meeting, which was about an upcoming battalion parade. The CO explained the overall plan, then turned the meeting over to the sergeant major to explain the details. The sergeant major went through every detail. At

The enlisted will wear the service 'C' uniform, a cartridge belt, canteen and first aid pack, and carry 'Smoke Poles,' said the sergeant major. Then he asked if there were any questions.

the end, he explained the wearing of the uniform and the equipment all Marines would fall out with.

"All officers and staff NCOs will be wearing the summer service 'C' uniform and equipped with a pistol belt and first aid pack. The enlisted will wear the service 'C' uniform, a cartridge belt,

canteen and first aid pack, and carry 'Smoke Poles,' " said the sergeant major. Then he asked if there were any questions. The young second lieutenant raised his hand and asked, "Sergeant major, will the troops not have rifles?" There were a few snickers, but we did eventually explain it to him.

CWO-3 Jack Wing, USMC
(Ret)
Apopka, Fla.

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

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New Option Now Available To Resolve CLJA Claims

The Department of the Navy (DON) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) announced the finalization and publication of a voluntary process, called the “Elective Option,” to help veterans and others more quickly resolve qualifying claims under the Camp Lejeune Justice Act of 2022 (CLJA). This option supplements other processes currently available under the CLJA, which remain in place.

The CLJA is a provision of Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act, which was signed into law on Aug. 10, 2022. The CLJA allows those who file claims and lawsuits to potentially recover for injuries caused by exposure to contaminated water at the Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., from mid-1953 through 1987.

Established jointly by DON and DOJ, the new Elective Option provides a framework for the DON to resolve certain CLJA claims quickly, equitably and transparently. In order to be eligible for the Elective Option, a claimant must first submit an administrative claim to the DON. To date, more than 93,000 CLJA claims have been filed with the DON.

The Elective Option allows the DON to focus its review on a few key aspects of a CLJA claim, such as the type of in-

jury alleged and the amount of time a claimant worked or resided at Camp Lejeune. Narrowing the scope of the review enables faster validation and, ultimately, extension of settlement offers. The Elective Option provides similar settlement offers to claimants with similar exposures and injuries with similar evidence of causation.

“The Elective Option is a critical step in bringing relief to qualifying claimants impacted by the contaminated water at Camp Lejeune, who will now have an avenue for receiving quick and early resolution of claims under the Camp Lejeune Justice Act,” said Associate Attorney General Vanita Gupta. “We are grateful for the continued partnership of the Department of the Navy and federal agencies in developing and administering this framework.”

“The Elective Option presented today should be of great interest to eligible Americans who seek a streamlined process to resolve their claims,” said Under Secretary of the Navy Erik Raven. “We recognize this takes a whole-of-government response, and along with DOD and DOJ, we are linked with Veterans Affairs and other federal agencies to support a fair and streamlined process. We are committed to ensuring that every valid Camp Lejeune claim is resolved

fairly and as expeditiously as possible.”

Within the framework, the Department of the Navy can make settlement offers to qualifying claimants with diseases that the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) has determined are linked to the chemicals found in the water at Camp Lejeune. Award amounts are tiered, largely based on the ATSDR’s classification of the strength of the evidence linking the contamination with a particular disease and the amount of time the individual spent at Camp Lejeune.

Tier 1 Diagnoses: Claimants with diseases for which the ATSDR has substantiated evidence of causation—kidney cancer, liver cancer, non-Hodgkin lymphoma, leukemia and bladder cancer—would receive settlement offers of \$450,000, \$300,000, or \$150,000, depending on whether the claimant was exposed to Camp Lejeune water for over five years, between one and five years, or between 30 and 364 days, respectively.

Tier 2 Diagnoses: Claimants with diseases to which the ATSDR has linked possible evidence of causation—multiple myeloma, Parkinson’s disease, kidney disease (end stage renal disease), systemic sclerosis/systemic scleroderma—would receive settlement offers of \$400,000, \$250,000, or \$100,000, depending on whether the claimant was exposed to Camp Lejeune water for over five years, between one and five years, or between 30 and 364 days, respectively.

Claims involving death would receive an additional \$100,000.

Payments under the Elective Option are not offset by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability benefits or VA medical care, and they do not impact ongoing treatment and support provided by the VA.

The Elective Option supplements other mechanisms for resolving claims currently available through the normal administrative claims or litigation processes. Claimants not eligible for the Elective Option may await finalization of their administrative claim or pursue litigation and engage in any broader settlement discussions occurring through court proceedings in the Eastern District of North Carolina.

DOJ will screen already-filed lawsuits and will extend settlement offers in qualifying cases that are similar to awards under the Elective Option.



LCPL CHRISTIAN AYERS, USMC

A geologist uses a tool to find vapors in soil samples to be tested for Per-and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) on Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., on Aug. 19, 2020. Frequent testing is done to ensure drinking water on MCB Camp Lejeune and MCAS New River is safe.



LCPL JUAN DIAZ, USMC

Maj Keith Lowell, Inspector-Instructor assigned to Detachment Delta Company, 4th Law Enforcement Battalion, Marine Forces Reserve, dressed as Santa Claus for students at June Nelson Elementary School in Kotzebue, Alaska, on Dec. 12, 2022. The Marines of Detachment Delta Co, 4th LE Bn, were responsible for distributing toys across the state of Alaska as part of the Toys for Tots program.

Those interested in learning more about the Elective Option should visit www.navy.mil/clja.

Individuals who think they qualify for relief under the CLJA can follow the instructions available on that site to submit a claim and provide requisite supporting documentation. There is no requirement to retain a lawyer to file a claim or subsequently pursue an expedited resolution. Claims that have already been filed with DON do not need to be refiled.

Department of the Navy



Toys for Tots 2023 Christmas Holiday Campaign Kick-Off

The Toys for Tots 2023 holiday campaign kicked off Oct. 1 and will run through Christmas Day. U.S. Marines and more than 40,000 volunteers will be conducting 850 local toy collection and distribution campaigns in all 50 states; Washington, D.C.; Puerto Rico; Guam; and U.S. Virgin Islands. The Marines and volunteers will be engaging with local businesses, media and individuals within their communities by collecting new, unwrapped toys and distributing those gifts to less fortunate children.

There are an estimated 12 million children living in poverty in the U.S. The mission of Marine Toys for Tots is to bring the joy of Christmas to them, with the goal of delivering a message of hope that will inspire youngsters to grow into responsible, productive and patriotic citizens. The objectives include having a positive impact on the development of children, creating or restoring self-esteem, and bringing all elements of communities together in a common cause each year.

Since 2020, Toys for Tots has partnered with organizations like Good360 to provide toys, books, and games to underprivileged children during special distributions outside of the holidays throughout the country. These distributions occur during the spring and summer months and provide children with toys and books that stimulate their young minds.

Toys for Tots' initiatives in 2022 included the expansion of the Toys for Tots Literacy Program, which provided 6.3 million educational and age-appropriate books to families with children and to Title I funded schools across the nation.

Toys for Tots also supports more children in need through its recently developed and evolving Foster Care initiative. In 2022, Toys for Tots was able to provide educational toys, books,

games, and school supplies to nearly 450,000 children in foster families. The Toys for Tots Native American Program also grew exponentially in its 75th year. Nearly 750,000 toys were provided to 200,000 Native American children. *(Editor's note: See the December 2022 issue of Leatherneck for Toys for Tots 75th Anniversary coverage.)*

The extraordinary support Toys for Tots received from the American public, corporate sponsors, and selfless coordinators enabled the organization to distribute an unprecedented 24.4 million toys, books, and games to 9.9 million children in need in 2022. For 75 years, Toys for Tots has provided year-round and holiday hope and magic to 291 million less fortunate children. The program continues to find avenues that extends our support even further, ensuring that hope and self-worth are restored to more impoverished children each year.

Toys for Tots is a 76-year national charitable program run by the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, The Marine Toys for Tots Foundation is a not-for-profit organization authorized by the U.S. Marine Corps and the Department of Defense to provide fundraising and other necessary support for the annual Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program. For more information, visit www.toysfortots.org.

Toys for Tots

Wreaths rest on headstones in Arlington National Cemetery (left) in Arlington, Va., and Miramar National Cemetery (right) in San Diego, Calif., in the 31st Wreaths Across America Day on Dec. 17, 2022.



SGT THERESE PRATS, USA



LCPL JOSE S. GUERRERO, USMC

Wreaths Across America Day Set for Dec. 16

This year, National Wreaths Across America Day will be held on Saturday, Dec. 16, at more than 4,000 participating locations across the country. There will be ceremonies held in every state. All National Wreaths Across America Day events are free and open to the public. This is a great event for families and youth involvement.

For readers interested in supporting the effort in their community, visit WAA's website www.wreathsasscrossamerica.org to find a participating location near you to volunteer, learn how to get involved, or sponsor a wreath for placement. Each sponsorship is \$17 and supports Wreaths Across America's year-round mission to remember the fallen, honor those who serve, and teach the next generation the value of freedom.

You can tune in to Wreaths Across America Radio, a voice for America's veterans, anytime or anywhere from your smartphone to learn more about those volunteers, military families and veterans participating in and being impacted by this important mission. Listen live at www.wreathsasscrossamerica.org/radio and via the iHeart Radio or Audacy apps.

Amber Caron, Wreaths Across America



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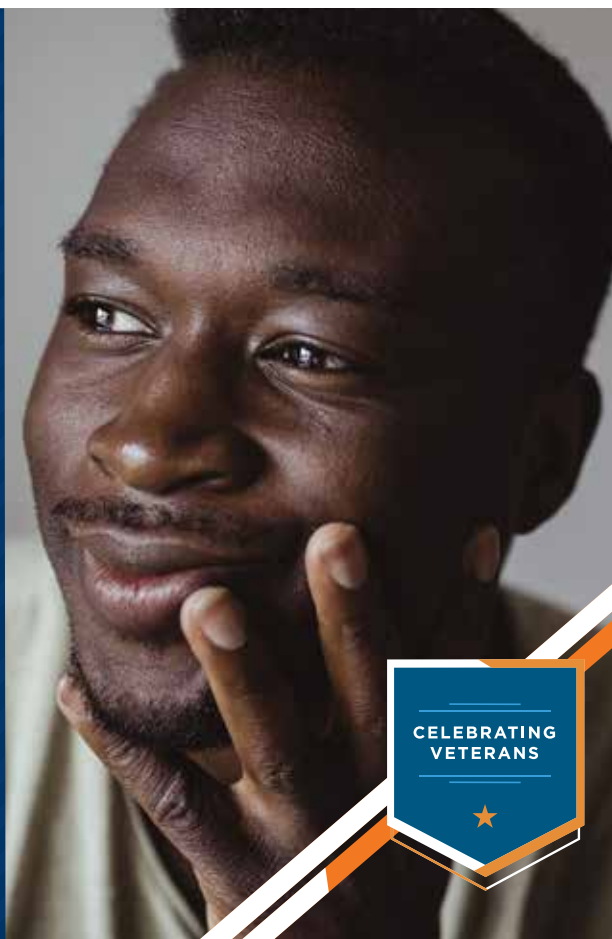
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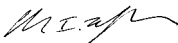
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Full Distance Brewing: A “Crossroads Connection”

By the *Leatherneck* Staff

Perhaps because of its large German immigrant community—his hometown was once known as “the beer capital of the world”—Meyer has had a love of beer and a vision for a brewery since his time in college.



WILLIAM TREUTING

The Brewer

Just off the southbound lanes of U.S. Route 1 in Virginia, 2 1/2 miles south of the National Museum of the Marine Corps, you'll find the Quantico Corporate Center. A short trip up the hill past the offices of Claxton Logistics brings you to the Merritt Business Park on the right. Tucked back into this unassuming industrial area is Full Distance Brewing—the only Marine Corps veteran-owned craft brewery in the Quantico/Stafford/Fredericksburg area.

FDB is unique in the craft beer community of northern Virginia and its Mexican-style lager, “Yucatan Sunrise,” has already won first place in the Virginia Craft Beer Guild’s 2023 Craft Beer Cup in the International Lager category. Impressive, considering they had only been open and operating for three months and this was their first time competing. Although, perhaps not surprising, given the backstory of FDB’s owner, veteran Marine infantryman, Captain Doug Meyer.

An Ohio native, Meyer entered the Corps through the Platoon Leaders Class program and was commissioned a second lieutenant in 1994 after graduating from the University of Cincinnati. Perhaps because of its large German immigrant

community—his hometown was once known as “the beer capital of the world”—Meyer has had a love of beer and a vision for a brewery since his time in college.

As a Marine, he served as a rifle platoon commander and the 81 mm mortar platoon commander in 2nd Battalion, 6th Marines. Always a storied battalion, Meyer served in the mid-1990s under commanders like (then-captain) Major General Austin E. “Sparky” Renforth, USMC (Ret) and 36th Commandant and 19th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General (then lieutenant colonel) Joseph F. Dunford, USMC (Ret). Drive, endurance and discipline, the hallmarks of these leaders, certainly made an impression on the young Lt Meyer. In his spare time, Meyer trained for and competed in marathons and triathlons including the Ironman—the “Full Distance” course of the swim-bike-run racing world.

After deploying to Okinawa, Meyer, like all other officers with Reserve commissions at the time, went through the selection process for a regular commission—known as “augmentation.” At that time, the augmentation rate was slim, and many officers faced the choice to either end their active-duty service or to accept a lateral move to another MOS that met “the needs of the Corps.” Meyer

chose the latter and became a 3002 supply officer, transferring to Marine Corps Base Quantico, where he was then promoted to captain. After serving in several supply and logistics billets in the base G-4, including operations officer and assistant G-4, a lieutenant colonel’s job, Meyer left the service in 2002. For the next 20 years, he worked as a defense contractor for the Department of the Navy.

On Memorial Day weekend of this year, Meyer realized his vision for a craft brewery. Years of service as a Marine, hard work, training, and racing require individual commitment and the support of family, friends and bosses. Meyer combined the commitment to overcome challenges with the passion for finely crafted beer, which has become Full Distance Brewing.

The Brewery

Most beer is roughly 95% water, and so the quality of this ingredient really determines the quality of the beer. The yeast, various malted grains, hops, and any other flavor additives like spices, herbs, fruits, etc. can only go so far to produce the intended style of beer. Meyer recognized this from the start and made a strategic investment in a solution. FDB



After serving in the Marine Corps and later as a defense contractor for the Navy for 20 years, former infantry Capt Doug Meyer founded Full Distance Brewing. Located in Stafford, Va., the business opened its doors in May 2023.

has something unique—one of the only Reverse Osmosis Water Purification systems among the breweries in this area of Virginia. What this means to non “beer geeks” is that the water can first be purified to remove unwanted chemicals like chlorine and minerals like salt, which renders a neutral taste profile that can then be “customized” to replicate the water of any regional style of beer by adding the right proportion of minerals back in. So, a German style Hefeweizen (unfiltered, or “cloudy” wheat beer) gets brewed with water that has an accurate “German” mineral profile. The same process can be used for any regional style of beer. Without this care for the brewer’s craft and investment in equipment, different styles of craft beer can taste alike and miss their intended style. The water makes all the difference, and therefore FDB’s various beers are both completely distinct from each other and authentic to their individual recipe’s style.

With the quality of the beer the top



Full Distance Brewing uses a Reverse Osmosis Water Purification system, which removes unwanted chemicals from the water during the brewing process.

priority, FDB also has solid production quantity with a five barrel brewhouse and a 50-barrel cellar capacity. Again, for non-beer geeks, a barrel is 31 gallons. The beer “keg” most of us are familiar with is actually a “half barrel,” or about 15.5 gallons. With less than four months in operation at the time this article is written, FDB has not started bottling/canning for retail distribution. However, plans are underway to partner with the National Museum of the Marine Corps and local restaurants to bring the product to the people.

The Beer

With Nov. 10 on his horizon, Meyer plans to celebrate the Corps’ 248th birthday with a signature beer. “We are working on recipes for a ‘colonial-style’ beer to coincide with the Marine Corps founding at Tun Tavern in Philadelphia while also honoring our home here in Virginia,” Meyer said.

Beyond great taste, to appreciate craft-

The name “Tun Tavern” refers to a “tun,” a barrel in the largest English brewery cask unit of measure: 252 gallons.

ing a beer recipe commemorating the founding of the Continental Marines, you must go back to Philadelphia in the mid-1770s. By that time, Philadelphia had grown to be the second largest city in the 13 colonies and a thriving port on the Delaware River with access to the Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean trade routes. The first European settlements in the Delaware Valley were founded by Dutch colonists in the early 1600s followed within 10 years by competing Swedish settlers. In 1655, a Dutch military campaign took control of the Swedish colony consolidating the greater “New Netherlands.” Then in 1664, the Anglo-



WILLIAM TREUTING

The original “home-brewing” system used by Doug Meyer.

Dutch War reached the new world, and an English fleet captured the New Netherland colony in 1664.

In 1681, Charles II of England granted Quaker clergyman William Penn a charter for what would become the Pennsylvania colony. For the next 90 years, colonists from the British Isles became the majority population of Philadelphia, creating a seething tavern culture amid the city’s rapid growth. With no refrigeration, no sanitary storage and little

means of distribution, beers were very local products. These beers used top-fermenting yeast brewed at room temperature, stored (briefly) in wooden casks and served within walking distance or even in the same building in which they were brewed. In fact, the name “Tun Tavern” refers to a “tun,” a barrel in the largest English brewery cask unit of measure: 252 gallons.

According to Meyer, “those styles of beers were mostly British ales, for example English browns and porters. Lagers (cold brewed beers with bottom-fermenting yeast) were not a thing yet. Our goal is to tie in specifics from Philadelphia but also bring in other ingredients such as corn that was the signature of colonial Virginia beers from archival recipes we have that were brewed by George Washington and James Madison. This would give us the complete style linkage from the birthplace of the Corps to today’s Marines and their passage—both officers and enlisted—through Quantico, the Crossroads of the Corps.” The beer’s name would be “Quantico Crossroads” and Meyer is already working to trademark that name.

Whether you’re stationed here or living in the Quantico area, or even if you are just passing through on temporary duty or going through a school, FDB is worth a visit. Food is always available for delivery from local restaurants and Meyer has a regular schedule of food truck partners on site. Centrally located near MCB Quantico, Prince William and Stafford Counties, taxis and all ride-share services are always responsive, in the event you don’t have a designated driver.

Be safe and plan your visit, enjoy responsibly and never drink and drive.



WILLIAM TREUTING

Full Distance Brewing’s five-barrel brewhouse can brew up to 155 gallons of beer at a time.

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SOUND OFF

[continued from page 10]


roster notes that he played for Penn State, he actually played for the University of Dayton and completed his education at Penn State after he was discharged.

I never played for or against Coach Jack, but my high school coach had previously been one of his assistants.

BGen Kevin G. Collins, USMC
Quantico, Va.

Stay tuned for an upcoming episode of the MCA's "Scuttlebutt" podcast, which will feature an interview with "The Mosquito Bowl" author, Buzz Bissinger.
—Editor

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

—Editor 

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Pilot Dies in F/A-18D Hornet Crash

A Marine died in an F/A-18D Hornet crash in the vicinity of Marine Corps Air Station Miramar in San Diego, Calif., on Aug. 23. **Major Andrew Mettler**, a pilot assigned to Marine All-Weather Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA(AW)) 224, was participating in a training exercise at the time of the incident. The cause of the crash is under investigation.

"I am deeply saddened to share the loss of Maj Andrew "Simple Jack" Mettler, a fellow Marine aviator who was honing his craft as a Hornet pilot and leader in his squadron, the 'Fighting Bengals,'" said 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW) commanding general Major General Scott Benedict. "I had the great honor of flying in an F/A-18D with Simple Jack and will always remember his skill piloting the Hornet and his wry smile. It is with great humility that I offer my deepest condolences to the family, loved ones and friends of Maj Andrew Mettler. You remain at the forefront of our thoughts and prayers."

Mettler served as an F/A-18 Hornet pilot with VMFA(AW)-224, Marine Aircraft Group (MAG) 31, 2nd MAW, at Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort, S.C. Originally from Georgia, Mettler was commissioned on Nov. 30, 2007. Mettler's awards include the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal with a gold star, the Navy Unit Commendation Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, and the Global War of Terrorism Service Medal.

"As 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing, we mourn the loss of one of our brothers who was devoted to the Marine Corps mission and its duty to continue forward in a matter that would reflect his devotion," MajGen Benedict said. "Maj Mettler's legacy will remain with every Marine, Sailor and civilian that he served with, and we have the obligation to continue to uphold the values that he stood for. He will be deeply missed within the 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing and among his brothers and sisters at the Fighting Bengals."

2nd Marine Aircraft Wing

Marines Die in Osprey Crash While Training in Australia

Three Marines died as the result of a MV-22B Osprey crash in Melville Island, north of Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia on Aug. 27, 2023. All three Marines were assigned to Marine Medium

Tiltrotor (VMM) Squadron 363 (Reinforced). The names of the deceased are: Corporal Spencer R. Collart, Captain Eleanor V. LeBeau and Major Tobin J. Lewis.

Twenty other Marines were injured in the crash. At press time, three remained hospitalized at Royal Darwin Hospital in Australia. The cause of the crash remains under investigation.

"We are deeply saddened by the loss of three respected and beloved members of the MRF-D family," said Colonel Brandon Sullivan, the commanding officer of MRF-D. "Our thoughts and prayers remain with the families and with all involved."

Maj Tobin Lewis, an MV-22B pilot, served as the executive officer of VMM-363 (Rein), MRF-D. Tobin, 37, of Jefferson, Colo., was commissioned Aug. 22, 2008. His awards include two Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medals and the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal.

Capt Eleanor V. LeBeau, an MV-22B Osprey pilot, was assigned to VMM-363 (Rein), MRF-D. LeBeau, 29, of Belleville, Ill., was commissioned on Aug. 11, 2018. Her awards include the National Defense Service Medal and the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal.

Cpl Spencer R. Collart served as a crew chief for the MV-22B Osprey and was assigned to VMM-363 (Rein), MRF-D. Collart, 21, of Arlington, Va., enlisted on Oct. 26, 2020. His awards include the National Defense Service Medal and the Global War on Terrorism Medal.

Marine Rotation Force-Darwin

LtCol Daniel E. Barber, 73, of Rockingham, N.C. He was an artillery officer who served for 30 years. He completed Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, Calif., and also had an assignment with Joint Special Operations at Fort Bragg, N.C., before retiring.

Col Clarke C. Barnes, 80, of Geneseo Ill. He enlisted after graduating from law school at the University of Iowa in 1967. He served a tour in Vietnam. In 1972, he left active duty but remained in the Marine Corps Reserve until retiring in 1995. He later had a career as a prosecutor and was appointed an associate judge of the 14th Judicial Circuit of Illinois and circuit judge of Henry County, Ill.

2ndLt Michael R. Beggs, 77, in College Station, Texas. He was commissioned

in 1969 and served in Vietnam as an infantry officer and was wounded. His awards include the Bronze Star with combat "V" and the Purple Heart.

MSgt Carl L. Bermender, 98, of Ocala, Fla. He enlisted in the Marine Corps at the age of 17 and served as a gun crewman with Weapons Co, 7th Marines, 1stMarDiv during WW II and saw action on Peleliu and Guadalcanal. He later served in the Korean War in the 1st Marine Air Wing. After the war, he played in numerous Marine bands across the Corps including bands at MCAS Cherry Point, on Okinawa as a percussionist and later as NCOIC. He also served as a recruiter in Pittsburgh, Pa., before retiring after 30 years of service. He later worked in computer and instrument repair and as the secretary of the Marine Corps Musicians Association. He was also a member of the Guadalcanal Campaign Veterans Association.

SgtMaj George N. Boutwell, 99, of Pell City, Ala. He enlisted during WW II and saw action on Iwo Jima. He continued his career for 28 years, serving with 3rd Recon Bn during the Vietnam War as well as assignments at multiple duty stations. He retired in 1975.

Merle J. Caples, 100, of Westminster, Md. She was a Marine who served during WW II.

David Cease, 75, of Muhlenburg, Pa. He was a Marine who served during the Vietnam War as an amphibian tractor operator. He later had a career as a correctional officer. His awards include two Purple Hearts.

Norman G. Dillard, 77, of Yakima, Wash. He was a Marine who served in 3rd Force Recon Bn from 1967 to 1968 during the Vietnam War. His awards include a Purple Heart.

PhM2 Leo Ehli, 96, of Fargo, N.D. He was a corpsman attached to Co L, 3rd Bn, 25th Marines, 4thMarDiv during WW II and saw action on Iwo Jima. His awards include a Bronze Star with combat "V" and a Purple Heart.

Donna Genovese, 91, of Waldorf, Md. She enlisted in the Marine Corps after graduating from high school. She was stationed at MCAS Cherry Point, N.C.

Michael R. Giddings, 89, of Newport Beach, Calif. After graduating from the University of California, Berkley, he was commissioned and served with 1st Force Recon Co and played on the Marine Corps football team. He later

had a career as a high school and college football coach.

Lewis W. Hake, 76, in Albuquerque, N.M. He enlisted in the Marine Corps after graduating from high school and served during the Vietnam War with Co A, 1st Bn, 11th Marines. His awards include a Purple Heart and Bronze Star with combat "V."

Maj Joe Horning, 102, in Lancaster, Pa. He was a Marine who served during WW II in the Pacific theater. After the war, he transitioned into the Marine Corps Reserve, retiring at age 60.

Col Ernest L. Ittner, 93, of Wichita, Kan. After graduating from college, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant and served in the Korean War with the 1st Tank Bn, 1stMarDiv. His awards include the Navy Commendation with combat "V" and the Purple Heart.

David W. Kelly, 77, of Abrams, Wis. He was a Marine who served during the Vietnam War as a sharpshooter. He later had a career in maintenance with the United States Postal Service.

Bruce M. Manns, 73, in White River Junction, Vt. He enlisted at age 16 and served three tours during in Vietnam. He was wounded in 1968 during the Tet Offensive. Following his discharge, he was a member of the DAV, the MCL, the

VFW and the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association. His awards include the Purple Heart.

David B. Perry, 82, of Pauls Valley, Okla. He was a Marine who served from 1958 to 1962 as an aviation electronics operator with MACS-8 and MACS-3. He was later the CEO of Mid-Continent Truck Sales.

Cpl James E. Polk, 52, of Houston, Texas. He was a Marine who served from 1990 to 1995 and is a Gulf War veteran.

John Puebla, 94, of Moline, Ill. He enlisted in the Army during WW II. He served in the Marine Corps during the Korean War. He later owned a cement business. His awards include a Purple Heart.

John Timothy "Tim" Quinn, 87, of Wilmington, Del. He was a Marine who served in the 1950s. After his enlistment, he graduated from Saint Joseph's College with a bachelor's degree in accounting. He later started a tax preparation and bookkeeping business. His son and one of his grandsons are also Marines. Another grandson is a Navy helicopter pilot.

Joseph Raneri, 101, of Chelmsford, Mass. He was a Marine who served during WW II in the Pacific theater with the 3rdMarDiv. His awards include the Purple Heart.

Harry Sloth, 99, of Barrington, Ill. He served as a Navy corpsman attached to the 4thMarDiv during WW II and saw action in Saipan, Tinian and Iwo Jima. He later had a 20-year career with U.S. Customs.

SSgt Rodney L. Spangler, of Colombia, S.C. He enlisted in the Marine Corps after graduating from high school and served from 1964 to 1968 during the Vietnam War. After his enlistment he worked as an accountant.

Daniel W. Stanley, 102, of Jacksonville, Fla. He was a Seabee attached to the 5thMarDiv during WW II and saw action on Iwo Jima.

Pamela J. West, 62, of Weirton, W.Va. She was a Marine who served after graduating from college.

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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Your generosity this holiday season will help the **Marine Corps Association Foundation** ensure our Marines will be ready to succeed by providing the leadership, mentoring, and development programs they need all year long.

Reader Assistance

Edited by Briesa Koch

Reunions

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

• **Embassy Guard Association**, May 16-19, 2024, San Antonio, Texas. Contact Bob Lighty, (717) 433-1105, bob.lighty@embassymarine.org.

• **Marine Corps Weather Service**, June 16-21, 2024, Billings, Mont. Contact Kathy Donham, (252) 342-8459, kathy.donham@hotmail.com, or Dave Englert, (812) 630-2099, englertd@psci.net.

• **USMC A-4 Skyhawkers**, Nov. 11-13, 2024, Pensacola Beach, Fla. All drivers, maintainers, and aficionados welcome. Contact Mark Williams, (702) 778-5010, rogerwilcol4@gmail.com.

Mail Call

• Clyde and Nell Slade, (251) 675-8427, clydeslade@att.net, would like to hear from Benjamin "Ben" Franklin Hanes, who served in Marine Corps around 1957-1958 and was stationed in Washington, D.C.

Wanted

• John Sanchez, (559) 970-1018, is looking for **1stMarDiv car window decals from Camp Pendleton, Twentynine Palms or any other West Coast Marine duty stations.**

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

Sales, Trades and Giveaways

• Cpl S. Reed, P.O. Box 112349 Tacoma, Wash., has a **55th Seabees Battalion 1942-1945 book** free to give away.

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. 🦖

Courageous Dissent

A.S. Kyle, G.M. Davis, Robert Packard, John Cochenour



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Dear Members of the Marine Corps Association,

The Marine Corps has adapted to many challenges throughout its history to maintain its preeminence as the expeditionary fighting force of our Nation. Since 1913, the Marine Corps Association has continually worked to improve its support of Marines and its members. In keeping with the spirit, we are updating our membership categories, benefits and costs. Our endstate is aimed at enhancing the Association's ability to better serve you and our Marines.

Starting *Jan. 1, 2024*, MCA will convert to a two-tiered membership model: **Associate** and **Premium**.

Associate membership benefits include basic access to select MCA products and services. They are offered at no cost to the member. Membership will be subject to eligible individuals who have attended an MCA-sponsored or supported event or have been a customer of The Marine Shop.

Premium membership benefits include full access to all MCA products and services including the digital editions of both the *Marine Corps Gazette* and *Leatherneck—Magazine of the Marines*. Premium members who request a print version of our magazines will pay a "print assessment."

Eligibility requirements and an explanation of the benefits and cost of each membership tier can be found at <https://mca-marines.org/become-a-member/>.

In recognition of your loyalty to the Association, **Lifetime** and **Insured** members will continue to receive your magazines and benefits at the current rate. All other active members may renew at the current **three-year** rate when your present membership expires, so I encourage you to **act now** to renew before these changes go into effect. If you have additional questions, please reach out to our Support Center team at 1-866-622-1775.

Finally, I want to personally thank you for being steadfast members of the Marine Corps Association. We truly appreciate your dedication and continued support for the future of our Marines and the Corps.

Semper Fidelis,

Charles G. Chiarotti
Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret)
President & CEO



MAJ DONNA J. NEARY, USMC

HONORING THE FIGHTING QUAKER—The first Commandant of the Marine Corps, Major Samuel Nicholas, may not receive the attention that other Marine legends have garnered over the years.

However, the exploits of the “Fighting Quaker” mean a lot to the city of Philadelphia where he was born and raised. Each year, on Nov. 10, members of the NROTC programs of Villanova University and the University of Pennsylvania provide a color guard and assist in laying a wreath next to Nicholas’ headstone. The Marine Corps League Department of Pennsylvania helped get the headstone installed in 2013 near the site of the traditional Quaker unmarked grave where Nicholas was buried after his death in 1790.

MCL Chester County Detachment trustee Fred LeClair, who was the founder of the Pennsylvania MCL’s Samuel Nicholas Memorial Committee, worked with members of Philadelphia’s Quaker leadership to get the headstone placed at the site of their Arch Street Meeting House. Before the headstone was placed, local Marines would informally honor Nicholas by jogging over to the Meeting House at dawn on the Marine Corps’ Birthday.

In addition to holding a ceremony at the site of the headstone, representatives from various Philadelphia-area MCL detachments also celebrate Nicholas by raising a 13-star colonial flag at Independence Hall and visiting the Tomb of the Unknown Revolutionary War Soldier. The MCL also conducts ceremonies to honor Nicholas on Independence Day and Memorial Day.

This year, LeClair is hoping to honor Nicholas on the famed battleship USS *New Jersey* (BB-62), which is permanently docked on the Delaware River.

The site of Nicholas’ headstone lies little more than a



PATRICK J. HUGHES



PATRICK J. HUGHES

musket shot away from where he recruited the nation’s first Marines in 1775 at Tun Tavern and Conestoga Wagon Tavern, which he managed. Nicholas served as Commandant during the Revolutionary War, leading several successful military efforts in the Bahamas and in Princeton, N.J.

“Major Samuel Nicholas played a vital role in shaping the Marine Corps,” LeClair said. “The Marine Corps League honors him by promoting and preserving the interests and traditions of the Marine Corps.”

“The Marine Corps is steeped in history,” added Captain Jeanbry Torres, Marine Officer Instructor for the Philadelphia NROTC Consortium. “As a recent instructor at Officer Candidates School, I understand that we cannot continuing excelling without knowing about where we started.” 🇺🇸

Happy 248th birthday, Marines

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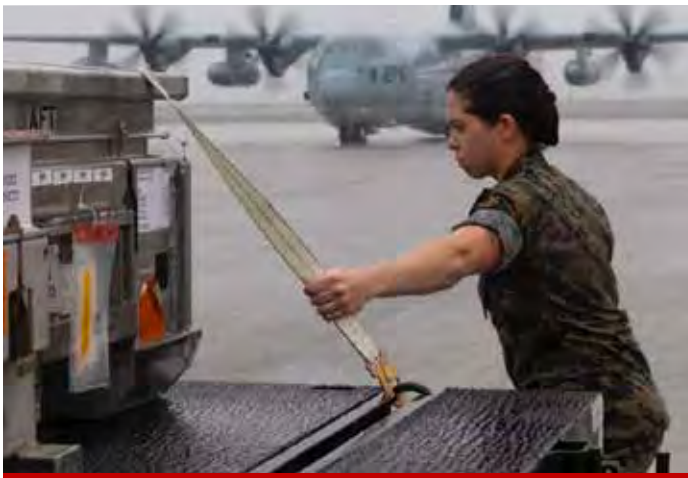
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