

FEBRUARY 2018

MAGAZINE OF THE MARINES

Leatherneck

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Remembering USS *Maine*

Finding Esprit de Corps
In the Great Outdoors

Vietnam 1968—
1st Force Recon Takes On
A Dangerous Mission

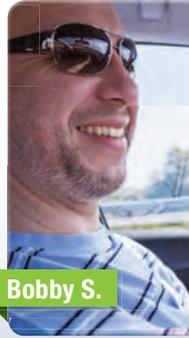
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COVER: USS *Maine* on June 26, 1911, after being raised by the Army Corps of Engineers. The ship sank under suspicious circumstances on Feb. 15, 1898, in Havana Harbor, Cuba. After salvage operations were completed, she was towed out to deeper water and was sunk with an appropriate military ceremony on Feb. 2, 1912. Copies of the cover may be obtained by sending \$2 (for mailing costs) to *Leatherneck Magazine*, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134-0775.

Letter of the Month

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

A few thoughts on Veterans Day, or Armistice Day as I knew it as a child, ran through my mind as I sat in a hall full of Marines, young and old, veterans of four wars, and marveled at their overall view toward life.

It was the monthly meeting of the local Marine Corps League in Longview, Texas. Most present served during the Vietnam era. Our oldest members are World War II veterans of Iwo Jima and there are three of them. There are also a few from Korea and a hefty sprinkling of younger men from the liberation of Kuwait along with the most recent batch fresh from the killing fields of Iraq and Afghanistan. Four generations sat here, yet with these men no generation gap exists. They are all from the same mold.

As I sat and observed the camaraderie, I sensed a robust optimism toward what remains of their lives. These men have seen the worst that humanity has to offer. They went through the transition from war to peace and came home to make their lives count for something. If you asked them why, many would say, "I live for the ones that can't." And that, in a nutshell, is what a veteran is, a person living and doing for those who will remain 18 years old forever.

The talk was about the 242nd Marine Corps Birthday, but also about the Toys for Tots mission. There is none of the pity-party, what-can-you-do-for-me attitude at this gathering. Collectively we are all aware of the fact that some never make the transition, that there are those that will always need help, and in spite of that, some will live out lives of quiet despair. These men see no need to use war service as a crutch for failure and few, if any in this room, have ever done so.

Multiple marriages? Failed endeavors? Yes, but each regained their feet and moved on. These men neither need nor seek anyone's pity nor even thanks for the sacrifices each has made from the government that sent them to war. Indeed, I'm caught by surprise when someone comes up and thanks me for my service. Apparently, it's the current trend to do so. At any rate, it's enough that society recognizes their service once a year.

And so, as you readers happen to encounter a veteran from any service, your appreciation is appreciated. All we ask as veterans is that you do not squander nor waste the freedoms we earned for you, that you as a society don't give it away, that you use the way of life that we have preserved for you to benefit this world we live in and that you pass it on to the next generation. We are all just proud to be Americans.

Cpl James "Jim" Jones, USMC
1966-1969
Gladewater, Texas



This isn't the John Philip Sousa, it's retired MSgt Carl M. "Bud" DeVere. This 1980 cover was set up and photographed by former *Leatherneck* art director John DeGrasse and photographic assistant, Ron Lunn.

Leatherneck Anniversary Issue Full of Memories

The 100th Anniversary issue of *Leatherneck* is chock-full of memories for me. I was the administrative assistant to the editor and publisher, Colonel Don Dickson, USMCR (Ret), until I retired from active duty in 1968.

Lou Lowery was a dear friend of mine and I was there when he retired from *Leatherneck*. Tom Bartlett and Bob Bowen were also friends. I just ordered Bob's book, "My Life and Lens: The Story of a Marine Corps Combat Correspondent."

Tom wrote a two-page story about me, "The Two Faces of Bud DeVere," in the March 1980 issue and I was on the cover as a look-alike of John Philip Sousa,

photographed by *Leatherneck* art director John DeGrasse.

Thanks for the memories.

MSgt Carl M. "Bud" DeVere Sr.
USMC (Ret)
Longmont, Colo.

Marine Sword

As usual, when my *Leatherneck* arrives I read it cover to cover. The sword article in the December 2017 issue got my attention right off. It was an excellently written article. When I saw the picture of Lieutenant General Mark Faulkner, USMC (Ret), holding his father's (now his) sword, it really got my attention as I place a high value on my sword.

While stationed at the U.S. Embassy, I was required to buy a sword. In October 1960, at Japan Sword, I picked out the sword blank, watched it be sized by one of the sword makers and listened as he explained why it was a good pick. He handed it to the master sword maker, who then had it blessed and that started the process of becoming a Marine NCO sword.

My name was not etched or scribed in after the sword was finished, but was included in the process of forging/stamping. I was invited back after the initial process was almost finished to watch the sword maker place it point down on a 100 yen coin and drive it through the coin with no damage. He then bent the sword to almost a half-circle and rebounded it to a perfectly straight sword blade. He explained that because it was a dress sword, the blade would not have a sharp edge. He then measured my right hand and picked out a handle/guard for me to try. Of course it fit perfectly.

I was invited back two weeks later to receive my finished sword. The whole process took about two months. The cost was \$50.

My question is, can you restore my sword to its original configuration? In my opinion, the sword is in excellent condition. I replaced the scabbard about seven years ago. The sword was never plated but had a lot of Brasso applied.

MGySgt Glen Killian, USMC (Ret)
New Bern, N.C.

• *The MARINE Shop is working with MGySgt Killian to determine if they can refurbish his treasured sword.—Editor*

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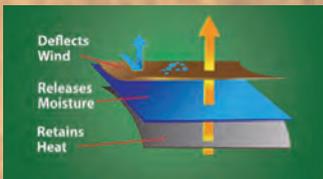
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asked before. If so, please accept my apologies.

It has to do with the sword the Marine is holding as depicted on the front cover of my December 2017 issue of *Leatherneck*. Near the hilt, or handle, is an engraved star. At first glance, I was thinking this was the Star of David. But a fellow Marine friend thinks it's the Star of Damascus. In researching this, I have discovered the following:

"The blade specifications for both the U.S. and British military swords require the six-pointed star with the word 'Proved' etched on the blade.

"As best we can tell, the specification for the six-pointed star is historical in nature and was likely used to signify that the blade was manufactured using the Damascus steel method. According to historian Ken Smith-Christmas, the Damascus craftsmen were renowned for their secretive art of making steel. They formed a guild and their symbol was this six-pointed star, the star of Damascus. Wilkerson sword makers used this symbol for publicity and soon other sword makers copied the symbol on their own swords."

I don't know if this info is right or not. But maybe someone would be kind enough in explaining what this star is, and how it became engraved on the Marine Corps sword.

Tom Lawton
Green Bay, Wis.

• *Your research is correct. You can find answers to other frequently asked questions about the Marine Corps on our website www.mca-marines.org/leatherneck.—Editor*

Now's the Time

I read in the December 2017 issue, "Now's the Time: The Commandant Cautions Marines to Be Ready to Go," by Colonel Mary H. Reinwald, USMC (Ret). I enjoyed the entire article but mostly the end where General Robert B. Neller, Commandant of the Marine Corps, tells Col Reinwald the thing that concerns him most.

Gen Neller mentions accidents, suicides, bad luck, sickness and "... I think that the primary contributing factor is alcohol." I agree with him because alcohol destroyed my Marine Corps career. I joined the Corps June 21, 1948, and after eight years left with a general discharge. What I think saved me from a BCD (bad conduct discharge) was my record in Korea.

I used to say it's my Irish blood that made me drink; I was always in trouble in my first hitch. Then when I came back from Korea, I blamed it on what they call now PTSD (post-traumatic stress

disorder). I was having bad dreams and drinking a lot. I sent in a request to reenlist to the Commandant's office. I received an approval, went out and got drunk and ended up in trouble. Needless to say I was not allowed to reenlist.

When I got out, I continued drinking until it broke up my marriage. Then after all those problems, I went to the VA. I also prayed to God for help. So, what I'm saying is listen to Gen Neller. What he said is sound advice, and if you need help, go get it.

Thomas J. Powers
Newell, W.Va.

Letter of the Month— No, Letter of the Decade

The December 2017 Letter of the Month, written by Dr. Jeff Pinkham of Dublin, Ohio, was (to me) perhaps the best "Sound Off" letter that I have read in at least the past 10 years. WOW! Not often do I get "fuzzy eye syndrome" reading letters in *Leatherneck* but I did today. As Dr. Pinkham said, "I saw a ghost of the battlefield turn, walk toward the horizon and slowly fade, but their story was now firmly cemented and as complete as it can be for my family."

I am president of the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association and I am constantly trying to get some of our 500 members to sit down and write personal accounts of their time in Vietnam.

I want to republish Dr. Pinkham's above quote in our quarterly 48-page magazine, the *Sponson Box*. Thank you and Semper Fidelis.

Sgt John Wear
3d Tanks RVN, 1968-1969
Elbert, Colo.

I just read the "Letter of the Month," in the December 2017 issue of *Leatherneck* and it brought tears to my eyes. It was one of the best letters that I have read in a very long time. I believe that it deserves \$100 instead of the \$25.

Keep up the great work that you do in picking the Letter of the Month.

GySgt Lew Souder, USMC (Ret)
Sebastian, Fla.

Memories of Fort Sill

Bobby Gentry's "Ode to Billie Joe" was a hit song when I was at summer camp training at Fort Sill in the southern plains of Oklahoma as a member of the 4th 105 Howitzer Battery.

We lived in tents the Army provided at an outpost called Camp Eagle, where a fellow Marine reservist from Connecticut painted an enormous eagle, globe and anchor symbol on a massive rock formation. Another Marine from our unit with

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PHOTO COURTESY OF FRED VOGEL

a background in biology science dissected a rattlesnake and a third Marine elevated his rack on bricks to avoid the tarantulas.

We never got to see the main side of the sprawling Army installation. To reach the site for a battery picnic we drove several miles in 6x8 trucks over a network of trails along a chain link fence only to find the gate padlocked when we got there; we had to backtrack.

We finally arrived at the designated picnic area covered in a film of white powdery dust. The grazing buffalo didn't seem to mind. I often wonder what the Fort Sill commander thought about the

official emblem and insignia of the United States Marine Corps and whether it still bedecks the outcrop of rocks there.

Gary Fischer
Madison, Wis.

B-29 Pilot Saluted Marine For Sacrifices of the Corps

Many years ago while at a VA hospital for treatment, an elderly veteran with a cane sat down next to me. When he realized I was a Vietnam Marine with three Purple Hearts, he stood up in front of me and saluted.

I asked him where and when he served

his country. He related his experience piloting a B-29 and having to crash land on a Pacific island. He stated there were Marines who had been killed in action everywhere in the area.

He retired as a colonel.

Keith E. Olson
Cook, Minn.

Reversed Photo

The article "Long Live the Red, White and Blue, [January issue] shows a photo on page 58 of Sgt George A. Persinger, a former hostage, 1stSgt Terry Taylor and GySgt Charles Constance, MSG instructors.

My congratulations to all three for their performance of duty as U.S. Marines. May God bless them all.

My question is: Why do they have their medals on the right chest and the ribbons on the left chest?

I am a retired captain (prior enlisted) and have dress blues as an enlisted Marine and as an officer, both preserved in clothing bags and hung in a closet. All appropriate items have been mounted as required (I think) which includes the medals and ribbons which are six medals on the left chest and the seven ribbons on the right chest in precedence order.

If I am correct how could these Marines make such an error, if in fact it is an error.

If not, when did the change of medal/ribbon mounting on dress blues change? I did note that the article is from the April 1981 *Leatherneck* archives. Maybe a change in regs?

I entered boot camp, Parris Island, S.C. in August 1956 and retired at MCASC Kansas City, Mo., November 1979.

Thank you for the great job you all do.

Capt Albert R. Lary, USMC (Ret)
1956-1979
Kansas City, Mo.

MSgt Tom Bartlett's story of the former MSG hostages taken during the Iranian militant's overthrow of their government is testament to the value of the training of all Marines. Their actions during the 444 days of captivity were outstanding and they are a tribute to the U.S. Marine Corps.

I would like to bring attention to the photo on page 58. It seems the negative was processed incorrectly or else the photo was taken in a mirror.

SgtMaj Robert A. Wieser Sr., USMC
(Ret)
Hamilton, Mont.

• *SgtMaj Wieser is correct. The photo was processed from a negative and was mistakenly reversed when printed in the January issue. The regulations*

have not changed and the Marines were appropriately attired. The error was mine for not noticing the reversed medals.—
Editor

Enlisted Pilots

I was intrigued reading the article in the November *Leatherneck*, “Flying Sergeants.” I was given a temporary commission in 1953 and kept my permanent enlisted rank. After I completed The Basic School, I applied for flight training and passed all the requirements. My brother was a naval aviator, and he encouraged me to apply for flight school and gave me a set of his wings, which I still have to this day.

The Marine Corps was very understanding but I was informed in no uncertain terms that never again would the Corps have enlisted pilots. So that ended that dream. Later, when my status was altered to a regular commission, it was a little too late as I had, by that time, established myself in the engineer MOS field.

Maj James L. Murphy, USMC (Ret)
Los Osos, Calif.

I received my November 2017 *Leatherneck* magazine yesterday, and as I was devouring the articles as I usually do, one really caught my attention. As I read the

article, “Flying Sergeants,” I realized that two of my favorite Flying Sergeants were not mentioned, Henry “Bud” Wildfang and Robert “Bob” Lurie. I knew both of them and flew many missions with them in Marine transports. There has to be some special circumstances that they were omitted. I knew Bud better than Bob. I think Bob accepted a commission and then may have reverted back to enlisted but I’m not sure about that. Bud was a totally different story. I do know he was commissioned and was caught up in a reduction in force (RIF) after World War II and was released as a major. He was only out a short time, less than a month, before he stopped at a Marine recruiting office and told his story. The recruiting sergeant told him he could come back in the Corps as a pilot, as an enlisted man, and he did.

I met him after Korea had ended. He was flying transports—R4D and the R4Q—and I know at one time he had flown the Convair R4Y. Then along came the Marine GV-1 which soon changed to KC-30-F. As a flight engineer I flew many missions with Bud during the Vietnam years. I watched as he rose up to master gunnery sergeant and then warrant officer 1 through 4. Bud stayed on and he and Bob retired the same day in 1975 as the last
[continued on page 66]

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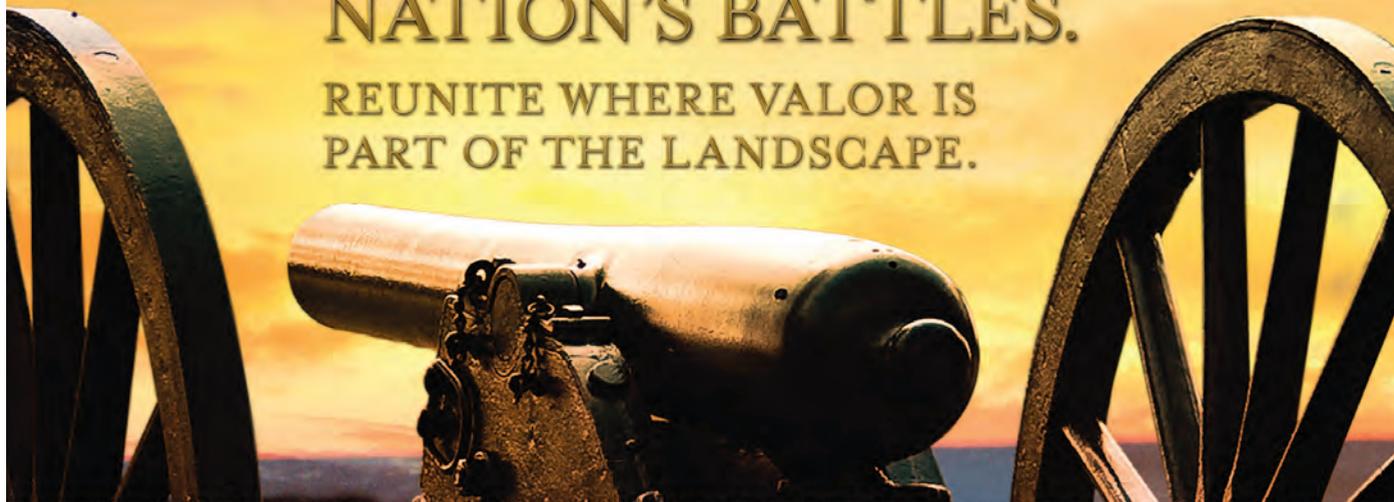


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Compiled by Sara W. Bock

MIDDLE EAST

Mine Sweeping: Marines Practice Clearing Runways

Combat engineers with Support Platoon, Marine Wing Support Squadron 373, Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force–Crisis Response–Central Command, conducted SweepEx, an area clearance training mission at an undisclosed location in the Middle East, Nov. 3, 2017.

The combat engineers were tasked with performing a simulated runway clearing operation by sweeping and proofing a road using metal detectors to locate improvised explosive devices. In this real-life scenario, they were not informed of the number of training IEDs placed on the road, which ensured that they honed and maintained their skills in order to stay safe.

“It’s crucial for these Marines to stay 100 percent focused; if not, they could step on an IED and critically injure themselves or the people around them,” said Gunnery Sergeant Scottie Carter, the platoon sergeant for Support Platoon, MWSS-373.



CPL JOCELYN ONTIVEROS, USMC

Cpl Adrian Medrano, a combat engineer with MWSS-373, SPMAGTF–CR–CC marks the road with white engineer tape during training somewhere in the Middle East, Nov. 3, 2017.

The Marines sweeping the road looked for abnormalities on the ground, including signs like wires sticking out, disrupted dirt, fresh pavement and anything else out of the ordinary. When clearing a road, the combat engineers ensure the entire area is swept for IEDs. As they walk from one

point to the other, they mark any possible locations, and after clearing a section of road, they mark it so other Marines know where it is safe to walk.

The Marines of Support Platoon train constantly so that if a runway or helipad needs to be cleared in order to safely land aircraft, they are prepared.

“It’s important to consistently train in order to be ready for the moment’s call,” explained Carter. “I’d rather sweat today than bleed tomorrow.”

Cpl Jocelyn Ontiveros, USMC

POHANG, SOUTH KOREA

CLR-3 “Workhorse” Completes KMEP 18.1

Engines roaring, hydraulics hissing and machinery clanging, the “Workhorse of the Pacific” returned to its headquarters at Camp Foster, Marine Corps Base Camp Smedley D. Butler, Okinawa, Japan, Nov. 14, 2017.

Combat Logistics Regiment 3, 3d Marine Logistics Group, also known as the



CPL JOCELYN ONTIVEROS, USMC

Combat engineers with MWSS-373, SPMAGTF–CR–CC, clear a road in the Middle East using CMD metal detectors to locate simulated IEDs, Nov. 3, 2017. The SweepEx ensured that the Marines honed and maintained the skills they need to clear a runway or helipad.

“Workhorse,” completed Korean Marine Exercise Program (KEMP) 18.1/Exercise Winter Workhorse 17, a six-week rotation in the Republic of Korea that involves bilateral training with the Republic of Korea Marine Logistics Group (ROK MLG).

“The capabilities we trained for were transportation and convoy movements, engineering, purifying water, building expeditionary bases, as well as basic rifleman tactics,” said Colonel Maura Hennigan, Commanding Officer, CLR-3. “This exercise allowed us to train for scenarios in different environments, whether the cold, rain or in simulated chemical-affected areas.”

The regiment’s subordinate units, 3d Transportation Support Battalion, Combat Logistics Battalions 3 and 4, and 9th Engineer Support Battalion traveled to the Korean peninsula from Okinawa and Hawaii, coming together to join the ROK MLG in various operations and team-building events.

“Bilateral training was a large focus for this exercise,” said Hennigan. “We had the opportunity to train with the ROK MLG’s Landing Support and Transportation Battalions during railway operations, beach landing operations and port operations in a combined environment, and they also allowed us to do exchange time as well. This allowed Marine-on-Marine exchanges, building relationships and resiliency between our units and our militaries, while also taking time to expand the logistics capabilities we maintain within the regiment.”

Marines from both militaries faced various challenges together, from language barriers to adverse weather. During the exercise, Super Typhoon Lan made landfall on Dogu Beach, Pohang, where Marines with 3d TSB and 9th ESB had set up a forward position to conduct water purification, fuel storage and transportation.

“Super Typhoon Lan happened to make landfall and knocked down one of our earthen berm walls,” said Warrant Officer Joseph Galinak, a platoon commander with Bulk Fuel Company, 9th ESB. “We also partnered up with some Korean civilians who came to the beach to collect and dispose of debris blown onto the beach by the typhoon. We covered a mile of the beach, going through and picking up trash.”

According to Galinak, despite the cold temperatures and adverse weather, the unit was able to complete mission requirements and gain valuable training experience for the company’s newest members.

“Only about 25 percent of the Marines we have out here have worked with the ROK Marines previously,” said Galinak. “Not many bulk fuel specialists have



SGT TIFFANY EDWARDS, USMC

Cpl Larry Anderson, a landing support specialist with Landing Support Company, 3d Transportation Support Battalion, CLR-3, crosses an obstacle with help from members of his unit and ROK Marines during a Leadership Reaction Course in Pohang, South Korea, Oct. 28, 2017. The course was part of Exercise Winter Workhorse 17/Korean Marine Exchange Program 18.1.



SGT TIFFANY EDWARDS, USMC

Combat engineers with Engineer Support Company, CLB-3, dig a trench while building an underground bunker at Rodriguez Live Fire Range, South Korea, Oct. 28, 2017. The Marines built an expeditionary base on the range for future units that rotate through the training area.

had the chance to work on a beach in an austere environment with another nation’s military. We have a very large number that have never been to South Korea or have never deployed at all, so this is a tremendous experience for them.”

The exercise also provided opportunities for the Marines to interact with the local communities near the various training areas. Whether playing with school children, visiting orphanages or helping farmers harvest crops after Super Typhoon Lan, Marines stepped up to the challenge and out into the community to make a positive impact.

“Just an ounce of effort to help and engage in activities like these further strengthens our partnership between South Korea and America,” said Lieutenant Commander Jeffrey Parks, USN, regimental chaplain for CLR-3. “This helps the local Korean populace know that the ROK and U.S. Marines care about their communities, and while we may train in preparation for combat, we also prepare for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts. This is just one small way we can give back and contribute to strengthening our nations’ alliance.”

For Hennigan, the combat and logistics



CPL ASHLEY LAWSON, USMC

Marines with 2d ANGLICO, II MEF, clear a room and evacuate casualties after a notional bombing attack at the IIT, MCB Camp Lejeune, N.C., Nov. 15, 2017. The Marines underwent four days of training to ensure they were proficient in ground operations in addition to their usual task of providing liaison assets to foreign countries.

training provided by KMEP 18.1 gave immeasurable benefits to CLR-3 and subordinate units, giving the Marines a chance to see how their allies train and trade ideas and procedures, allowing for an efficient, unified force.

“Our Korean partners are extremely gracious, and they provided us with access to ranges that we don’t normally have on Okinawa,” said Col Hennigan. “CLR-3 was able to train in an environment they may eventually have to work in, whether it’s in conflict or during relief operations. This also gave them a chance to build relationships with the ROK Marines, whom they may train with again in the future, which is a great opportunity for junior and senior Marines.”

KMEP is a regularly scheduled bilateral training rotation in South Korea, carried out in the spirit of the Republic of Korea-U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty signed between the two nations on Oct. 1, 1953. The exercise is part of III Marine Expeditionary Force’s dedicated effort to learn and share tactics with the ROK Marine Corps, building enduring relationships and becoming more proficient partners. These relationships will be invaluable during future combined operations in the region.

Sgt Tiffany Edwards, USMC

CAMP LEJEUNE, N.C. Next Stop, Afghanistan: 2d ANGLICO Completes IIT

Marines with 2d Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company, II Marine Expeditionary Force participated in the infantry immersion trainer (IIT) and convoy operations at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., Nov. 14-17, 2017.

In preparation for their upcoming deployment to Afghanistan, the unit underwent four days of training designed to strengthen their knowledge of ground operations while simultaneously providing liaison assets to foreign countries.

“The Marines are doing great and learning that this is very different from our normal ANGLICO mission,” said Captain Michael Valdez, a firepower control team leader with the unit. “It’s almost simpler than controlling air and naval gunfire, but it’s more complicated in terms of different languages and understanding foreign tactics.”

Each team went through three iterations of scenarios in the immersion trainer, which involved taking notional casualties from snipers, improvised explosive devices, small arms and mortar fire. During their convoy operation, the Marines rode in tactical vehicles until they arrived at their destination, where

they dismounted to conduct a foot patrol. Their mission was to keep themselves and the Georgian and Afghan role players safe while trying to secure the area of operation.

“The infantry immersion trainer replicates chaos,” said Corporal Niko Ray, a radio operator with the unit. “We have a good number of new Marines with no combat experience, so this exercise gives them that sense of familiarity and confidence in themselves and also in their leadership.”

The main goal for the trainer was to prepare the Marines to work alongside Georgian and Afghan servicemembers and provide fire support and medical evacuation capabilities amidst the chaos of combat.

“The Marines are quick to act and understand that they’re working with a different military,” said Valdez. “A lot of them are fairly new to the Afghanistan area of operations and the IIT does a great job of making you feel like you’re right in the moment.”

Additionally, the Marines gained experience and knowledge with the process of a convoy, because they could possibly be tasked out with one.

“These Marines are well-versed in directing fire support, but they need to

SAN CLEMENTE ISLAND, CALIF.



LCPL RHITA DANIEL, USMC

FIREPOWER—An amphibious assault vehicle with 1st Combat Engineer Battalion, 1st Marine Division, fires a mine clearing line charge during a simulated amphibious breach in support of Exercise Steel Knight 2018 at San Clemente Island, Calif., Dec. 9, 2017.

be just as fluent in ground operations,” said Major David Beere. “Afghanistan is a totally different beast compared to a field exercise and they need to expect the unexpected.”

2d ANGLICO continues to train in order to maintain optimal readiness so they are able to successfully complete any mission that is given to them.

“We show that Marines are universal and

whenever they say we’re done, we’re really not,” said Ray. “We’re always going to be out there helping anyone who needs it.” Cpl Ashley Lawson, USMC

SIGONELLA, ITALY **Evacuation Control Center** **Puts SPMAGTF to the Test**

Marines with Special Marine Air-Ground Task Force—Crisis Response-

Africa conducted non-combatant evacuation operation training at Naval Air Station Sigonella, Italy, Nov. 17, 2017. The training helped test and evaluate the unit’s ability to work with the air station in an evacuation scenario.

“The exercise involved getting evacuees and American citizens out of a country or area that is unstable,” said First Lieutenant David Kerkhoff, officer



LCPL PATRICK OSINO, USMC

A Marine assigned to SPMAGTF–CR-AF processes a notional evacuee during non-combatant evacuation operation training at NAS Sigonella, Italy, Nov. 17, 2017.



LCPL PATRICK OSINO, USMC

A bomb disposal robot inspects a suspicious object at the ECC, NAS Sigonella, Italy, Nov. 17, 2017. The Marines and Sailors of SPMAGTF–CR-AF rehearsed evacuation procedures as part of their mission to conduct limited crisis response and theater security operations in Europe and Africa.

in charge of Evacuation Control Center (ECC) operations. "ECC is meant to track and process all personnel that have been evacuated and make sure that they are accounted for."

The training included verifying identities, providing medical assistance, performing individual contraband searches and conducting administrative processing.

"We have to identify the categories of evacuees and move them through a number of stations for pat-down searches, administrative processing and medical inspections before they can be evacuated safely," said Sergeant Dominic Dady, the unit's current operations chief.

The current rotation of SPMAGTF-CR-AF worked with permanent personnel stationed at NAS Sigonella, who filled roles on both sides of the simulation as evacuees and as security screeners. During the exercise, the role players, some of whom played the roles of pregnant women, people with contagious illnesses or disruptive individuals, made the training more realistic. In one scenario, Marines quickly de-escalated a situation in which an embassy employee was complaining about being subject to a "pat down" inspection and asked many questions.

In another scenario, one role player had a notional improvised explosive device in his luggage, which was detected by

the Marines conducting the search and screening. They put the individual into custody for further evaluation.

At any given time, the U.S. Department of State may call for the evacuation of U.S. citizens out of a foreign country that is facing natural disasters, political unrest or a deteriorating government. In that situation, a noncombatant evacuation operation is conducted. Once the Secretary of State approves an evacuation, the U.S. ambassador to that country has the authority to implement the plan.

"I think we executed the training pretty well and I am confident saying that if this were to happen in a real world, we could do it successfully," said Dady.

SPMAGTF-CR-AF is deployed to conduct limited crisis response and theater security operations in Europe and Africa.

LCpl Patrick Osino, USMC

IWAKUNI, JAPAN **Hot Refuel: Squadron Simulates Hazardous Conditions**

Leathernecks with Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 121 trained to keep aircraft in the fight while working inside a simulated hazardous environment at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, Nov. 15, 2017.

The Marines conducted hot refuel on F-35B Lightning II aircraft while wearing

Mission Oriented Protective Posture (MOPP) gear level four.

"This exercise enables us to refine our standard operating procedures while familiarizing the Marines to operate in gear they aren't used to," said Staff Sergeant Martin Aldrete, a maintenance controller with VMFA-121. "It's important to practice in MOPP gear because the Marines don't get many opportunities to wear this on a daily basis, so in the instance where they do have to wear MOPP gear in a real-life scenario, it's not going to be a shock or surprise to them of how they are going to operate."

It's essential for operational readiness to train for hazardous scenarios where lethal agents such as chemical, biological or radiological weapons can hamper mission success. A hot refuel is a fast-paced fueling method that allows aircraft to take in fuel while powered up, which gets them more quickly back to the fight. Executing missions on time and being faster than the enemy is vital to the success of the Corps, and exercises like these assure that Marines can keep working quickly no matter what environment they're forced to work in.

"It's important to be proficient with this because on the battlefield there's not much time to put aircraft in the air," said Gunnery Sergeant Joseph Michael Jones, the ordnance staff noncommissioned officer in charge with VMFA-121. "Every second that we can save on that is possibly saving someone's life."

Corporal Ryan Thompson, an ordnance technician with VMFA-121, said that despite the extra gear, the exercise went as expected. One challenge they faced was the narrowed field of vision that came with working while wearing a gas mask.

"It was just a little bit harder to see, but that's about it," said Thompson.

Overall, the exercise was completed successfully and the Marines gained experience and knowledge from working a familiar job in an unfamiliar fashion.

"What I hope the Marines can take away from this training evolution is a better understanding for MOPP gear and the process that goes into this whole training event and the added time that it requires to be able to perform this," said Jones.

Cpl Carlos Jimenez, USMC



While wearing MOPP gear level four, Cpl Laren Kenison, a powerline mechanic with VMFA-121, conducts a hot refuel of an F-35B Lightning II during a training exercise at MCAS Iwakuni, Japan, Nov. 15, 2017.



CPL CARLOS JIMENEZ, USMC

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Compiled by Col Mary H. Reinwald, USMC (Ret)



PFC SAMANTHA SCHWOCH, USMC

SgtMaj Thomas G. Eggerling, left, Sergeant Major, Marine Corps Forces South; LCpl Gonzalez, center; and MajGen David Bellon, pose for a photo after LCpl Gonzalez was presented with the Navy Cross in El Paso, Texas, Nov. 14, 2017.

DOD Completes Review of Valor Awards, Recommends Upgrades

In January 2016, Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter ordered all of the services to review valor awards in order to ensure the appropriate level of awards had been presented during the course of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. More than a thousand awards were reviewed throughout the Department of Defense, 425 of which were awards presented to Marines and Sailors. All Navy Cross and Silver Star recommendations made since Sept. 11, 2001, in the Department of the Navy were included in the review. The Secretary of the Navy recommended 30 awards to be upgraded by the Navy and the Marine Corps. Three of the upgraded awards recently were presented to Marines who served in Afghanistan and Iraq.

LCpl Benjamin Gonzalez



The Navy Cross was presented to Marine Corps veteran Lance Corporal Benjamin Gonzalez on Nov. 14, 2017, at the Navy Operational Support Center, El Paso, Texas. LCpl Gonzalez's award was upgraded from the Silver Star for his actions on June 18, 2004, while serving in support of Operation Iraqi Free-

dom II and presented by Major General David Bellon, Commanding General, Marine Forces South.

LCpl Gonzalez was serving in Al Fallujah, Iraq, as an automatic rifleman with Company F, Second Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment. LCpl Gonzalez's fire team was manning an observation post at the Saqlawiyah Bridge on the northern outskirts of Al Fallujah when a motorcycle-borne insurgent threw a hand grenade into his fighting hole. LCpl Gonzalez threw himself on a fellow Marine, shielding him from the blast. LCpl Gonzalez sustained serious injuries but his fellow Marine was unharmed.

PFC Samantha Schwoch, USMC

Cpl Eubaldo Lovato



In 2004, Cpl Eubaldo Lovato was deployed as a squad leader with 1st Battalion, 8th Marines in Iraq. During Operation Al Fajr, Lovato was informed that a fellow Marine, Travis Desiato, had been gunned down and dragged into a room by an insurgent. Lovato assembled a team of noncommissioned officers to link up with the squad leader of the fallen Marine. The team was initially unsuccessful in their efforts to retrieve Desiato; in the room were five to six insurgents waiting for any Marine to come through the door. On the third attempt, the team,



PFC SAMANTHA SCHWOCH, USMC

BGen Michael Martin, far left, Deputy Commanding General, Marine Corps Forces Command; Sgt Lovato; and SgtMaj Bryan Fuller, Sergeant Major, Combat Logistics Group 453, met with Lovato's family in Montrose, Colo., Nov. 18, 2017.

led by Lovato, entered the room with grenades and small arms and successfully recovered the body of Desiato.

For his heroic actions, Lovato initially was awarded the Bronze Star; his award was later upgraded to the Silver Star and on Nov. 18, 2017, he was presented with the award. "To be completely honest, I don't deserve this," said Lovato. "I didn't do anything different than what I was trained to do. But I appreciate it and I am going to wear it proudly because the person who does deserve this wasn't able to make it home. He was a 19-year-old kid from Massachusetts who had just gotten married. I am going to wear this Silver Star for him. He is the one that made the ultimate sacrifice."

Though Lovato has been out of the Corps for almost 14 years, his actions will never be forgotten.

"Everything you go through in boot camp, and the values they instill in you, shape who you are going to be in the future," said Lovato. "As soon as you get to the fleet, the camaraderie and being able to work with different people, being able to take orders and to give orders simultaneously, instills the values that I think every person needs. The values that you receive will build upon the rest of your life."

PFC Samantha Schwoch, USMC

Cpl Donald J. Cline



Tina Cline, the widow of Lance Corporal Donald J. Cline, was recently presented with her husband's Silver Star at the Marine Corps League Detachment in Mandan, N.D., Nov. 1, 2017. Brigadier General Kurt W. Stein, Director, Marine and Family Programs, Manpower and Reserve Affairs made the presentation. LCpl Cline was killed in action during the Battle of Nasiriyah on March 23, 2003, while serving with 1st Battalion, 2d Marines during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

According to his citation, "with total disregard for

his own safety, LCpl Cline left his covered position and exposed himself to enemy fire while aiding his fellow Marines . . . He tirelessly carried wounded Marines 75 meters across the perilous highway . . . and provided security for the casualties." LCpl Cline was mortally wounded while protecting his fellow Marines.

In a statement to *Marine Corps Times*, Tina Cline said, "While nothing will ever make up for the loss of my husband, we were honored to receive the award upgrade on his behalf and will always be proud of the actions he took on March 23, 2003, saving the lives of his fellow Marines."

Media Reports



LCPL RICARDO DAVILA, USMC

BGen Kurt W. Stein, Director, Marine and Family Programs, presents the Silver Star to Tina Cline, widow of LCpl Donald Cline, during a ceremony in her late husband's honor in Mandan, N.D., on Nov. 1, 2017.



Route Bridle: No Patrol Was Routine On a Road Laden with IEDs

By Dick Camp

Prelude

In March 2006, the 3d Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion (3d LAR) deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) 05-07.1. Upon arrival in country, the battalion was designated Task Force Wolf Pack by attaching a Human Intelligence Exploitation Team, a Civil Action Group detachment, and Battery C, 1st Battalion, 10th Marines as a provisional infantry company.

In mid-July, TF Wolf Pack was suddenly tasked to provide a headquarters element and a maneuver capability to effect a Relief-in-Place with the U.S. Army's 4th Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment (4-14) and assume responsibility for Area of Operations (AO) Saber, an area spanning 27,200 square kilometers, the largest battalion-sized AO in western Iraq's Al Anbar Province. Major Matthew T. Good, the battalion operations officer,

remarked, "We will not get much of a turnover and will not be able to prepare much for it."

Designated Task Force Rawah, the unit consisted of half of Headquarters and Service Company and 1st and 2d Platoons of Company D for a total of 259 Marines and Sailors. "This stretched an already stretched battalion even thinner," said Captain Hunter R. Rawlings, commanding officer of Co D. The task force replaced the reinforced 4-14 Army Cavalry squadron, numbering 1,200 to 1,500 soldiers and 60 Stryker armored fighting vehicles, with only about 40 percent of 4-14's combat power.

Maj Good maintained that TF Wolf Pack was unable to match the Army's operational tempo. "We were out-cycled, a step behind because we were grossly under-manned, with only a third of the manpower our predecessors had."

Capt Rawlings agreed. "Rawah was

particularly bad," he said. "When we showed up to visit the police chief, he and his deputy's heads had been cut off and placed on stakes in front of the station."

AO Saber encompassed two cities—Rawah and Anah. The inhabitants were almost entirely Sunni, which provided fertile breeding grounds for the Sunni-based al-Qaida insurgency. The Army estimated that 98 percent of the local Sunni population either supported the insurgency or had been cowed into silence by intimidation and threats from insurgent groups. There were only four police officers left in Rawah. Five were murdered and one was gruesomely beheaded, with his head placed in a banana crate and left in the market square. Most of the other police officers quit.

A captured insurgent admitted that, "There's scarcely a family that doesn't have at least one son or cousin who worked as a henchman or leader of the local branch of al-Qaida in Iraq or other terror groups." In the 11 months that 4-14 had operated in AO Saber, the squadron had lost eight soldiers and 19 Strykers to insurgent IED attacks.



A Deadly Assignment

On July 29, a week after taking over from the Army, a light armored vehicle (LAV-25) from Second Lieutenant Courtney Rapé's 2d Plt was manning a joint Iraqi/Marine Traffic Control Point 3 (TCP-3) on the north side of the Rawah Bridge when a large fuel tanker approached the gate. After being passed through the outer checkpoint by the Iraqi police gate guards, the vehicle accelerated directly for the building where the off-duty members of the platoon were resting. Sentries Corporal Phillip E. Baucus and Lance Corporal Anthony E. Butterfield ordered the driver to halt, and when he ignored them, the two opened fire, forcing the truck to stop approximately 6 feet from the HESCO reinforced berthing area.

The driver then detonated the explosive-laden vehicle, killing the two Marine sentries and collapsing the walls and roof of the billet. Rapé said, "I was 5 to 6 miles away at another checkpoint and I heard and felt the explosion." It was later determined that the truck was loaded with 900 pounds of explosives, and if it had hit the building, all of the Marines would have likely been killed. As it was, two platoon members inside, Private First Class Jason Hanson and Sergeant Christian B. Williams, were killed. Lance Corporal Joseph T. Hand and Corporal Adam A. Galvez were injured. Cpl Baucus and LCpl Butterfield later were posthumously awarded the Bronze Stars with combat "V," and in early September, Rawah police captured an Iraqi suspected of involvement in the bombing.

Immediately after the explosion, the TCP was attacked with approximately 30 rounds of sporadic small arms fire. Maj Good said, "It was mostly ineffective but the [bombing] casualties had to be evacuated by ground transportation but the small arms fire kept a medevac helicopter from landing." An RPG team maneuvering to the east of the position came under fire, causing the detonation of a rocket they were carrying and killing the team. A sweep of the area revealed scattered, unidentified body parts.

"That night I discussed the attack with the platoon," Rapé said. "It was tough, certainly a shock. Up to that point, we had had a very successful deployment and for the first couple of weeks it was relatively quiet. The loss of four Marines was painful, but the platoon remained combat effective and dedicated to the mission."

The next night Maj Good said, "We responded with a series of targeted raids after people who were suspected of having some affiliation with the attack. We detained an insurgent's father, but he did not cooperate. For the first time since



COURTESY OF 2NDLT COURTNEY RAPE, USMC

Platoon commander 2ndLt Courtney Rapé ensured that his Marines stayed in the fight while they were deployed to Iraq during 2006.

Fallujah, we are facing an enemy who is motivated by ideology who have been taught to hate."

Three weeks after the suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive device, four LAV-25s from Rapé's platoon were motoring along Route Bridle 2 kilometers northwest of Rawah on their routine afternoon patrol, except that no patrol on Route Bridle was routine. Small arms and improvised explosive device (IED) attacks were a constant threat for Co D. Rapé was told by the Stryker squadron, "There's a ton of IEDs on that dirt road.

If you can avoid it, avoid it!" Rawlings agreed. He had been told by two of the Army company commanders, "There are IEDs everywhere, already pre-laid—all they have to do is put a battery on them. Just never go down Route Bridle."

The battalion had cancelled four previous patrols along the route because of this danger; however, a decision was made to establish a vehicle control point (VCP) on a dominating hill on the western edge of Rawah. Route Bridle was the only available road. Through the luck of the draw, the 2d Plt drew the mission for the patrol. The platoon was well aware of the danger and, with only weeks to go before rotating home, the Marines were in a heightened state of vigilance. "We all knew that Bridle was dangerous," Rapé said, "but I knew they wouldn't send us there unless it was critical."

The patrol was spread out, traveling in a standard road formation with 30 meters between vehicles. The scouts rode in the personnel compartment. As the platoon approached the hill, the first three vehicles swung off the road to the left, climbed over a short embankment, and started up the slope. "I was the first up the hill," Rapé recalled, "with the other vehicles behind me. Because of the pressure-plate IED threat, it was SOP for the following LAVs to keep in my tracks."

The last vehicle turned short of the others. As it crossed the berm, a catastrophic explosion rocked it. "An IED went off on the back right wheels of the vehicle, just behind the vehicle commander and under the scouts," Rapé explained. The vehicle had run over a pressure plate



USMC

LAV-25s from TF Wolfpack monitor roads for small arms and IEDs.



COURTESY OF CAPT HUNTER RAWLINGS, USMC

Capt Rawlings, left, and two scouts inspect an IED crater. The IED exploded only 5 feet from Rawlings' LAV.

IED consisting of three 155 mm artillery shells resting on top of a metal plate and a 55-gallon drum of fuel accelerant. "It cooked off all the ammunition in the vehicle," Rapé stated, "AT-4s, small arms, and 25 mm. The explosions were so heavy I knew medevac helicopters couldn't land anywhere nearby and requested ground evac."

The 14-ton vehicle was instantly engulfed in flames. The vehicle commander, Staff Sergeant Blaine L. Scott, suffered burns over 40 percent of his body and was stuck halfway in the turret on top of the vehicle. Scouts Corporal Adam A. Galvez, Lance Corporal Randy L. Newman and Hospitalman Chadwick T. Kenyon died in the inferno. The fourth scout, Lance Corporal Gallegos, was ejected from the vehicle by the blast and lay unconscious and on fire. Two other troops were able to extricate themselves from the destroyed vehicle with only minor injuries.

Lance Corporal Matthew W. Carter, the driver of the vehicle, was able to escape with severe burns on his body and hands. Instead of rushing to safety from the flames and exploding ordnance, he rushed to the scout compartment and attempted to force open the jammed hatches, further burning his hands. Unable to budge the doors, he rushed over to LCpl Gallegos, who was on fire and unable to move or cry for help, and extinguished the fire.

Lance Corporal Joseph T. Hand, a scout in the second LAV, jumped out of his moving vehicle and ran back to the burning hulk. Despite the danger from the ongoing fire and explosions, he crawled on top of the engulfed LAV and pulled the severely injured platoon sergeant, SSgt Scott, to the ground and away from the flames. LCpl Hand administered vital medical support to the severely injured survivor.

The horrific bombings sent shockwaves

through the company, threatening to undermine morale. Capt Rawlings noted that the incident was "clearly affecting everyone. I could see it in their faces." After higher headquarters launched an investigation to determine the circumstances surrounding the incident, "morale went even lower," Rawlings said.

Maj Good noted, "White Platoon has sustained 50 percent casualties after operations in Habbaniya, Fallujah, Kharma, Rutbah, Hanza and Rawah. At this time, they are pretty much mission incapable and have, for all intents and purposes, been shelved."

The Bomb Maker

Capt Rawlings was provided intelligence indicating that the Aug. 20 IED attack was engineered by a former member of Saddam Hussein's army. According to the intelligence reports, the Iraqi had received specialized training in Syria and used the country as a base of operations, entering Iraq only to carry out one or two attacks on newly arrived American units before quickly escaping back across the border to rearm and refit. He remained elusive despite several attempts to capture or kill him.

U.S. intelligence agencies compiled an extensive profile of the Bomb Maker, including his name, where he lived and even the location of his girlfriend's house about 10-12 kilometers west of the city on Route Bridle. They knew he visited her on a regular basis and traveled on a small, green motorcycle. A photograph of the Bomb Maker was circulated. The photo showed an Iraqi man in his mid-30s wearing a tracksuit with running shoes. The man had black hair and a beard with a roundish face and slim, fairly fit body. There was a standing order that he was to be apprehended.

According to intelligence sources, the Bomb Maker did not make the IED components. He depended on others to acquire and manufacture the bombs. His sole assignment was to emplace and trigger bombs, which he completed with great skill. He seemed to have a sixth sense for placing IEDs in the most effective locations for maximum damage. The Aug. 20 strike represented a prime example of his work. The reports also indicated that he was a lone wolf, working independently. The profile did not specify his motivation.

Retribution

The Bomb Maker's attack left Capt Rawlings with a deep-seated anger. "I wanted to get the SOB," he declared. "I had such hatred for this guy ... such anger!" For the remaining weeks of the deployment, the company searched for the bomber but did not have any success.



Above: An LAV with scouts checks for IEDs. (USMC photo)

Below: Scouts spread out as vehicles travel in standard road formation of 30 meters between vehicles. (USMC photo)



LAV-25

In the 1980s, the Marine Corps was looking for a light armored vehicle (LAV) to provide divisions with improved mobility. The Corps selected a vehicle based on a Swiss design. The light armored vehicle is an eight-wheeled amphibious armored reconnaissance vehicle powered by a diesel turbo-charged engine capable of speeds up to 62 mph on land and about 7 mph in water using equipped propellers. The LAV is fitted with a turret that has a 360-degree traverse. It is armed with a Bushmaster M242 25 mm chain gun, and two M240 machine guns, one coaxial and the other pintle-mounted. The LAV has a crew of three—a vehicle commander, gunner, and driver—and can accommodate six scouts in the passenger compartment. There are currently seven variants, which give the vehicle a capability to accomplish a variety of missions.

Dick Camp

Rawlings felt great frustration at the end of the deployment without eliminating the bomber; however, the Bomb Maker's murderous activities generated high-level attention. A Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC) team was tasked to capture or kill him.

Small World

Fast-forward 10 years to 2016. Rawlings and Good were lieutenant colonels and instructors at the Marine Corps Command and Staff College. The two were in Gettysburg, Pa., shepherding the Command and Staff warrior scholars on a Professional

Military Education (PME) tour of the battlefield when a fellow instructor said, "I overheard you talking about the IED incident in Rawah. I know about the guy." Rawlings was taken aback and asked him to explain. "I was in MARSOC at the time and got the word through the tasking unit that this IED planter was just playing hell with our Marines [and] we need you to go get him. The guy is out in the wood-work making some bad things happen."

According to Rawlings, the officer described how "he got his team ready. He went through his own pattern analysis and the [intelligence] guys picked up what

they needed to identify the target house. The team inserted by helicopter on the objective, raided the house and quickly found that the Bomb Maker was not there. Instead of immediately withdrawing, the team made it appear that they were pulling out, but in fact left a stay-behind team." Good referred to this as the "mother-in-law tactic"—she just never leaves.

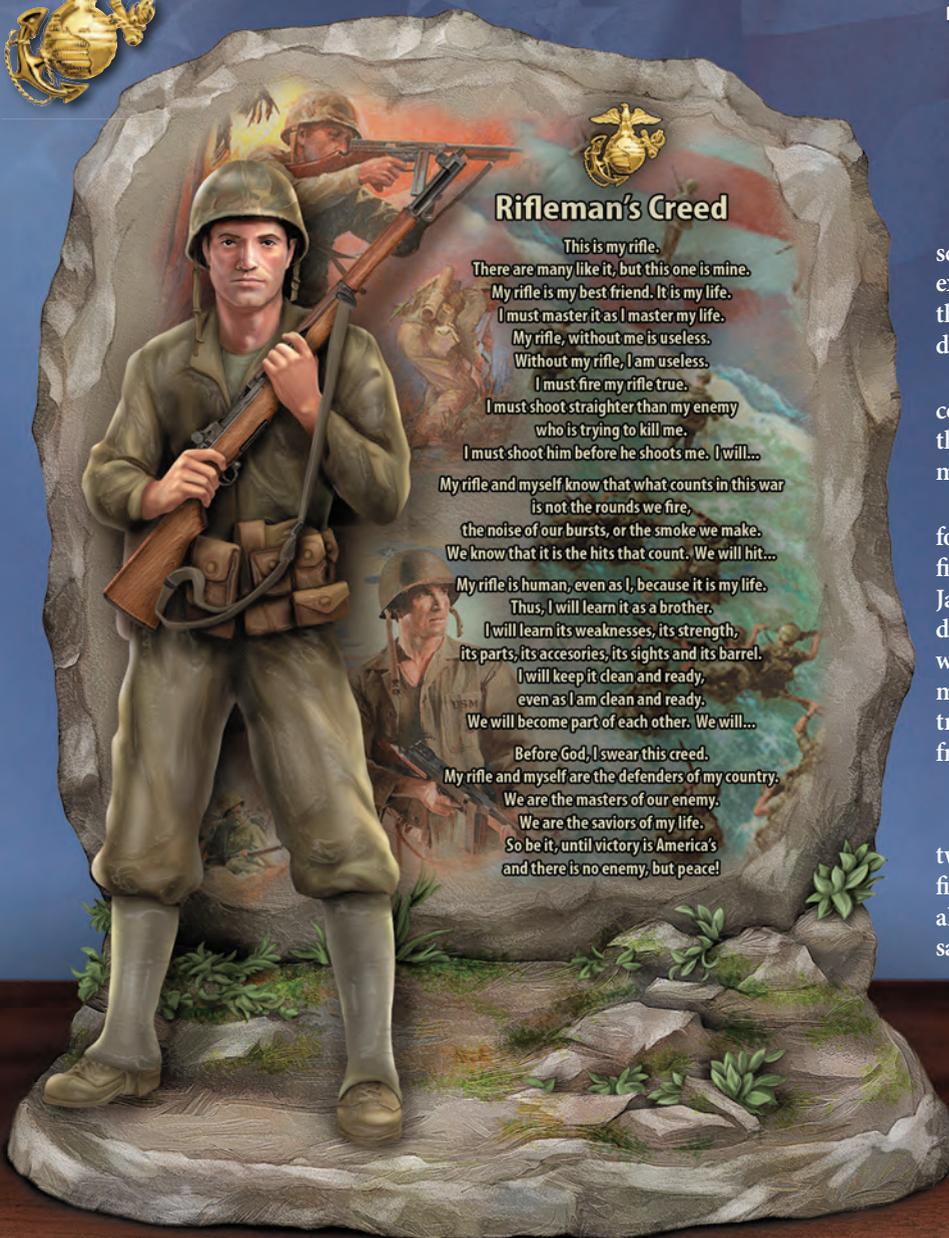
"The stay-behind team expected a long wait, but instead the target showed up within a couple of hours. As he entered the house, he came face-to-face with the MARSOC team leader, who saw the surprised look on the man's face. The Bomb Maker made a grab for his weapon, but before he could use it, the team leader shot and killed him." After a decade had passed, the elimination of the Bomb Maker finally gave LtCol Rawlings the closure he sought.

Author's bio: Dick Camp, a retired Marine colonel, is the former director of operations for the National Museum of the Marine Corps, former deputy director and director (acting) of the Marine Corps History Division and a prolific author. His most recent nonfiction books, "Shadow Warriors" and "Assault From the Sky," are available from The MARINE Shop. He is a frequent contributor to Leatherneck. 🇺🇸



The leathernecks of 2d Plt, Co D, 3d LAV Bn, like the rest of TF Wolfpack, were spread thin across AO Saber.

Every U.S. Marine Is First a Rifleman.



Rifleman's Creed

This is my rifle.
 There are many like it, but this one is mine.
 My rifle is my best friend. It is my life.
 I must master it as I master my life.
 My rifle, without me is useless.
 Without my rifle, I am useless.
 I must fire my rifle true.
 I must shoot straighter than my enemy
 who is trying to kill me.
 I must shoot him before he shoots me. I will...
 My rifle and myself know that what counts in this war
 is not the rounds we fire,
 the noise of our bursts, or the smoke we make.
 We know that it is the hits that count. We will hit...
 My rifle is human, even as I, because it is my life.
 Thus, I will learn it as a brother.
 I will learn its weaknesses, its strength,
 its parts, its accessories, its sights and its barrel.
 I will keep it clean and ready,
 even as I am clean and ready.
 We will become part of each other. We will...
 Before God, I swear this creed.
 My rifle and myself are the defenders of my country.
 We are the masters of our enemy.
 We are the saviors of my life.
 So be it, until victory is America's
 and there is no enemy, but peace!

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**There are many like it,
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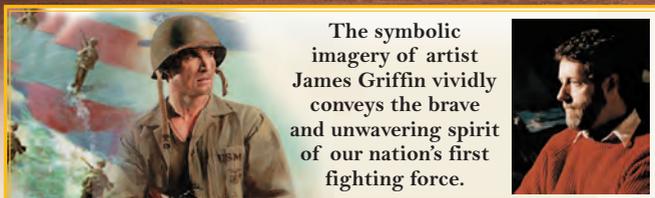
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SEA STORY OF THE MONTH

Thanks to a Mosquito

As Christmas 1969 approached, I had been serving as a grunt in Vietnam with “India” Company, 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, 1st Marine Division (Rein) for about six months. Illness was common with Marines who had been in the bush for prolonged periods, and my friend Jim Gleaton and I were medivacked to USS *Sanctuary* (AH-17) for malaria treatment. While we were recovering, rumors began spreading that Bob Hope, who was visiting a nearby aircraft carrier, might bring his show to *Sanctuary*. Few people believed the scuttlebutt, but sure enough the loudspeakers aboard the ship announced that he was coming with some of his troupe and would do a brief show for us.

Dressed in our blue hospital garb we all quickly scurried to where the show was going to be held to get a good vantage point, but as I took a seat I realized I had forgotten my camera. I asked my buddy Jim to save my seat while I fetched my Kodak Instamatic. On the way back to the area we were bunked in, I saw a large group of brass headed down the passageway toward me. I pressed against the bulkhead to let the procession pass and before I knew it, I was face to face with the man himself—Bob Hope. When I blurted out “Hi, Bob,” he stopped and shook my hand and asked where I was from. When I told him Utica, N.Y., he smiled and said he had done many vaudeville shows there. As he said that, he noticed I was looking over

his shoulder. He turned and said, “Oh, this is Neil Armstrong.” Astronaut Neil Armstrong then shook hands with me but noted I was looking over his shoulder as well. He looked behind him, and then laughingly said, “Bob, I don’t think he’s interested in meeting us.” You see, behind Hope and Armstrong was Connie Stevens and several of the lovely showgirls they had brought aboard. Everyone laughed and the procession moved on. As all the ladies passed me, Connie and the girls shook my hand, or said hi, and one even gave me a kiss on the cheek.

After the last of the trailing brass had passed, I quickly fetched my camera and made my way back to the show. It was an abbreviated show due to the lack of space and time, but it meant a great deal to us. At the end of the show we sang “Silent Night,” and I don’t think there was a dry eye in the place. It is a memory that I will always treasure ... Bob in his white shirt and jacket, Neil in his dark plaid shirt, the ladies, the music and songs, the jokes ... a lasting memory that is all due to one small mosquito. Thanks for the memory, Bob and thank you, mosquito.

Michael K. LeClair
USMC (Ret)
Longs, S.C.

Taking One for the Team

During boot camp in 1969, the briefing on the Uniform Code of Military Justice notwithstanding, most of the recruits in platoon 3146 at San Diego thought our drill instructors had the power of life and death over us. They were devilishly clever at gaining and maintaining our attention, to include throwing whatever they had in their hands with

seeming unerring accuracy at any private not towing the mark for whatever reason. This could be a boot, mess kit, or on one occasion, an M14 thrown from several yards away that hit the misbehaving private’s rifle at the balance of the piece and knocked him on his assets. Discipline, discipline, discipline.

Meals were no exception. Our routine was always the same. We entered the mess hall, took a tray, sidestepped through the line and theoretically held the tray out if we wanted something or held it back if we didn’t. At the end of the line we marched smartly to the long tables we were to occupy.

Each table had room for 10 privates on each side with a long bench adjacent that we sat upon. Once we reached the Marine already standing at attention at the table, we would execute right or left face, put our tray down smartly and assume the position of attention. Once the table was full, the drill instructor would command, “Ready, seats.”

Our job was to ensure that every rear end hit the bench at the same moment. We would then sit at the position of attention until the drill instructor shouted, “Eat!” Woe to the table where this level of precision wasn’t met. Generally we would repeat the drill until the DI was satisfied. Once that happened we would pass the half pint milk containers that were delivered to the head of the table until each man had two, and we would turn to our meals.

One day, I was next to Recruit Steve Ford who was the first to enter our row and was next to the window. After we’d gone through the seating drill several times, I was seated at what I trusted

was attention when suddenly I was hit with a carton of milk. I assumed I was slouching so I tightened up my position, but to no avail, I was hit again. I actually heard this carton coming and it hit me with enough force to cause a small leak in the container. I was really scared now because not only was I screwing up, I didn’t know how, so I couldn’t fix it. I tightened up even more. I never even heard the third milk carton. I just assumed it was traveling faster than the speed of sound when it hit me. This time it had sufficient force to pop open the top and the entire contents splashed onto the recruit next to me. I just assumed I was a dead man.

Suddenly from the end of the table a drill instructor’s trained voice shouted, “Munson, you idiot, get out of the way. I’m trying to hit that dirtbag next to you!” I leaned way back and the next carton hit Steve with “unerring accuracy.”

Curt Munson
USMC, 1969-1993
Edmond, Okla.

Passing the Russian Flag

In March 1954, I was on duty at the U.S. Embassy in Vienna, Austria. At that time Austria was occupied by America, Russia, France and England. My two-year tour was coming to an end and replacements were starting to come into Vienna. One of those was Corporal Jeff. In the process of getting squared away, Jeff found he had a little spare time and decided to explore his new home. As he was strolling down the street he noticed a young man standing in front of the Russian Embassy looking at the big Russian flag. For whatever reason, this young man decided he wanted the

flag and climbed up the side of the building to get it. As he was gathering the flag, two Russian guards saw him and gave chase.

While Cpl Jeff was looking at shops and restaurants the man with the flag passed him and handed him the flag. The next thing Jeff knew he was standing there holding the Russian flag and looking down the barrel of two Russian burp guns. Needless to say this had the prospect of becoming an international incident. Fortunately for Cpl Jeff and the United States, the two Russian guards confirmed Cpl Jeff's story. However, the Russians insisted that someone be punished and Cpl Jeff was restricted to quarters for 90 days.

Bill Berry
USMC, 1949-1958
Hot Springs, Ark.

Trading Cognac Prohibited

I was the exercise director for Dynamic Impact 94 for Marine Forces Europe filling the billet for Strike Force South conducted at Capo Teulada in Sardinia. A combined NATO exercise, the U.S. element was the 24th MEU commanded by then Colonel Marty Berndt. As the MEU returned from Somalia, I received a message that Col Berndt wanted to meet with me to discuss something of concern. When we met, he said there was a problem with Marines bringing alcohol back to the ship; they were showing up with small bottles of cognac. Not sure what was going on, I told him I would check on it.

As it turned out, the Italian field rations contained a small bottle of cognac for the evening meal. Go figure. We had placed one Marine and one Italian soldier together as range guards around the area at Capo Teulada. We thought it was a way of promoting goodwill, etc. The Marines discovered the cache of cognac and,

being a resourceful group, started to trade small bottles of Tabasco sauce for the cognac.

Col Berndt then published instructions that no trading of the cognac was allowed for the Marines from the MEU. Crisis ended.

Col William T. Anderson
USMC (Ret)
Spotsylvania, Va.

Standing Watch

It was a Sunday in September 1967 and my company had just come out of the field in Vietnam. Arriving at our combat base, two other grunts and I were told we had in-country R&R and we had to leave now. Being 14 miles south of Da Nang, we hitched rides north.

When we came to a "Y" junction, we needed to go right but the truck was going left. Jumping off the truck we started walking. China Beach was another mile or two ahead. Just coming out of the bush and heading into the rear, we must have been a sight. Unshaven, dirty sweaty utilities, 782 gear, helmets and M16s and smelling to high heaven, we continued walking down the hot and dusty road.

A civilian Jeep pulled up beside us. The driver asked where we were going and we told him China Beach. He told us to jump in and he would deliver us. Arriving at the gate we noticed a sign, "Closed Sunday." The civilian told us he would take us to his house and we could stay there overnight. Not only could we stay overnight, his wife would make us dinner and breakfast.

Our hosts pulled out all the stops. We found that he was the country representative for a National Liquor Company and supplied all of officers' clubs in Vietnam. In his living room was a table about 8 feet long filled with at least 40 bottles of booze. He told us we could have as much as we wanted.

After showering, we sat down to eat. His wife was Filipina and served chicken adobo with rice. It tasted wonderful. We retired to the living room for drinks and conversation. Not having had any liquor for several months, the three of us couldn't take more than one drink each.

When we retired to the bedroom we each had our own bed with clean sheets. Again, this was heaven as we had not seen the like for several months.

Our hosts' house was an old two-story French mansion surrounded by a 10 foot high rock wall in the middle of Da Nang. This worried us as to security. We envisioned the Viet Cong seeing us go into the compound and then later slipping in to massacre us while we slept. In our delusional state we decided to stand watch looking out the bedroom window as if we were in the field.

I know I will forever be grateful to this man and his wife for their selfless and kind acts toward three grungy grunt Marines. I just wish I could thank them again.

Sgt Ken Fields
Columbia, Mo.

Marine's Slang Gone Wrong

I was designated acting staff sergeant (E-5) waiting for promotion to E-6 in the 6th Marine Regiment's S-3 section. One of my duties was to publish training schedule guidelines for the regiment. I would receive training requirements and prepare layouts for the mimeograph machine stencils. All was contained on an 8x10½-inch sheet of paper. Juggling events, unit names, locations, titles and such to fit on one page was sometimes a perplexing chore—even with landscape orientation. Innovative abbreviations became the norm and occasionally "grunt argot" would find its

way into the final document.

I was the only person in the S-3 section one day when Colonel Austin Conner "Shifty" Shofner, the regimental commanding officer, bounded into the office with a copy of the most recent schedule asking for Lieutenant Colonel Lobel. I stood, came to attention and responded that the operations officer was at mess and asked what I could do. Col Shofner asked, "What does OGA mean on this schedule?" I responded, "Organized Grab Ass, Sir." I don't remember exactly what ran through my brain at the time but I'm sure it wasn't pleasant because the blood had drained.

After a brief pause Col Shofner tossed his head back and let loose a bellowing laugh that ricocheted off the bulkheads of the passageway as he strode back to his office.

I informed the S-3 chief of Col Shofner's visit. He grimaced, but luckily I never heard another word about the abbreviation.

Donald F. Perkins
Raleigh, N.C.

Correction: In the December 2017 "Sea Stories," Alligator Patrol by Steve Dumovich, was told to him by Col Fred Cone, USMC (Ret).

Do you have an interesting story from your time in the Corps that will give our readers a good chuckle? Maybe it's a boot camp tale or a good old sea story that will have us in stitches? We would love to hear your stories and see any accompanying photographs. Write them down (500 words or less) and send them to: Patricia Everett, Leatherneck Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134, or email them to p.everett@mca-marines.org. We offer \$25 or a one-year MCA&F membership for the "Sea Story of the Month." Spread the word! 🍷

“FIRST TO FIGHT”

1st Force Reconnaissance in Hue City



The 1st Force Recon Marines operated from Hill 327 near Da Nang and from a base in Phu Bai south of Hue City. They conducted special ops in support of the III Marine Amphibious Force from the Mekong Delta to the DMZ. (USMC photo)

By Kyle Watts

Veterans and civilians alike assume significance in the battle for Hue City. The warriors who fought in that gruesome urban combat are rightfully respected and revered. Prior to the battle in the city, the Marines of 1st Force Reconnaissance Company waged a far less recognized or understood war in the surrounding jungle. Their role supporting Operation Hue City commenced weeks prior to the Tet Offensive in January 1968 and carried into the main conflict. Their fight adopted various forms for which their skills were uniquely suited.

“First to Fight” was their motto. It held true in the hills surrounding Hue, just as it did in every operation they supported. These Marines never held the spotlight, but their mission was vital, and they always fought with a “kill or be killed” mindset. Moving swiftly and silently on long-range patrols, four to eight-man teams observed the enemy from the

shadows, set up ambushes, and called for fire from artillery or air support. What they lacked in numerical superiority or firepower they made up for in stunning expertise, bravery, and creative action. A study conducted during the war concluded, that for every 1st Force Recon Marine killed in action, 34 enemy soldiers were killed. This kill ratio was more than four times higher than regular Marine infantry units.

For most people today, only Hollywood can create the scenes and situations 1st Force Recon Marines faced in Vietnam. Whether dangling in midair while taking fire, jumping from a cliff into the back of a waiting helicopter, or diving into an underwater tunnel looking for the enemy, it was routine for these elite Marines. It was their job. The jungles surrounding Hue were no exception.

1st Force Recon launched patrols north toward the city from their base in Phu Bai, 8 miles south of Hue. Through December 1967 and January 1968, the Marines experienced more and more contact with

the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and saw increased activity throughout the area. Some patrols were overrun and lost. Others were extracted under fire, barely escaping alive. Even so, the company maintained a rigorous patrol schedule.

Bill Hauxhurst, a 1st Force Recon Marine who served from late 1967 to early 1969, described, “Operations took on a whole new intensity in ’68. We were very busy—in the bush for five or six days, back for a couple days, then right back out again. We never went into an area where it wasn’t expected there was enemy present. That was our reason for being there, so there were no patrols where you ever thought, ‘Well this is going to be a cakewalk.’”

As the Tet holiday approached, recon Marines watched the NVA streaming into Hue. After the offensive was launched on Jan. 31, patrols became even more harrowing.

“Every day, all we did was count literally hundreds of enemy troops moving into the city,” said Bob Buda, a platoon

sergeant and team leader with 1st Force Recon, who received three Purple Hearts. “We were trying to call fire missions and air support constantly.”

The battle that raged in the city made helicopter extraction for the recon patrols nearly impossible. Anything in the air was likely to be shot down.

On one patrol, Buda’s team was detected by a larger enemy force. They ran from the enemy up the side of a mountain in a life or death game of cat and mouse. At the top, with nowhere else to go, the team called a helicopter for emergency extraction. The bird arrived to find the team standing at the edge of a cliff.

“The helicopter came in and hovered against the face of the cliff, which was an outcropping of stone in the mountain,” Buda recalled. “We were able to leap from the stone onto the tailgate of the helicopter one guy at a time to get out of there.”

One Marine missed the tailgate and fell more than 30 feet through the trees below. Those behind him watched their buddy disappear into the foliage, thinking they had witnessed his death. Shockingly, he reappeared back at the top of the cliff by the time the helicopter started pulling away with the rest of the team. One of the escort UH-1N Huey gunships swooped down to the cliff’s edge. When the crew felt the skids touch the ground, they grabbed the Marine into the helicopter. The entire patrol was extracted alive.

Another patrol produced similar circumstances for Buda and his team. The eight-man patrol ran into part of an NVA unit and initially maintained their position for the fight. It became clear that the enemy outnumbered them at least seven to one as the gun battle progressed. The enemy maneuvered close enough to lob grenades into their position. The Marines decided their only chance for survival was to climb to the top of a nearby hill.

The team fought through the blocking enemy position, killing four NVA soldiers in the process. The dense jungle provided concealment as they moved toward the top of the hill in search of a possible extraction site. The Marines had been on patrol for more than 18 hours and darkness was settling in. The last rays of sunlight provided the last possibility of hope for extraction from the jungle and the enemy force that now had them completely surrounded.

At the head of the column, Buda encountered a large trail. He posted security while the remainder of the team passed and moved up the trail toward the high ground. AK47 fire sprayed in the Marines’ direction as they emerged from the jungle. The errant rounds revealed the enemy closing in, but not yet close enough to



Above: Sgt Bob Buda debriefed the only remaining monk at a Buddhist temple in Hue City, 1968. (USMC photo)

Below: Sgt Bob Buda, left, and Cpl Sam Carver stand in typical recon patrol gear.



COURTESY OF BOB BUDA

see. Buda took this opportunity to set up his own ambush.

“I pulled a claymore out of my pack and emplaced it on the side of the trail,” he said. “I rolled out the line and took a hidden position behind a tree while the rest of the team moved up toward the hill top.”

30 feet of wire lay behind him before the NVA patrol came into view. The enemy spanned the width of the trail, moving in ranks towards Buda’s concealed position. He waited patiently as the patrol moved

into range. Sweat burned in his eyes and he tried to control his breathing while hiding motionless. The enemy approached just feet from the claymore and Buda squeezed the detonator. The blast flung the four closest NVA through the air. Hundreds of steel balls shot out, shredding the flying bodies and others still on their feet. Ten enemy soldiers died instantly. The ensuing confusion gave Buda enough time to slip away and rejoin the rest of the patrol at the top of the hill.

The team leader called for emergency extraction. By the time helicopters were overhead, darkness had fallen. The Marines fought the enemy closing in on all sides. There was nowhere else to go. The patrol leader directed air support from the Huey gunships. This delicate coordination spelled life or death for the Marines. Friendly fire from the gunships posed a threat as dangerous as the approaching NVA. The Hueys made multiple strafing runs, lighting up the jungle with machine-gun fire and rockets. The Marines on the ground saw enemy tracers return skyward toward the helicopters.

A CH-46E Sea Knight hovered into position over the patrol. Crewmembers poured out heavy machine-gun fire from the tail and side doors as they lowered a hoist 60 feet down to the ground. The device, called a “jungle penetrator,” looked like a three-pronged fishhook and was designed to lift one man. In situations like these, recon teams often loaded two or even three Marines at a time. Facing each other, leg over leg, the Marines clutched one another and the hoist as they rose through the air toward the belly of the bird. While the team lifted out, the gunships continued blazing paths through the jungle around their position.

Agonizing seconds turned into minutes. The helicopter stayed steady overhead while the team made trip after trip getting everyone aboard. AK47 rounds smacked the side of the helicopter and tore through

the trees. One Marine was shot in midair as the hoist lifted him skyward. Finally, the last of the team made it aboard, and the helicopter ascended into the air and out of harm’s way.

Into these perilous circumstances, recon Marines unhesitatingly patrolled. They collected intelligence and monitored the enemy’s ingress and egress from the city. 1st Force Recon conducted 35 patrols through the month of February, calling more than 120 fire missions or air strikes on enemy targets. Out of 180 Marines in the company, 34 were wounded and four were killed.

Meanwhile, the streets of Hue raged in increasingly lethal conflict. The Vietnamese jungle presented grunts with unimaginable dangers and challenges, but the urban environment of Hue combined the deadliest parts of modern warfare in close quarter battles that infantry Marines were not accustomed to fighting.

The simple geography of Hue presented its own challenges. The Perfume River cut through the middle of the city, splitting it in two. North of the river, the ancient Citadel was almost completely overrun. On the south side, Marines withstood the initial attacks from their base at the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) compound.

February dragged on and the infantry worked its way through the city south of the river. As their grasp tightened over the south side, commanders looked north

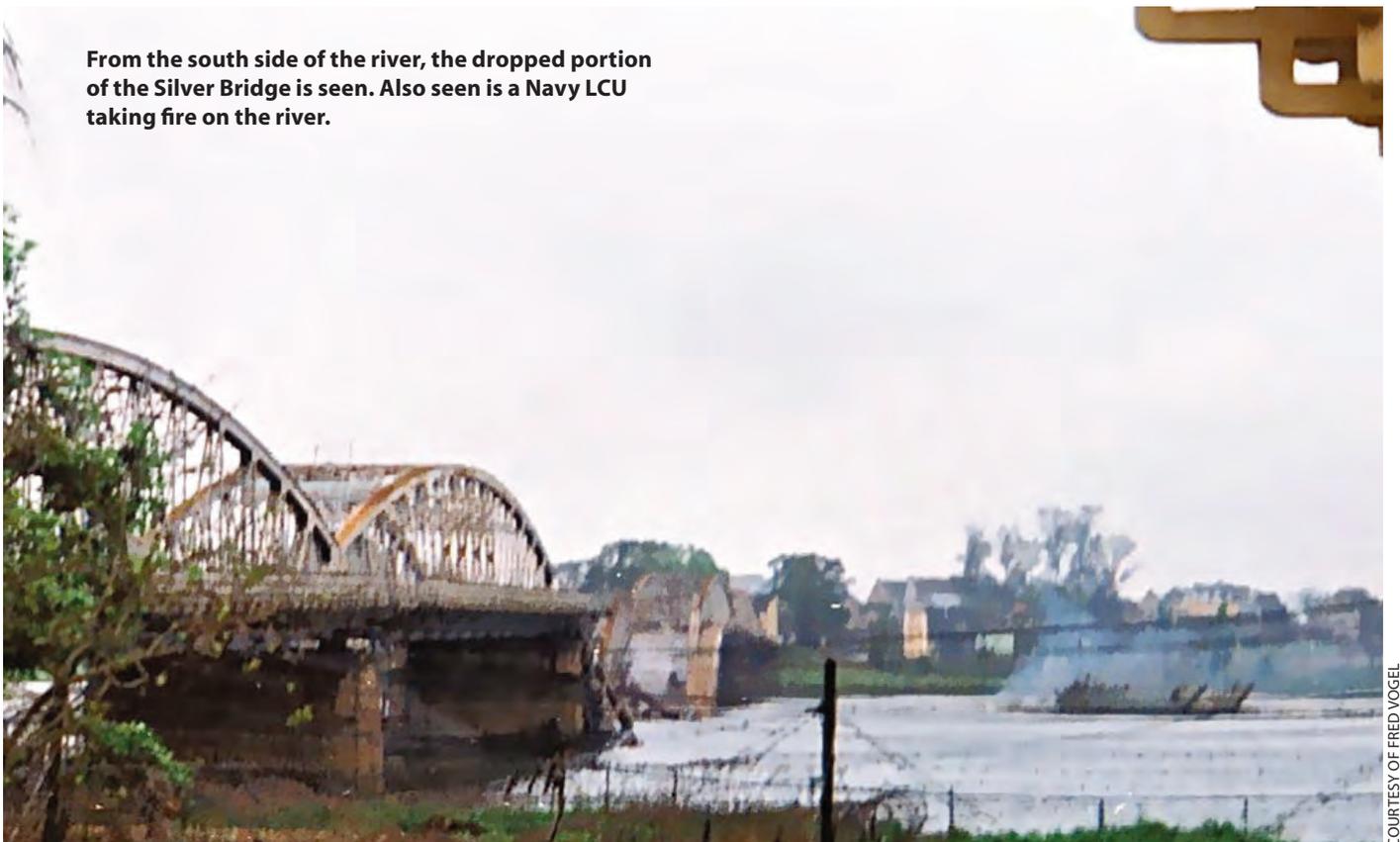
into the Citadel. One bridge served as the primary river crossing. The Silver Bridge, as Marines called it, stood more than 1,000 feet long and 30 feet wide. A single span closer to the north side had been blown, making it impossible to cross.

Marines overcame the obstacle by calling Navy Landing Craft Utility (LCU) vessels to ferry Marines and vehicles across the river. Intense fire from the north side forced the LCUs to follow the Perfume River all the way around the city and offload personnel at the northeast corner of the Citadel. Marines then battled south through the Citadel back toward the Silver Bridge.

North Vietnamese dominance faltered on both sides of the river. Resistance continued throughout the city, but the Marines felt they had enough control to finally cross the Silver Bridge. Enabling this avenue of approach would provide them a huge tactical advantage and swift means of reinforcement.

A pontoon could be constructed for crossing the dropped span; however, the standing portion of the bridge presented great risk. A column of infantry or convoy of tanks would present a perfect target for enemy spotters monitoring the bridge, waiting to detonate explosives rigged to any other portion. The Marines had to know if more explosives were present. To get this intelligence, they needed a dive team. To get the dive team, they called 1st Force Recon.

From the south side of the river, the dropped portion of the Silver Bridge is seen. Also seen is a Navy LCU taking fire on the river.



COURTESY OF FRED VOGEL

Scuba-trained Marines conducted combat diving as a collateral duty. These unique missions came down infrequently when compared to their long-range patrols. Fewer than one-third of the Marines in the company held scuba qualifications. They were needed in combat before they could receive the full regimen of recon training. These dive teams supported both the Army and Marines, performing a wide range of missions, including frequent bridge inspections. Teams also dove river bottoms in search of lost equipment or bodies.

The most unnerving dives came when infantry units chasing an enemy soldier observed the soldier jumping into water without resurfacing. Often, this indicated the presence of an underwater tunnel entrance that needed to be flushed out. Divers inspecting these tunnels either waited under the water for someone to emerge or swam into the tunnel, expecting to surface in a hole full of NVA.

Nature itself presented many dangers to Marines in the water. The enemy situation on the surface factored heavily as well. The greatest danger underwater was the presence of enemy divers. NVA naval sappers occupied the waterways opposing the Marines. To arm themselves, divers kept their fighting knives close. Some Marines even carried privately purchased revolvers. Standard-issue pistols were useless in submerged combat, but revolvers still operated. Stories surfaced of underwater gun battles, knife fights and other horrors potentially awaiting Marines as they dove.

Back at Phu Bai on the morning of Feb. 24, Captain Fred Vogel received the call ordering the dive of the Silver Bridge. As the company Dive Officer, Vogel was no stranger to combat diving and the hazards involved. He oversaw the diving program in addition to his other duties, including long-range patrols. His first order of business was to assemble a team of scuba-trained Marines not already out on patrol.

His first obvious selection was Sergeant Robert Hughes. Hughes held the role of Dive Noncommissioned Officer (NCO), and diving and maintaining the scuba gear for the unit was his primary responsibility. A giant of a man with numerous combat dives under his belt, Sgt Hughes was the subject of several underwater horror stories floating around 1st Force Recon. Stories circulated that he had at least two submerged kills involving knives, grappling and ripping out an enemy diver's throat. "There is no one I would rather have as security underwater than Sgt Hughes," recalled Capt Vogel.

Next, Vogel found Corporal Dave Thompson, a 21-year old who had arrived in Vietnam only three weeks earlier.



COURTESY OF FRED VOGEL

Capt Fred Vogel, the Dive Officer for 1st Force Recon Co, geared up for the assault to recapture the Hue bridge.

Thompson had participated in just one patrol, though he was scuba-trained. Thompson would later grow into his role as a recon team leader and receive the Silver Star, but this served as his initial combat dive.

Cpl Buda was another scuba-trained Marine not in the bush. The 19-year-old had already seen action on 10 patrols around Hue, but like Thompson, this would be his first combat dive.

Vogel rounded up two more divers and a corpsman. They assembled their personal gear in an unusual fashion. Cammie paint, tiger stripe uniforms, boonie covers,

and 20 magazines of ammunition were standard protocol for recon. On this mission, they donned flak jackets and helmets for protection in the city. Sgt Hughes collected the scuba tanks, regulators, and rubber boat to take on the mission.

The team gathered in the road by their truck. Capt Vogel noticed two extra faces in the group.

"Sgt Hughes, who are these two and what are they doing here?" he asked.

"He's a truck driver, and he's a parachute rigger," replied Hughes.

His answer fell flat against the captain's raised eyebrow, as he searched for a good reason for why they intended to tag along.

"Sir, they joined the Marines to fight, and I told them they could come with us."

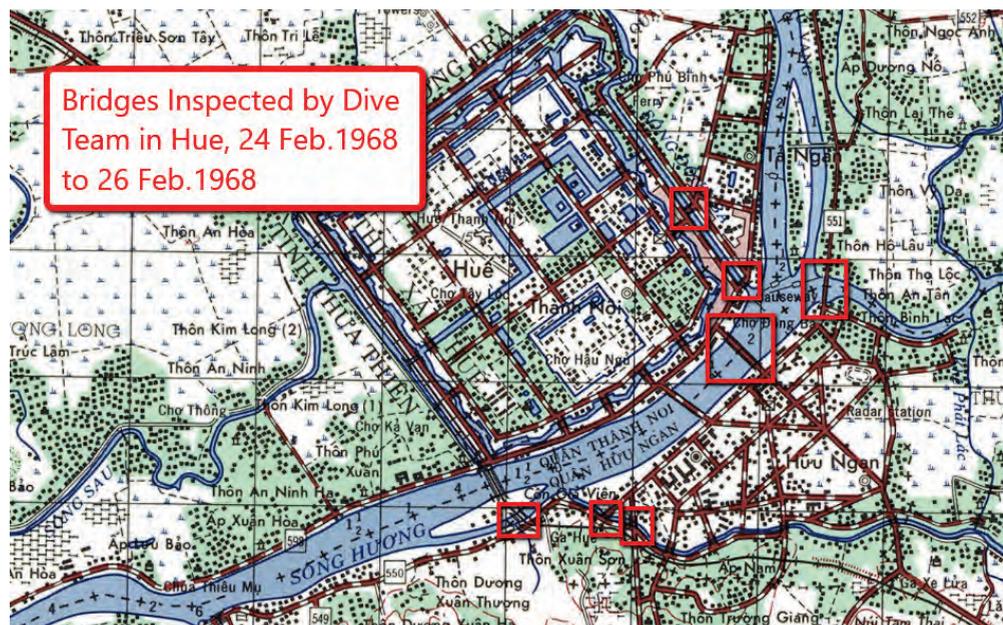
Vogel pondered for a moment. "Every Marine a rifleman," he thought to himself. "Carry on, sergeant!"

The nine Marines loaded up and the convoy departed for Hue.

They reached the city limits without incident, stopping first at the city's soccer stadium. As Vogel sought directions to the MACV compound, the rest of the team exited the truck. Unbeknownst to them, the stadium had become a casualty collection point, as well as a staging area and helicopter landing zone.

"When we pulled into the area, I looked across the field and all I saw were body bags and uncovered bodies uniformly laid out," recalled Buda. He realized the dead were not enemy soldiers. They were Marines. "I hadn't ever seen anything like that. I'd seen plenty of dead bad guys on patrol and had a couple guys on my team killed from time to time, but to see that many just laying out there, I was shocked. I still reflect on that to this day."

They reached the MACV compound and immediately got to work. They dis-



covered their orders now called for the inspection of eight different bridges, on both sides of the Perfume River, spread across the city. Their dive mission had virtually become an urban patrol, with diving included. They geared up and prepared to move out. A squad of Marines from 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment joined them to provide security. The grunts would help them navigate the city streets, and more importantly, secure the areas around dive sites as the vulnerable divers entered the water.

Capt Vogel elected to first inspect a causeway east of the Silver Bridge. Unlike other bridges in the area, the causeway was a mass of solid concrete just a few feet above the water line crossing a smaller tributary.

The team approached the south side of the causeway and took cover in a house nearby. In the street, they noticed a sand-bagged position surrounding a recoilless rifle. The infantry occupied the position to prevent unwanted company from the north. Thompson and Buda prepared to inspect the causeway. Without wetsuits, they braved the chilly water in their skivvies.

On the north side of the tributary, less than 200 meters away, NVA soldiers occupied buildings overlooking the causeway. Movement on the far banks attracted their attention. They watched in disbelief as they saw what appeared to be men, all but naked except for their flak jackets and helmets, approaching the causeway. The novelty of it all must have

worn off quickly, as they soon noticed the men were carrying rifles and opened fire.

Thompson and Buda hustled back to the house occupied by the rest of the team. Every Marine present returned fire across the river. Inaccurate mortar rounds fell in the buildings around them, and the deafening sound of recoilless rifles from both sides filled the air.

“I thought to myself, ‘Man, I’m sure as hell glad I’m not a grunt!’ ” recalled Buda. “Grunts didn’t want to come to Force Recon because they thought they would get killed on their first patrol. They didn’t realize that out in the bush, we have superiority with cover, concealment and surprise in our favor. These guys, on the other hand, go toe to toe with the bad guys face to face!”

After assessing the enemy situation, Capt Vogel determined that diving the causeway was not possible. The team’s visual inspection revealed it was structurally sound and crossable. They broke contact along with the security element and moved back towards the MACV compound.

Vogel decided next to complete the main focus of their mission and dive the Silver Bridge. Given the length of the bridge and number of pillars to inspect, two dive teams were needed.

The Marines suited up—or rather down—to enter the water. They stripped to their skivvies and put on their dive booties. These coral shoes protected their feet and fit snugly into their fins. Each grabbed a

life jacket, mask, regulator, fins and most importantly, a Ka-Bar. Lastly, each heaved the enormous “twin 90” scuba tanks onto their back. This 70-pound set of tanks was unheard of in civilian diving, but recon Marines trained with them and handled the load with ease.

Vogel and Buda paired together as the first team. Thompson and Hughes went second. The grunts established a perimeter on a traffic circle just off the south side of the bridge. From inside the position, the divers looked across 50 meters of open ground between them and the water. They planned to navigate this distance on their own.

The divers sprinted from cover toward the water. With dive gear in hand and scuba tanks weighing them down, adrenaline pumping through their blood provided their only source of speed. The enemy spotted movement and the men in the open drew NVA fire from the opposite side. Sniper rounds cracked overhead and kicked up the dirt. The Marines back in the perimeter returned covering fire over the divers’ heads.

“In the years since I’ve often wondered what the NVA thought. They had guys on the other side with binoculars watching, and they see these idiots running around in the middle of a battle wearing shorts and big scuba tanks coming down to the river. Clearly they would have known what we were doing, but it must have looked so incongruous to them,” Vogel mused. “It looked incongruous to me!”



Cpl Bob Buda and Cpl Dave Thompson prepare to inspect the causeway.

COURTESY OF FRED VOGEL



COURTESY OF FRED VOGEL

Capt Fred Vogel with the 1st Force Recon dive team seen here after clearing the Silver Bridge in Hue City in 1968.

The first shocking realization hit them instantly when they reached the river. The water temperature was only around 50 degrees. Without wetsuits, the Marines were chilled to the bone. Once submerged, the clarity of the water also surprised them. The Marines could see close to 20 feet. This factor alone would make it easier to inspect for explosives and detect any threats.

Five pillars suspended the Silver Bridge over the river. The center pillars extended more than 50 feet below the waterline to the bottom. Two divers visually inspected the pillars from a few feet away and investigated anything suspicious. The

other two provided security for their buddy—constantly watching for booby traps, enemy divers and any other dangers.

No explosives were readily apparent as the Marines searched from top to bottom. Swimming deeper, they began to see tons of ordnance spread across the river bottom.

“There were explosives and ammunition and weaponry all over, it was like an ammo dump. We saw tons of every type of projectile and thing you could dream of, but none of it was rigged to detonate on any part of the bridge,” remembered Buda.

An hour of diving revealed no threats to the structure. The divers swam back

toward the south side of the river. While Vogel and Buda finished the inspection, Thompson and Hughes exited the water.

“I just got out and made it about halfway back to where our gear was in a small trailer. There was still small arms fire off and on, but that’s when they started mortaring where we were diving,” remembered Thompson.

Back under the water, the first dive team shook as the explosions vibrated down. They saw bubbles like a shaken soda can and heard the boom rumble through the water as the mortar rounds exploded on the surface.

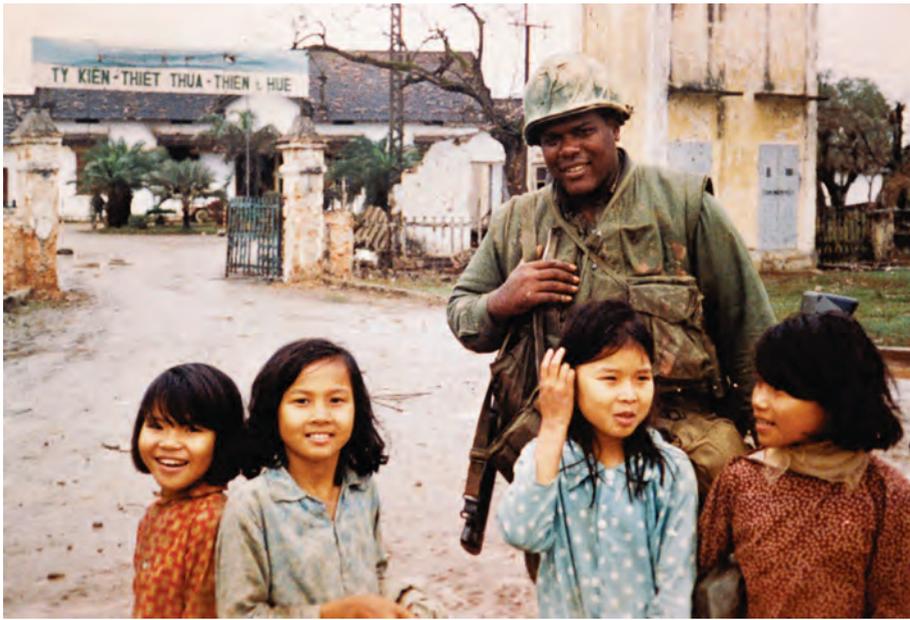
“That’s one thing the NVA messed up. They should have used delayed fuses,” Vogel remarked. “Coming down straight into water like that might as well have been a brick wall. If they had used delayed fuses, it might have gone down far enough to knock us out. Fortunately, they didn’t think that far ahead.”

The divers hugged the bottom of the river. The explosions above rumbled in their ears and chests as they swam until they surfaced under the bridge for cover. At the divers’ signal, the grunts back at the traffic circle opened up with everything they had. Vogel and Buda reached the perimeter unscathed.

With everyone back safely, they doffed their gear and returned to their flaks and



Pictured here is the causeway where the dive team first attempted a bridge inspection. The dive was aborted due to the intense enemy fire taken from the buildings on the north side. (Photo courtesy of Fred Vogel)



COURTESY OF FRED VOGEL

Above: Sgt Robert Hughes shown here with some local children near Hue City, 1968.

Below: Civilians are seen crossing one of the bridges. In the center of the bridge lies one of the many bodies that littered the city after the fighting.



COURTESY OF FRED VOGEL

helmets. They had successfully confirmed nothing was rigged to drop more of the Silver Bridge. The infantry could now plan a crossing in force.

Even though their primary mission was complete, they still had lots of work to do. It was around 4 p.m., and Vogel wanted to inspect one more bridge before darkness fell. He decided to cross over into the Citadel where several bridges required inspection.

The team moved quickly across the top side of the Silver Bridge, and over the makeshift pedestrian crossing erected at the downed span. They turned right and headed through the Dong Ba Market. Their target bridge crossed a canal lining the east side of the Citadel. The distant sound of gunfire and explosions grew

buder and louder as they drew near. Similar to the causeway, infantry Marines already occupied defensive positions at the bridge. They were engaged in a battle with the NVA across the canal. Capt Vogel assigned Cpl Buda to inspect the bridge with him. He planned to conduct a visual inspection, as they left their gear trailer back on the south side of the city.

The canal separated the opposing forces by a mere 70 meters. Prior to the team's arrival, the raging battle knocked out a friendly tank at the western end of the bridge. The team took shelter in a house at the corner of the intersection where the tank burned. The smell of cordite filled the air as the volume of gunfire swelled.

Vogel grabbed Buda and they crawled out of the building. They reached the

destroyed tank and dropped behind the tracks for cover. Amidst the roar of gunfire, rockets and mortars exploding, they could hear rounds cooking off inside the burning tank. Bullets pinging off the tank's side prevented them from moving closer.

"I remember thinking, 'What in the hell am I doing?'" said Buda. "I'm a recon guy, I'm supposed to be out in the jungle hiding in the bushes! Now I'm hiding behind a burning tank? I hadn't ever even seen a tank before in Vietnam! Burning tanks, guys shooting at each other with freaking cannons, are you kidding me? There's no future in this!"

The two Marines returned to shelter with the rest of the team. Attempting any type of inspection at this point amounted to a death wish.

The forces on both sides continued pouring fire across the canal. One enemy soldier in particular harassed the Marines from a second-story window. He popped into the window, fired his automatic weapon, then dropped out of sight. He maintained this routine over and over, pinning the Marines down in the house and chipping away at the walls around them.

"One of the Marines with us had an M79 grenade launcher with the stock cut off," remembered Thompson. "He used it like a giant pistol."

The Marine picked a concealed spot and waited for the NVA soldier to show his face again. As soon as he did, the Marine sent one grenade at him. The perfect shot soared straight through the window and detonated.

"I'm sure the last thing that brave young boy from Hanoi saw in his life was a rapidly expanding grenade round with USMC written all over it," said Vogel. "We continued taking mortar fire but no more automatic weapons fire from that building."

In the battle's lull, the team broke contact and returned to the Silver Bridge. They crossed back to the south side and decided to continue their mission in the morning.

That night at the MACV compound, the team ran into a Marine sergeant named Dale Dye, who invited them to his hooch for hot chow and war stories. Today, Dye is the founder of Warriors, Inc., and has starred in numerous Hollywood features such as "Platoon," "Saving Private Ryan" and "Band of Brothers." In Hue, he was a combat correspondent with the 1st Marine Division, fighting for his life with the grunts and thankful to be alive.

"I had commandeered a civilian house about a block away from the MACV compound," said Dye. "We had it made at that

point—a flush toilet, actual beds, a liquor cabinet, and everything else a bush beast could want.”

Dye combined several types of C-rations into a helmet and prepared the food over a fire. For recon Marines used to living off little in the jungle, this full, hot meal was a welcomed treat.

The Marines rose with the sun the following morning and prepared to inspect all remaining bridges. Their second day in Hue proved to be significantly less eventful. Periodic sniper fire kept their heads down and the occasional mortar landed in the distance.

Five more bridges were inspected through out the city. The enemy situation at each location prevented divers from going into the water. All bridges were inspected visually from the ground. Some were already destroyed completely, while others appeared structurally sound.

As the team patrolled throughout the city, one consequence of the battle seemed omnipresent. Buda remembered, “There were dead civilians that hadn’t been policed up littered everywhere. That was unusual. We didn’t see things like that. The carnage of a city battle was unique to us. There were bodies all over the place.”

Day two ended with their mission complete. All assigned bridges were inspected with no evidence of rigged explosives. The team spent one more night in Hue and

returned to Phu Bai the morning of Feb. 26. Less than one week later, Operation Hue City officially concluded. The NVA retreating into the surrounding hills were not home free. The Marines of 1st Force Recon waited for them in the jungle.

One month of fierce fighting had passed before friendly forces controlled the city again. For recon Marines, the battle began in the jungle weeks earlier and intensified as 1968 progressed. The 35 patrols conducted in February became 45 in March, 53 in April and climaxed at 64 during the month of July.

The intelligence they risked their lives to secure unfortunately proved to be an underutilized resource. The Tet Offensive launched at the end of January came as a surprise, despite 1st Force Recon’s numerous reports of increased activity and the enemy massing around Hue. Their unique specialties in warfare, such as patrolling and diving, have been largely forgotten and undocumented in the shadows of the main infantry actions.

Fifty years later, these Marines maintain their calculated, silent professionalism. They are not the type to boast in their stories or accomplishments. For some, the dangers faced in the jungles and waters of Vietnam are still very real threats. Rare forms of cancer or other illnesses have been traced back to an exposure during their time in country. For all, every threat

they faced and every patrol they survived replay in their memories as they reflect on their youth.

“We went into Hue because this was the greatest battle of the war, a defining moment in our history, and we wanted to be part of it,” Vogel said recently. “Those other eight Marines on our team were magnificent. My biggest concern was holding them back. How am I ever going to get these guys back alive when they’re aggressive to the point of madness? Men like Bob Buda, Dave Thompson, Sgt Hughes, and the others. Where indeed do we get such men?”

“Bob Buda always said, ‘It’s a good patrol if no one got killed,’” remembered Thompson. “I may not remember all my patrols, but no one can ever forget the bad ones. We went through a lot of Purple Hearts, friendships that will never end and more brothers than any normal family.”

Author’s note: First Force, First to Fight. Thank you for your inspiration, and allowing me to take part in your history. May these words pay tribute to your fallen and your service. It has been my great privilege getting to know you. Semper Fidelis.

Author’s bio: Kyle Watts is a former Marine captain and communications officer. He currently resides in Richmond, Va., with his wife and two children.



The 1st Force Recon dive team poses at MACV Compound in Hue in 1968. Front row left to right: LCpl William Shaw, Cpl Edward Unkel, Capt Frederick Vogel and Cpl David Thompson. Back row left to right: LCpl Robert Schmitt, Cpl Robert Buda, HM3 Robert Schoelkopf, Sgt Robert Hughes and Cpl Clifford Dobson.

Denton, Texas



SGT DANIELLE RODRIGUES, USMC

Top OCS Grad Receives Commandant's Award at UNT

During the Nov. 11, 2017, homecoming football game at the University of North Texas in Denton, Texas, Lance Corporal Devin Allen was presented with the Commandant's Award, the highest honor a Marine Corps officer candidate can receive, given to the top graduate of the Platoon Leaders Course six-week summer training program at Officer Candidates School, Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va.

In front of a large crowd, Allen, an intelligence specialist with Marine Corps Forces Reserve and full-time UNT student, was congratulated by Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Conner, 8th Marine Corps District Operations Officer, and Captain Michael Bressler, Recruiting Substation Fort Worth Officer Selection Officer, and was presented with a trophy provided by the Marine Corps Association & Foundation.

Submitted by Capt Scott Kates, USMC

Greeley, Colo.



COURTESY OF RALPH MCCLURE

MCL Detachment Helps Active-Duty Servicemembers Fly Home for Holidays

On behalf of the Union Colony Marines, Commandant Mike Buck from Marine Corps League Detachment #1093 of Greeley, Colo., presented a check for \$2,000 to Pam Matt and Teri Keeny, founders of Helping Heroes Fly on Aug. 19, 2017. The donation was made from the proceeds of a raffle that was conducted by the detachment. Helping Heroes Fly is an organization that supports active-duty enlisted servicemembers by providing airfare that allows them to go home for the holidays, special occasions or in emergency situations in which they wouldn't otherwise have the funds for a plane ticket.

Submitted by Ralph McClure



COURTESY OF MSGT BRUCE C. VANAPeldoorn, USMC (RET)

St. Louis

Marine Tankers Reunite, Record History

Every two years, a reunion is held by members of the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association (VTA); most recently, they gathered in St. Louis, Sept. 21-24, 2017. And while their reunion consisted of many "typical" reunion events, including touring the city, holding an auction, gathering for a formal dinner and enjoying camaraderie in the hospitality room, which they dubbed the "Torsion Bar," there were other special moments that will help ensure that

the stories of Marine tankers from all eras will be preserved for the benefit of generations to come.

Several years ago, the directors of the association decided to make an investment in an oral history project to record members' combat experiences. First Lieutenant Peter J. "Pete" Ritch, pictured on the left, maintains the oral history collection and conducts each interview. At the St. Louis reunion, he recorded the stories of First Sergeant Al Nelson, USMC (Ret), who recalled his experiences making a beach landing on Iwo Jima with Company C, 5th Tank Battalion; Corporal Ed Hoffman, who talked about his service with Co C, 1st Tank Bn in Korea; and Sergeant Joe Tyson of Co B, 3d Tank Bn, who provided insight into the landing in Chu Lai, Vietnam, and his participation in Operation Starlite.

These and other video interviews can be viewed at www.usmcvta.org/video-interviews. Also available on the USMC VTA site are stories written by members of the association. During the St. Louis reunion, Cpl Frank L. "Tree" Remkieswicz hosted a workshop about developing articles and recording combat experiences.

The association's next reunion is planned for 2019 in Seattle. Membership is open to any and all who were assigned to a Marine tank battalion.

Submitted by MSgt Bruce C. Van Apeldoorn, USMC (Ret)

Quantico, Va.



ABIGAIL WILSON

TBS 5-83 Gives Back, Supports MCAF

Members of The Basic School Class 5-83 reunited Aug. 4-5, 2017, in Quantico, Va., and Washington, D.C., for the first time since graduating in November 1983. In a tribute to their four fallen brothers—Joe Berkey, Magnus Magnusson, Art Scrivenor and Sergio Vivaldi—they made a generous donation to the Marine Corps Association Foundation. The donation was presented by Brad Mills and John Coonradt to Colonel Timothy S. Mundy, USMC (Ret), MCAF Director, at the Marine Corps Association & Foundation headquarters in Quantico on Oct. 5, 2017.

The TBS 5-83 reunion included a visit to the Indoor Simulated Marksmanship Trainer (ISMT) at Camp Upshur, MCB Quantico; a briefing from the commanding officer of TBS and the director of the Infantry Officers Course; and a self-guided tour and lunch at the National Museum of the Marine Corps, Triangle, Va. The

day concluded with the sunset parade at Marine Barracks Washington, D.C., where, thanks to classmate Lieutenant General Stacy Clardy, Military Deputy, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, the class members were honored as VIP guests. The second day of the reunion was a casual affair at Murphy's Pub in Old Town Alexandria, Va.

Submitted by Col Timothy S. Mundy, USMC (Ret)



COURTESY OF CAPT DAN MACSAY SR., USMC (RET)

Washington, D.C.

Then and Now: 5th Comm Bn Vietnam Vets Reunite

In August 2017, six members of 5th Communications Battalion, III Marine Amphibious Force who served together in Vietnam 52 years earlier, gathered for a reunion in Washington, D.C. The group enjoyed the opportunity to reminisce and share experiences with their spouses and other family members. Together they visited the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall, the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Triangle, Va., and other sites in the nation's capital.

In July 1965, 7th Comm Bn arrived in Da Nang, Vietnam, and was redesignated as 5th Comm Bn in November of that year.

"Lesson learned was don't

wait 52 years to have a reunion. Time slips by too fast, and the old saying, 'Once a Marine, Always a Marine,' can't be more true once you relive the past with fellow Marines," said Captain Dan Macsay Sr., USMC (Ret).

Submitted by Capt Dan Macsay Sr., USMC (Ret)

"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: Sara W. Bock, *Leatherneck* Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134, or email them to s.boat@mca-marines.org. Submission does not guarantee publication, and we cannot guarantee the return of photos. 🐾

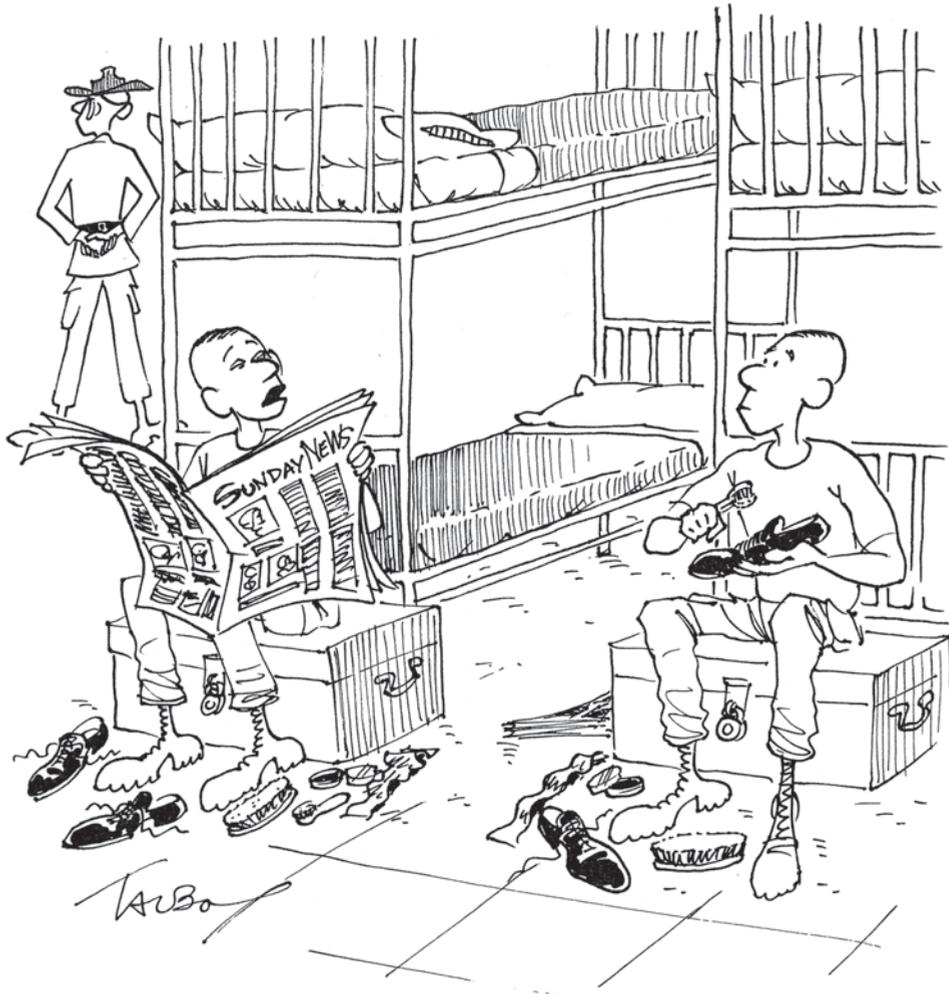
Leatherneck Laffs



"Shhh. Watch your #@%*##* mouth!
Here comes the chaplain."



"I just came by for a visit, Sir. I know it's lonely at the top."



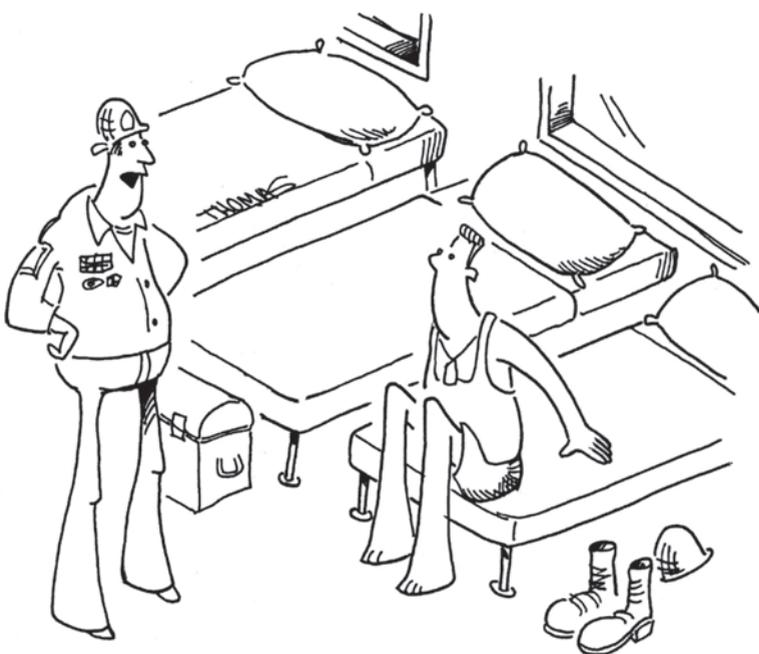
"Boot camp has cured me from always wanting to be the center of attention."



"I want to find an emoji that salutes."



"Have her home by 2200, Marine."



"You get vacation time in the Marine Corps.
It's called sleep."

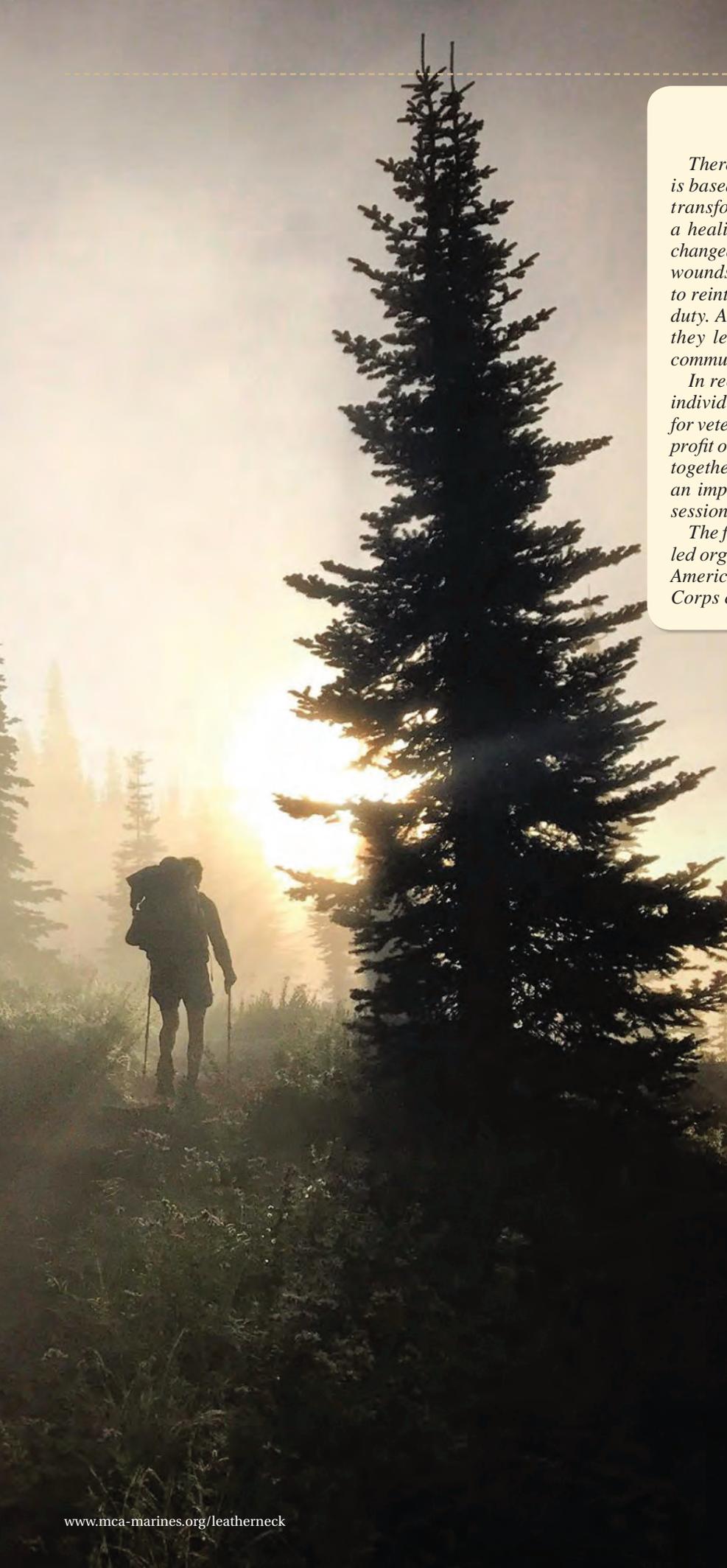


"My weapon has hundreds of 'Likes' on Facebook."

During a six-month journey along the Pacific Crest Trail, made possible by Warrior Expeditions, a veteran hikes through Chinook Pass near Mount Rainier, Washington, in 2017.

Finding Their True North

Marine Veterans Navigate the Civilian Wilderness
By Taking to the Great Outdoors



By Sara W. Bock

There's a growing movement across America that is based on a simple, yet compelling idea: that the transformative power of the outdoors can have a healing effect on those whose lives have been changed by their experiences at war. Some deal with wounds both visible and invisible; others struggle to reintegrate into civilian life after leaving active duty. And for some, there's a sense of isolation as they leave the atmosphere of camaraderie and community that has become the only life they know.

In recent years, many passionate and dedicated individuals have taken the idea of outdoor therapy for veterans and turned it into reality, starting non-profit organizations that exist solely to get veterans together outdoors. For some participants, it's had an impact that far surpasses traditional therapy sessions or medications.

The following are just a few of the many veteran-led organizations that are helping change the way America's heroes heal—and they all have a Marine Corps connection.

WARRIOR EXPEDITIONS Roanoke, Va.

www.warriorexpeditions.org

When Marine Corps tank officer Sean Gobin returned home from a yearlong deployment to Afghanistan in early 2012, he left active-duty service, drove out the back gate of Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., and headed straight for Georgia, determined to fulfill a childhood dream: to hike the entire Appalachian Trail, all the way to Maine. But what started out as a personal and physical challenge for Gobin, who previously had served as an enlisted infantryman prior to commissioning, quickly turned into something more.

“As I was going through the experience, I started to realize that there was a huge therapeutic benefit,” Gobin said.

“I wonder if this could be therapeutic to other veterans as well,” he recalls thinking to himself.

Gobin had a vision—an organization that would provide groups of fellow combat veterans with the gear, equipment and supplies they would need to hike the Appalachian Trail and connect them with community supporters along the way. These supporters would invite the veterans into their homes, feed them meals and give them a place to sleep and do laundry, a welcome break from the monotony of sleeping bags, tents and pre-packaged foods.

“When you’ve got a lot of combat

COURTESY OF WARRIOR EXPEDITIONS

deployments under your belt, you're dealing with the worst of humanity, which is why a lot of people come home and they're cynical," said Gobin. "So now to come home and have all of these people you don't even know that are incredibly generous and supportive and encouraging—it kind of reframes your thinking ... and re-establishes that basic faith in humanity that you might have lost along the way."

Luckily for Gobin, he already had a good start on building that network of supporters. He was hiking the trail with a fellow Marine—someone he had deployed to Afghanistan with—and the duo had turned their journey into a fundraiser for veteran amputees. Through his efforts, he met and connected with kind, supportive individuals in locations all across the expansive trail; many were members of local veterans service organizations like the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). Upon completing the trail, he quickly began to take action.

By 2013, after hundreds of phone calls to every outdoor retail company Gobin could find, gathering donations of gear, Warrior Expeditions was born.

"We were just immediately inundated with requests from veterans that wanted to do this," Gobin recalled of the organization's early days, adding with a



COURTESY OF HEATH LANCTOT

Marine veteran and Bronze Star recipient Heath Lanctot stops on the Continental Divide Trail in Wyoming in 2017. He said the opportunity to participate in a long-distance hike with Warrior Expeditions was a "life reset."

laugh that when he first had the idea, he wasn't entirely sure if anyone would want to go on a 2,000-mile hump after spending any number of years in the military.

Inspired by the legacy of World War II veteran Earl Shaffer, who in 1948 embarked on the Appalachian Trail to "walk off the war," becoming the first individual to hike its entire length, Gobin has seen firsthand the positive impact that

long distance outdoor expeditions have on those who have served in combat.

"Having the time and space to process, decompress and then come to terms with what they've experienced as a result of their deployments ... The pace is so fast while you're in service and the transition experience is so fast as you process out and try to get your civilian life established, there's not really time and space to process and come to terms with everything you've gone through," said Gobin. "By doing these long-distance trails with other combat vets, you've got other people there that understand what you've gone through."

Gobin personally spends the first week or so of each expedition with the group, but otherwise the hikes are self-guided. In 2014, Warrior Expeditions added two more trails, the Continental Divide Trail and the Pacific Crest Trail, to the list of offerings, rounding out what outdoor enthusiasts call the "Triple Crown" of hiking. In 2015, after getting numerous applications from veterans who had injuries that would prevent them from hiking thousands of miles, Gobin added the Warrior Bike and Warrior Paddle programs. In recognition of his work in helping transitioning veterans, CNN named Gobin one of their Top 10 Heroes of 2015.



A veteran crosses Fremont Creek in Wyoming along the Continental Divide Trail in 2017 during a Warrior Expeditions-sponsored hike.

COURTESY OF WARRIOR EXPEDITIONS



COURTESY OF WARRIOR EXPEDITIONS

Sitting on the edge of Moose Mountain, N.H., a Warrior Expeditions veteran enjoys the picturesque view during a hike of the Appalachian Trail in 2017. Extended time in the outdoors allows veterans the space to process their experiences at war.

Today, Warrior Expeditions sends veterans to hike eight different trails across the U.S., bike the Trans America Trail, and paddle down the Mississippi River. The expeditions vary in length from three to six months and are supported by big outdoor industry names like Big Agnes, Camelbak, Keen, Merrell, Mountain Hard Wear, Nalgene, Jetboil and dozens of others who provide high-quality gear—and replacements along the way—at no cost to the participants. Support personnel with Warrior Expeditions coordinate resupply shipments of new shoes, food, and gear necessary for the next leg of the trip, including whippets, which are ice

axes that attach to the top of trekking poles. Those packages are received by community supporters and are ready and waiting at the group’s next stop.

Some of the participating veterans are newly transitioning from active-duty; others, like Marine veteran Heath Lancot, are looking for what he refers to as a “life reset.” The Bronze Star recipient, who served two combat tours as a reconnaissance Marine during the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the Second Battle of Fallujah, hiked the Continental Divide Trail with four other veterans in 2017, sponsored by Warrior Expeditions. He had been separated from active-duty

service for more than a decade, but recently had come to terms with the fact that he suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder.

“I was troubled from certain things that I did or saw. Up to that point I was hesitant to confront it,” said Lancot. “In my mind I thought, ‘There’s no way I can have this—I’ve got to be stronger than that’ ... so I finally decided to confront it, and the prolonged outdoor therapy was an idea that really kind of hit home with me. I’ve always found peace in the outdoors, I guess you could say, and just a chance to think without distraction or anything else.”

It was exhausting and strenuous. Lancot laughs about losing toenails along the 3,100-mile trail that crosses five states from New Mexico to Montana, but the group kept going. Four of the five in his group completed the entire trail.

“There’s parts of our country that people never get to see, and that we fought for, that are simply just beautiful,” said Lancot. “That in itself can be therapeutic, not to mention just the time you have to just decompress and just think about everything that’s happened up until that point in your life.”

**CAMP PATRIOT—
Libby, Mont.
www.camppatriot.org**

At the Camp Patriot Veteran Retreat Ranch in northwestern Montana, wounded and disabled veterans are given the tools they need to enjoy the outdoors through trail hikes, horseback and mule adventures, fly-fishing and ice fishing, and snowmobile and ATV riding, and many other activities.

“When you can get them in the outdoors and show them something that they used to do ... and say ‘Hey, I enjoyed that, I’m going to do it now!’ or doing something they never thought they’d be doing, it gives them hope,” said Micah Clark, who founded Camp Patriot in 2005. For the Navy veteran, a former “green side” Fleet Marine Force corpsman, creating hope in the lives of others is his driving force.

“If you’ve got some kind of hobby in your life that drives you and you’ve got dreams, then most likely you’re going to steer away from suicide,” he said.

Clark, who worked for several different government agencies after he left active-duty service, was working as a contractor for the U.S. State Department in Afghanistan in 2004 when several of his close Marine buddies were killed in Iraq.

“I felt blessed to not be injured, and to have the opportunity to be out in the outdoors and go fly-fishing,” said Clark, who felt compelled to start a Christian-based organization that would give disabled veterans the support and assistance they need to once again enjoy the outdoors.

While still working as a contractor, he organized a group of wounded warriors, including amputees and veterans who had lost their eyesight, to climb to the summit of Mount Rainier in his home state of Washington. It was a life-changing experience and the beginning of Camp Patriot which he started from scratch with a “Nonprofits for Dummies” book, he said with a chuckle.



COURTESY OF CAMP PATRIOT

A group of disabled veterans takes to the trail on snowmobiles near Camp Patriot’s ranch in Libby, Mont.



COURTESY OF CAMP PATRIOT

Marine veterans from New Jersey enjoy dinner together at Camp Patriot in 2017. Since 2014, the organization’s ranch has hosted groups of disabled veterans, allowing them an opportunity to build relationships and enjoy outdoor adventures.

The project evolved into bringing veterans to Montana for fly-fishing and other outdoor adventures. In 2014 the organization purchased what they call “the ranch,” a 90-acre facility in an idyllic setting with access to a river, a lake and an expansive trail system. Clark, who serves as the organization’s executive director, and his staff welcome veterans of all wars

from across the country to the ranch year-round for three to five day stays, free of charge, giving them the opportunity to enjoy a variety of outdoor adventures that vary by season and the chance to decompress and build camaraderie with one another. The organization also offers several off-site opportunities like hunting trips, motor sports and a hockey team.



COURTESY OF CAMP PATRIOT

Horseback riding through Montana is just one of many activities offered by Camp Patriot for disabled servicemembers from all wars and conflicts.

Late in 2017, Camp Patriot hosted a group of five disabled Vietnam veterans at the ranch—three of whom were Marines. On the second morning, the group approached Clark and told him something that affirmed for him that Camp Patriot is on the right track.

“We opened up more with each other sitting in this atmosphere than we’ve ever done in a VA [Veterans Affairs] therapy session,” Clark recalls one of the veterans saying.

“Pretty impactful when you get some Marines, some Vietnam guys that are pretty hard core ... and they’re very thankful for these kind of programs,” said Clark. “They were crying and hugging me when they left.”

Clark is working on the addition of a third lodge to the ranch, which will sleep about eight more people—bringing the total of beds at the facility to 20. He’s also developing a homesteading program, which will allow two wounded veterans at a time to stay for an entire month. With a 3-acre high fence garden and orchard, a greenhouse, horses, chickens and other animals, Clark plans to work with the veterans to teach them sustainable skills they can take back and implement at home.

Whether they served in the Vietnam War or in Afghanistan as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Camp Patriot’s mission for disabled veterans is the same: to build relationships, restore hope and provide a unique kind of “therapy” found only in the great outdoors.



COURTESY OF CAMP PATRIOT

Gearing up for an ATV ride at Camp Patriot’s Montana ranch, veterans prepare to enjoy one of the many scenic trails surrounding the facility.

**TRIPLE B ADVENTURES—
San Diego
www.tba.vet**

“Navigate the civilian wilderness”—it’s the motto of new San Diego-based veterans’ hiking, fishing and camping group Triple B Adventures, and it rings true in the lives of those who struggle to feel connected since leaving military service.

Marine veteran Brady Pesola knows exactly that feeling. He’s been there; in fact, he was in what he describes as a “low place” when he started the organization in December 2016. When veterans tell him that participating in Triple B’s campouts and adventures has saved their lives, he tells them it’s done the same thing for him.

Pesola, who has been teaching outdoor survival skills since 2010 as the founder of San Diego Survival School, noticed a trend among his fellow veteran friends—they all would jump at the opportunity to accompany him when he was teaching land navigation or other courses for clients.

“I’d get calls like, ‘Hey dude, I need to go out in the woods again, I’m having a bad day—can we go for a hike?’ Or they wanted to go camping or fishing, so I’d go pick them up,” Pesola said. The wheels started turning, and he began to formulate an idea for a veterans campout group.

In October 2016, a friend contacted him to ask for help doing some restoration



COURTESY OF TRIPLE B ADVENTURES

While dove hunting in San Diego County, Calif., veterans have the opportunity to build a community of support thanks to the efforts of Marine veteran Brady Pesola. Through his new organization, Triple B Adventures, he organizes outdoor activities and campouts for local veterans.

work at a church on Mount Laguna, Calif. Pesola called in some favors and a group of 16 veterans headed there to tear down a roof and tear up some old floors.

“We knocked that church out in 4 or 5 hours. It was crazy to see all these veterans—they don’t even have to say anything, they just knew what to do,” Pesola said. “We were laughing, having a great time, getting dusty, dirty, crawling around the rafters, and there was definitely

some morale to it. For the first time in a long time, I felt pride in myself,” he added.

He suggested to the group of veterans, both male and female, that they put a camping trip together. Shortly afterwards, they met in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park in San Diego County for a two-night campout. It was such a success that afterwards, Pesola created a Facebook group and called it “Beers, Bonfires and Brotherhood”—Triple B Adventures.



COURTESY OF TRIPLE B ADVENTURES

A large group of veterans—and some of their kids and pets—gather at Broken Oak Ranch in San Diego County as part of Triple B Adventures’ “Modern Mountain Man Rendezvous” in October 2017.



COURTESY OF TRIPLE B ADVENTURES

Among the attendees at Triple B Adventures' "Modern Mountain Man Rendezvous" was Marine veteran and actor Rudy Reyes, third from left, who taught a "recon style" knot class for the group. Founder Brady Pesola, a veteran Marine and military policeman, is pictured on the right.

"You can come out to a campsite around a bunch of people that you know and love as veterans and you trust them. I mean, we don't like to open up. We are the first ones to offer help and we are the last ones to ever ask for help," said Pesola. "Well, how do you get a veteran to open up and ask for help? You give him a couple beers and you let them be in the company of other brothers who are sharing their stories, and all of a sudden they get a little comfortable, and they get a little emotional and that's when they open up."

At least once a month, Triple B Adven-

tures hosts a campout in the San Diego area. It's important to Pesola and the rest of his staff that everyone can rely on the fact that every month they can have that opportunity to get together. The gatherings are open to all interested veterans, and upcoming events are listed on the organization's website and Facebook page.

For Pesola, it's been incredibly rewarding to watch the group grow and witness the healing and camaraderie that takes place when veterans can get together, act like themselves without fear of judgment and enjoy the outdoors. It's more than a

group to Pesola—it's a family.

"We've created this family environment where we keep in touch with each other and let each other know we're not alone anymore," said Pesola, adding that he believes the feelings of loneliness and isolation that many veterans deal with is a byproduct of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Currently, Triple B Adventures provides the campsites for each event and is working to raise the funds and support to provide food, gear, and necessary clothing items for participants. But for now, its members work together to make sure everyone is taken care of, and there's always enough to go around.

Pesola has dreams of expanding the organization beyond the San Diego area, which would allow more veterans to become part of a supportive community of like-minded individuals. He also envisions a brick-and-mortar location, a "meeting place" of sorts, where someone is always on duty as a resource for veterans in crisis. Someday, he hopes to leave his day job and pursue Triple B full time.

"I have two passions in my life—being outdoors and helping veterans—and for a long time I tried to figure out what I wanted to do," said Pesola. "I can work outdoors and help my brothers and sisters. I want to work with veterans the rest of my life ... the more people that show up, the more it's told me that this idea is a good idea, and it's doing something."

VETERANS EXPEDITIONS Salida, Colo.

www.vetexpeditions.com

From ice climbing to snowshoeing and skiing, white-water rafting, trail biking or summiting Denali in Alaska, the Colorado-based organization Veterans Expeditions has something for everyone at every skill level. The only requirements are a DD-214 and an adventurous spirit.

Led by co-founder and executive director Nick Watson, a former Army Ranger and 2014 National Geographic Adventurer of the Year, the exponential growth of Veterans Expeditions over the past eight years is proof that building community through outdoor adventures is one of the best ways to enhance the lives of those who have served their country.

Colorado team leader and field director Nathan Perrault, a veteran Marine infantryman who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, is living proof. He moved to Colorado to attend Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colo., in 2011 after leaving



CHRIS KASSAR

Marine veteran John Krueger ice climbs in Hyalite Canyon, Mont., with Veterans Expeditions, a nonprofit organization that provides a wide variety of outdoor adventure opportunities for veterans.

active duty. While in college using his GI Bill, Perrault was volunteering with Team Rubicon USA, an organization that "deploys" veterans to assist with disaster relief efforts, when a fellow volunteer told him about Veterans Expeditions. He looked into it and in 2014 participated in an ice-climbing trip in Ouray, Colo., led by the organization. He was hooked.

"I just kind of fell in love with ice climbing and the organization," Perrault said.

He began to volunteer as a leader for climbing trips, and summited Denali in 2015 with Watson and a small group of veterans. The Denali trip solidified his commitment to the organization; he now serves on its staff and gets to go on about 85 percent of the trips.

Veterans Expeditions offers a wide variety of activities and trips—mostly in Colorado, but some are on the Pacific Coast, the East Coast or Alaska, at little to no cost to the participating veterans. Some trips require a small reservation fee,

While mountain biking on Monarch Crest Trail near Salida, Colo., veterans enjoy the beautiful scenery and the company of their fellow servicemembers during a Veterans Expeditions-led trip.



COURTESY OF VETERANS EXPEDITIONS



COURTESY OF VETERANS EXPEDITIONS

Veterans take on the white water of the Arkansas River near Salida, Colo., during a rafting trip with Veterans Expeditions, July 15, 2017. More than 30 veterans participated in this trip, making it one of the most highly attended of the organization's events in 2017.

said Perrault, just to ensure that those who sign up will show up. The organization provides meals, equipment and lodging. But it goes beyond just the tangible needs and extends to the creation of community and camaraderie that is so essential to veteran reintegration. Combined with the opportunity to “reconnect with the land they served,” it’s a recipe for enhancing their lives.

For what might be considered more “high-risk” trips, Watson and his staff

generally prefer that individuals come out on a beginner trip first so they can assess their abilities and build a relationship of trust.

Veterans Expeditions are open to all who served, in any branch, at any time. Perrault recalls a 2016 ice-climbing trip with a group that included several Korean War veterans.

“All the young guys—I’m obviously post-9/11—and we were all tired by 3 p.m. and started to wrap things up

for ice climbing for the day and all the Korean War guys were like, ‘Come on guys, let’s go! Keep moving!’ It was really impressive. They’re way harder than us!” Perrault said with a laugh.

Currently, the organization runs approximately 50 trips each year, bringing about 600 veterans out annually, said Perrault.

“We’re a very laid-back organization,” he said. “There’s no ‘write in a journal about your feelings’ type part to our trips. Everything that happens—these intense conversations, these personal conversations come up on our trip ... it happens organically.”

Technical climbs and other high-risk activities, said Perrault, bring back the “squad mentality” that he relied on so heavily during his time in the Corps.

“You have to trust each other and really believe in each other’s abilities to watch your back and keep you safe,” he said.

By 2019, Veterans Expeditions, which relies solely on donations and sponsorships to operate, hopes to grow its leadership outside of Colorado and offer 10 to 15 trips on each coast.

The de-stressing effect of physical exercise, combined with the bonding that comes from shared adversity, is, in Perrault’s mind, the best kind of therapy. 🐾

From the *Leatherneck* Archives: April 1998

“REMEMBER THE MAINE. TO HELL WITH SPAIN!”



The battleship *Maine* at Bar Harbor, Maine, in 1895 was one of the first American-designed and built steel-hulled warships.

Story by MGySgt R.R. Keene
USMC (Ret)
Photos courtesy of
Naval Historical Center

It was six bells, or 11 a.m., Jan. 25, 1898. On the holystoned quarterdeck of the battleship USS *Maine* (ACR-1) stood First Lieutenant Albertus W. Catlin, who in another war would be awarded the Medal of Honor. He was the picture of a Marine officer—dark-blue jacket with gold-braided sleeves and Mameluke sword indicative of his rank and station. Behind him, resplendent in the Caribbean sun, under spiked white helmets, dress-blue bedecked leathernecks of his detachment stood in armed formation. Around them were white-jumpered tars and their officers, 354 in all, aboard *Maine* as she steamed proudly beneath the Spanish guns of Morro Castle through Canal del Puerto and into colonial Cuba's Havana Harbor.

Indeed *Maine* was awesome to behold. She was unique in that she was totally designed and built by Americans. In an age when man thought machines could conquer and accomplish anything, *Maine*, at 319 feet and displacing 6,682 tons, was the largest vessel to be built in a U.S. Navy shipyard. One of the country's first steel warships, she symbolized man's faith in technology at the height of the Industrial Age, and, more importantly, America's emergence as a naval power.

Catlin and the rest of *Maine's* complement had every reason to be proud. The 45-star national ensign fluttered over the alabaster hull, gold trimmed with 10-inch breech-loading rifles, 6-inch guns, rapid-firing 6-pounders and torpedo tubes bristling all under her scarlet-painted dual smokestacks. How could the Spaniards, Cubans and indeed the world not be impressed?

America had come of age.

USS *Maine* was entering Havana on only a few hours' notice. The Spanish government was hoping to negotiate an end to a bloody three-year rebellion which had cost more than 100,000 lives. By allowing some "self-governing" within the colony, the Spaniards wanted to appease Cuban guerrilla forces, led by Jose Marti, seeking full independence.

The rebellion had strained relations between Madrid and Washington. The newspapers of William Randolph Hearst and his rival, Joseph Pulitzer, told Americans of the bitter struggle between the Cuban people and their imperial rulers led by Governor General Valeriano "Butcher" Weyler. Americans' sympathies naturally lay with the rebels and American

volunteer "filibusters" went south to fight for the Cuban cause. There was some talk in Washington circles of annexing the island. Adding to Spain's problems were similar native revolts half a world away in the Philippines.

Spanish Queen Regent Maria Cristina knew the last thing the throne needed was a war with the United States. And yet, there was USS *Maine* heading for anchor at Buoy #4, only 250 yards to starboard of the Spanish cruiser *Alfonso XII* and north of the American passenger steamer, *City of Washington*.

Maine was in Havana at the behest



Captain Charles D. Sigsbee prudently ordered Catlin and the Marines to establish increased security for the ship while in the harbor.

of American Consul General Fitzhugh Lee (Robert E. Lee's son), who'd been a Confederate cavalry commander during America's "War Between the States" and who had sympathy for the guerrillas. Citing tensions between the Spanish and Cuban patriots and tensions between Spain and the United States, Lee asked that the Navy be alerted, suggesting American war vessels and Marines be dispatched to protect American citizens.

Told that *Maine's* visit was a courtesy call, the Spanish were surprised, but cordially received the ship by sending a case of sherry to the officers' mess.

Maine's skipper, Captain Charles D. Sigsbee, prudently ordered Catlin and the

Marines to establish increased security for the ship while in the harbor. There would be no liberty in Cuba. That would have to wait until they docked in New Orleans during the Mardi Gras. Sigsbee and a few of his officers were, however, invited by the Spanish government to view a bullfight which Sigsbee ordered be attended in civilian attire.

The afternoon at the "plaza de toros" was uneventful except that someone handed Sigsbee an anti-American propaganda leaflet that complained of "Yankee pigs who meddle in our affairs" and that "the moment of action has arrived ... Death to the Americans." On it also were scrawled the words: "Watch out for your ship!" Sigsbee advised Catlin, who, in turn, ordered his armed sentries to be extra watchful and alert at night.

Catlin had every confidence in his Marines. They belonged to a time when leathernecks were, as a reporter from the Manchester, N.H., *Union* noted in 1895, of "a hard character," in a Corps where promotions were slow and life Spartan. Their ranks were of "some toughs," and at least a quarter of all enlisted men were new immigrants. The reporter also found the men "respectable, their barracks neat and clean, and their discipline and drill flawless."

Enlistments were for five years and open to unmarried men between the ages of 18 and 35 who could read and write and who were "well-made, sound as to senses and limbs." (The Corps also allowed the enlisting of 14-year-old boys as field musics.) Recruit training took place at Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and Mare Island, Calif. New Marines were then transferred to Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C., for "polishing" and then sent to a ship's detachment.

Training was done by the books, and the leathernecks' bible was "The Marines' Manual," the Corps' first handbook on military subjects which advised bathing and washing the feet "at least twice a week" and good marksmanship consisted of taking "the best position for holding the rifle. Aim it correctly, hold it steadily, and pull the trigger without deranging the aim."

Novice leathernecks were trained "in skirmishing; at target practice; at bayonet exercises; and in ceremonies." Seagoing Marines became proficient with "the great gun or artillery drill," learned to swim and became proficient with boats, signals and broadsword.

Discipline was iron-clad. A Marine suspected of being less than sober could draw five days on bread and water. A typical court-martial sentence for de-

serting included a year's confinement shackled to a 12-pound ball on a 4-foot chain. One officer wrote: "Waste of any kind was not abided Orders were to be obeyed. Work was to be done. No excuses. No explanations. No quarter to be given or expected."

If it was a harsh Corps for enlisted men, it was agonizingly slow in recognizing its officers. For them, promotions came after a decade of service. Officers who had been commissioned during the Civil War were still captains, having served 18 years as lieutenants. They could look forward to major's leaves after spending another 21 years in grade.

Captain George C. Reid, a 53-year-old veteran of 30 years of service, testified in 1894 to the Congressional Joint Committee on Naval Personnel. He said, "When he [an officer] passes the age of 45 and still has the duty of officer of the day to perform on a day on and two days off, he feels it very much He will not have that cheerfulness, that interest, that energy and industry that every officer should have."

Although most of the Corps' officers were graduates of the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., and long on practical experience, many of the senior captains were too old for active field duty. (Congress eventually would solve the problem with the Military Retirement Act.)

Enter Colonel Commandant Charles Heywood, who took the helm of the Corps in 1891. Then 52 years of age with service ashore and afloat during the Civil War, Heywood was considered by his contemporaries "a mere lad." He, however, wasted no time in taking inventory of the Corps' needs.

Although the Navy had begun to modernize, the Corps had not kept pace.



**Albertus W. Catlin retired
as a brigadier general
with the Medal of Honor.**

**As a first lieutenant,
he commanded USS *Maine's*
Marine Detachment at
Havana Harbor.**

Heywood asked for and received an increase of 500 men. War, however, would come before the Corps could substantially meet its new authorized strength. The Corps entered the Spanish-American War with only 77 officers and 2,900 Marines manning 14 shore stations on both coasts and aboard 35 men-of-war vessels and five receiving ships (permanently moored

vessels that received, processed, quartered and fed transient enlisted personnel).

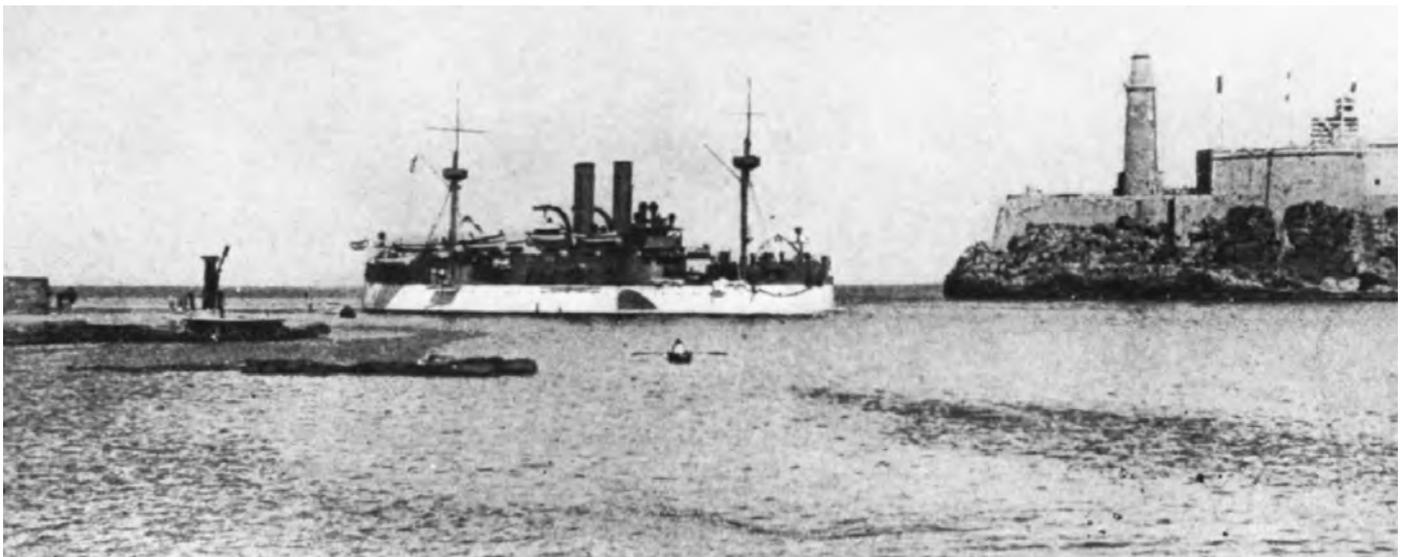
When the Navy considered removing Marines from its warships, Heywood fought back. He believed that Marines ashore would always be as essential as sentries and as emergency infantry during civil disorder. However, he also believed that Marines were most useful at sea. "It is as Artillerymen aboard our new floating batteries that their importance must be felt and acknowledged in the future."

He organized the School of Application where new officers and hand-picked enlisted Marines were taught infantry drill, tactics and general field service subjects. More importantly, the 10-month course also included naval gunnery, mine warfare, electricity and high explosives as well as instruction at the Navy's Washington gun factory and Torpedo School at Newport, R.I.

Further, he told barracks commanders to de-emphasize ceremonial drill and increase rifle marksmanship proficiency. He dumped the Navy standards of rifle qualification and adopted the more challenging Army course which required shooters to fire from 200 to 1,000 yards and ordered that all Marine officers become expert riflemen so they could, in turn, properly instruct their men.

He then gave them the high-velocity, clip-fed, bolt-action, .236-caliber (6 mm) Lee Navy rifle which used smokeless powder (the first in the U.S. Armed Forces). Unit armories also were stocked with two rapid-fire weapons which gave infantrymen the capability of great destruction: the Gatling gun and the Hotchkiss revolving cannon.

When the Secretary of the Navy authorized the awarding of Good Conduct Medals on July 20, 1896, Heywood de-



***Maine* steamed under the Spanish guns of Morro Castle and into Havana Harbor and war-torn Cuba. Three weeks later she exploded.**

signed the Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal. The late Corps historian, retired Colonel Robert Debs Heinl Jr., later wrote, "Anyone familiar with his character would immediately recognize [Heywood] from the medal's legend-Fidelity, Zeal and Obedience."

Thus it was in this setting on the night of Feb. 15, 1898, that Catlin, his Marines and the crew of *Maine* would come to war.

Aside from the note handed to Capt Sigsbee, warning him to watch his ship, *Maine's* presence in Havana had been uneventful. The lack of liberty challenged the ship's cooks and Japanese mess stewards to creatively come up with interesting meals while the crew concentrated on maintenance and drills of general quarters and repelling boarders. *Maine's* pride in teamwork was exemplified by its All-Navy championship baseball team captained by Seaman Bill Gorman. They were becoming anxious to unlimber on a real ball diamond of terra firma.

That night the team's third baseman Marine Trumpeter C.H. Newton made his way to his station on *Maine's* superstructure to play "Taps." It was moonless and quiet. The lights of old Havana, Regla and Casa Blanca reflected off the water, smooth and mirror-like. Below Newton in the forward berthing decks 327 Sailors and Marines talked quietly or rested in their hammocks.

At 9:10 Trumpeter Newton sounded "Taps," and it was, as some later recalled, a uniquely haunting and lilting version. The ordnance officer, Lieutenant John Hood, smoking a cigar, paused to reflect. Catlin, preparing to write a letter, stopped to listen. Those in the berthing area undoubtedly listened as men of arms always do when "Taps" is played. In his cabin Capt Sigsbee, not known to be particularly romantic, wrote in a letter: "I laid down my pen to listen to the notes of the bugle, which were singularly beautiful in the oppressive stillness of the night. The Marine bugler, Newton, who was rather given to fanciful effects, was evidently doing his best. During his pauses the echoes floated back to the ship with singular distinctness, repeating the strains of the bugle fully and exactly."

Afterward it was uncommonly still.

At 9:40 Capt Sigsbee finished his letter to his family. Lt Catlin looked for his pen among the papers. Navy veteran Lt John Bandon, who'd been cited for bravery while on board USS *Trenton* during a typhoon, felt a bit melancholy and walked to the starboard side of the ship. Lt Hood approached him and asked laughingly if he was asleep. Bandon answered: "No, I am on watch."

Then USS *Maine* exploded.



In this photo, members of *Maine's* crew demonstrated some of their pastimes: playing cards and reading. While in Havana Harbor they maintained a high state of alert.

It was a dull, sullen roar followed by a sharp explosion, although some would later say numerous detonations. Bandon would remember only one which came from the port side. "Then came a perfect rain of missiles of all descriptions, from huge pieces of cement to blocks of wood, steel railings, fragments of gratings, and all the debris that would be detachable in an explosion." He was struck on the head by a chunk of cement, but basically was unhurt. He and Hood ran to the poop deck to help lower boats. When they got there, water was up to their knees and the quarterdeck was awash.

In his cabin Sigsbee felt the crash of the explosion and trembling and lurching motion of the huge vessel, and the lights went out.

Lt Catlin thought he heard two explosions, one sounding like the "crack of a pistol and the second a roar that engulfed the ship's entire forward section." Then darkness. He groped his way out and made for the weather decks to join the other ship's officers. (All but two survived the blast.)

Private William Anthony, Capt Sigsbee's orderly and a 14-year veteran, left the safety of the weather decks and jumped through flames to find his captain. He worked his way through the black, smoke-filled compartments and found Sigsbee in a darkened passageway. Anthony snapped to attention, saluted and made his report: "Sir, I have to inform you that the ship has blown up and is sinking" or words to that effect.

The orderly had merely stated what his captain already knew. When both men reached the weather decks, *Maine* was already settling in the harbor's mud. One of her stacks lay in the water, and the entire bow was gone; water rushed into the hole where the bow had been. Ammunition was exploding overhead. Wounded men littered the black water.

The berthing area had been only two decks above the powder magazines where 10,000 to 20,000 pounds of powder had ignited.

Hood later recalled his horror: "The whole starboard of the deck, with its sleeping berth, burst out and flew into space, as a crater of flame came through, carrying with it missiles and objects of all kinds, steel, wood, and human ... all was still except for the cries of the wounded, the groans of the dying, and the crackling of flame in the wreckage."

Sigsbee directed his executive officer, Lieutenant Commander Richard Wainwright, to post sentries around the ship and then realized "that there were no Marines available, and no place forward to post them." His command and souls that made it such were, for the most part, gone.

Gigs from *City of Washington* and *Alfonso XII* quickly came alongside what was left of *Maine*. Sigsbee ordered the ship be abandoned and was the last to leave. He ordered the boat to circle *Maine* again and again in his attempt to find survivors. He could be heard calling: "If there is anyone living on board, for God's sake say so!" No one ever answered.



A canvas painting of USS *Maine* by A. Melero depicts the sunken battleship on the morning after the explosion.

Indeed, 28 Marines were among the 266 killed, including Trumpeter Newton and all but one of *Maine*'s championship All-Navy baseball team. Of those rescued, eight died later of injuries.

Only 88 survived.

News of the disaster ignited the American press to scream for vengeance.

Sigsbee thought it was a mine that set off the explosion. Others in the Navy weren't so sure. The Navy Department cautioned: "Public opinion should be suspended until further report."

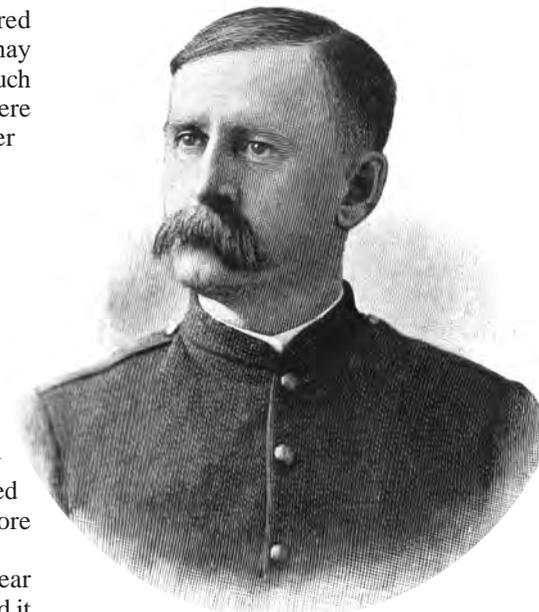
Although USS *Maine* was considered state of the art, she had one flaw that may have claimed her. Coal bunkers lined much of her hold, and eight of the bunkers were next to the magazines where powder was contained in copper containers. In January an investigative board had reported on dangers of spontaneous coal fire to the Secretary of the Navy and warned of bunker-to-magazine fires, which had been discovered in time to prevent disaster on the armored cruiser *New York* (ARC-2) and gunboat *Cincinnati*. Spontaneous combustion in the coal bunkers was a common, real concern to the Navy who, for various reasons, in 1881 stopped using anthracite coal in favor of the more volatile bituminous coal.

The newspaper editors, if they did hear of such speculation, chose to disregard it and trumpeted their jingoistic "exclusives."

Two days later, The *New York World* asked in a banner headline: "MAINE EXPLOSION CAUSED BY BOMB OR TORPEDO?" While the *New York Journal* proclaimed: "THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WAR SHIP MAINE WAS THE WORK OF AN ENEMY," and stated USS *Maine* "was split into two by an enemy's secret Infernal Machine." There were

illustrations showing the ship anchored over a mine with wires connecting to a Spanish fort.

No one will probably ever know what actually happened. However, a man in New York City whose name has been since lost in time, lifted his glass in a Broadway bar and intoned to the patrons, "Gentlemen, remember the *Maine*!" A Hearst reporter picked up on it, and the "Yellow Press" had their battle cry. While



**Private William Anthony
saluted and reported:
"Sir, I have to inform you
that the ship has blown up
and is sinking."**

Congressional Speaker of the House Thomas B. Reed said, "A war will make a large market for gravestones," the majority of politicians and the American public accused the Spanish of treachery and were sparked by the headline: "Remember the *Maine*. To Hell with Spain!"

Although peppermint candies appeared carrying that message, and Tin Pan Alley cranked out the song "My Sweetheart Went Down With the *Maine*" the newspapers and public needed a hero. When the Navy and Marine Corps recognized Pvt Anthony's actions by promoting him to sergeant, the press joined in and made him a national hero. (It was more than the veteran Marine could handle. Haunted by the death of his comrades and overwhelmed by the publicity, he took to heavy drinking and was retired the following year as a sergeant major. Despondent and out of work, he committed suicide at age 46. The New York police found his body on Nov. 24, 1899, in Central Park. He was *Maine*'s last casualty.)

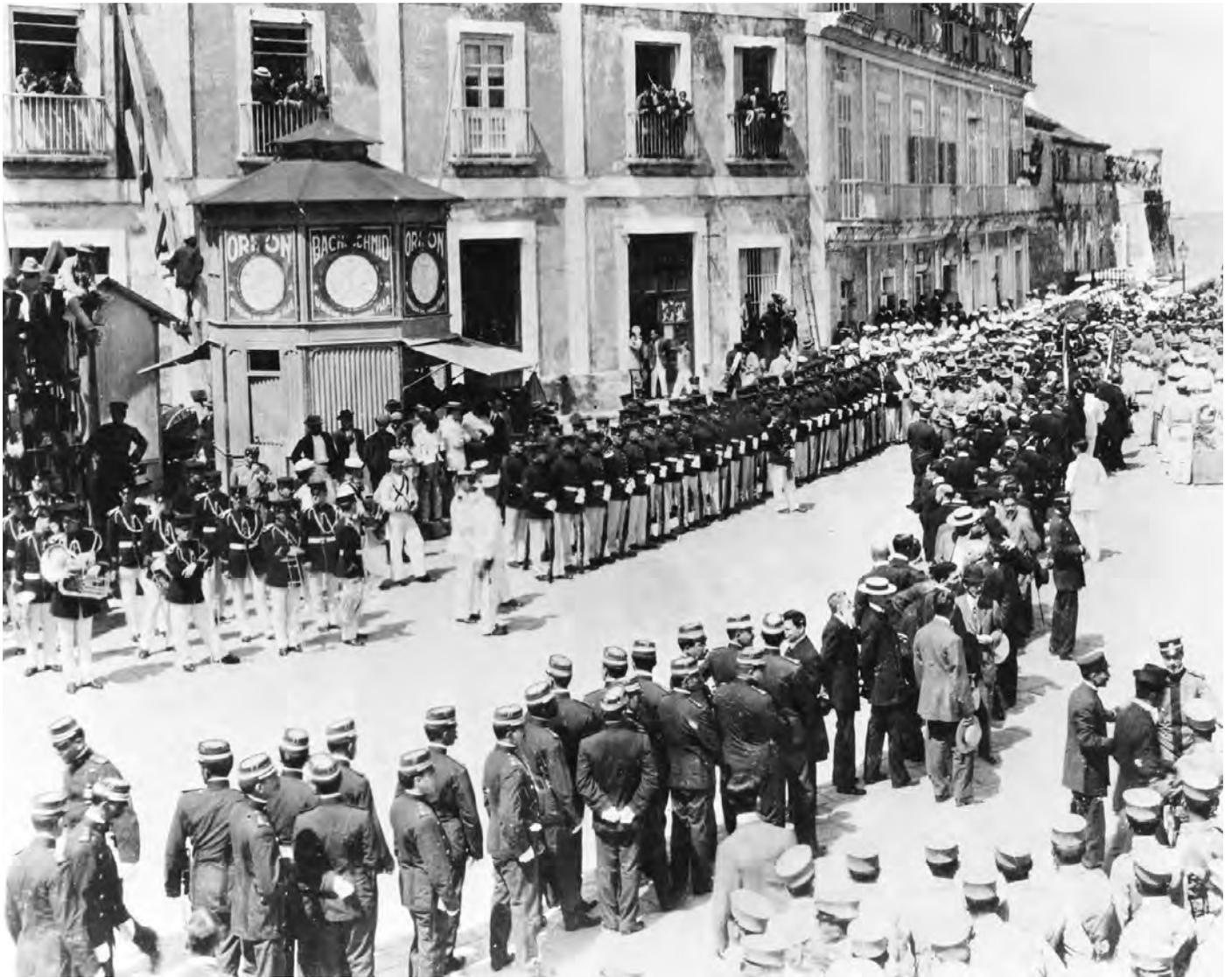
Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt was eager for a fight and on Feb. 25, cabled his friend, Commodore George Dewey with the U.S. Pacific Fleet in Hong Kong, the following: "Secret and confidential Keep full in coal. In the event of declaration of war with Spain, your duty will be to see that the Spanish squadron does not leave the Asiatic coast and then offensive operations in Philippine Islands. Keep *Olympia* [cruiser (C-7)] until further orders. Roosevelt." It was also at that time that Secretary of the Navy John Davis Long ordered the white hull of American warships repainted battleship gray.

Spain made futile attempts to conciliate. But war fever had taken the American nation. On April 11, President William McKinley, although he was against war, asked Congress to support an ultimatum that Spain "clear out of Cuba and allow Cuba to be independent." On April 19, Congress recognized Cuba's independence and carefully promised not to annex the island. Then, on April 21, a reluctant President McKinley ordered a naval blockade of Cuba, and Congress formally declared war. (Spain answered with a declaration of war on the United States.)

It was a war the United States was not ready for.

On April 23, the President called for 125,000 volunteers.

The U.S. Army had 28,000 men whose ranks contained veterans of Indian wars on the plains. However, as with the Marine Corps, decades of peace and slow promotions had taken its toll on the best officers. Further, the War Department



On March 16 U.S. Marines and sailors formed for a funeral procession in the streets of Havana and escorted the bodies of USS *Maine's* crew back to the States.

had become mired in red tape. Although the regular Army was quickly enlarged to more than 61,000 volunteers, it had neither stockpiles of supplies nor trained reserves to realistically meet the challenge of coming campaigns.

The U.S. Navy wasn't much better off. It possessed only five battleships and two armored cruisers. That the warships were spread thin was demonstrated when USS *Oregon* (BB-3) was forced to steam at flank speed, 11,000 miles from Puget Sound, Washington, down to the Strait of Magellan (as there was no Panama Canal at the time) and up to Key West, Fla.

The Marines, meanwhile, stripped posts and receiving ships of leathernecks. They ordered every available man west of the Mississippi River to New York's Brooklyn Navy Yard.

They arrived in only a few days: 23 officers and 623 enlisted men, mostly recruits. They mustered as a battalion before their commander. He was Lieutenant Colonel Robert W. Huntington,

a bearded relic of the Civil War, but an officer who had not lost the courage to command or his ability to lead in the years of relative peace. His efforts to form and ready the battalion of Marines helped build the Corps' reputation for combat valor and readiness.

As further impetus, Colonel Commandant Heywood came up from Washington to work and supervise preparations. The battalion "was supplied with all the equipment and necessities for field service under conditions prevailing in Cuba, including mosquito netting, woolen and linen clothing, heavy and light weight underwear, three months' supply of provisions, wheelbarrows, pushcarts, pickaxes, shovels, barbed-wire cutters, wall and shelter tents, and a full supply of medical stores."

Huntington quickly found his best non-commissioned officers and had them hone the battalion into a force resembling combat-ready Marines. He provided the five rifle companies with new Lee Navy rifles

and added four 3-inch rapid-fire guns to the artillery company's inventory.

As the battalion formed and prepared for war, a former merchantman vessel, rechristened USS *Panther* (AD-6), was quickly fitted to serve as transport and destroyer tender. Between Brooklyn and Cuba, Huntington ensured his leathernecks trained nonstop.

After some delay, the battalion was ready to board USS *Panther* for the fleet base at Key West, to be in readiness for duty on the Greater Antilles island of Cuba. No other unit of comparable size (with the possible exception of the "Rough Rider" cavalry regiment) would see as much action or receive as much newspaper coverage during the Cuban campaign.

On April 22, Huntington paraded his battalion, laden heavily with the tools of war, through cheering throngs in Brooklyn and boarded USS *Panther* while a Navy band played "The Girl I Left Behind Me."

Marines, Sailors Visit Iwo Jima To Study Touchstone Battle

Sand shifted below the feet of Marines and Sailors as the smell of sulfur permeated the humid air on the island of Iwo Jima, Nov. 7, 2017. As they took in the view of a place where so many lives were lost during World War II, the servicemembers were able to more fully understand the historical value of Iwo Jima as the site of one of the Corps' most iconic battles.

Members of several squadrons stationed at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, traveled to Iwo Jima for a professional military education (PME) trip made possible by Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron (VMGR) 152, whose KC-130J Super Hercules aircraft transported the participants there from the air station. When they disembarked from their flights, the Marines and Sailors broke off into groups and conducted a hike, passing by caves, memorials and old machine-gun nests before reaching the summit of Mount Suribachi.

Once the servicemembers reached the top of the legendary mountain, they left behind items like rank insignia, belts, nametapes and dog tags.

"Never in my entire life did I think I'd ever be in Iwo Jima," said Seaman Anthony Adams, USN, a corpsman with VMGR-152. "It blew my mind; the best

part of the day was being able to place my shield at the top of Mount Suribachi."

"It tugs at my heartstrings," said Sergeant Gregory Voss, an aviation ordnance technician with Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron (MALS) 12. "This is a huge piece of Marine Corps history. Marines shed blood, sweat and tears here. Granted I've only been in for five years, but this is the most exciting thing that I've done in my career. I'm honored that I could be here."

The servicemembers began their journey down to the beach to collect some of the island's legendary black sand and with the sun beating down on them and heat radiating from the volcanic island, they were even more appreciative of what the World War II Marines had faced in taking the island.

"It was demanding," said Voss. "Though we didn't go through what our brothers ... went through, it was definitely a challenging—but humbling—experience."

Servicemembers collected sand from the beaches in various containers so they could take a piece of history with them to keep or give to their families back home.

"Tradition, lineage and Marine Corps history means the world to me," said Voss. "It reminds me of where we come from. Just to say I was in the same 'family' as Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone is amazing."

LCpl Mason Roy, USMC

Corps Fields "Game Changer" Biometric Data Collection System

In September 2017, Marine Corps Systems Command (MCSC) completed the fielding of a new biometrics system to help deployed Marines identify and track the movement of individuals encountered on the battlefield, conduct entry control point operations and distinguish friend from foe.

Identity Dominance System-Marine Corps (IDS-MC) is a simple yet effective biometric data collection, matching and transaction management system with two components: a handheld device, known as the Secure Electronic Enrollment Kit, and a laptop computer with specialized biometric collection sensors and a badge printer.

IDS-MC replaces the Biometric Enrollment and Screening Device (BESD) to assist with detainee management and questioning, base access, counterintelligence screening, border control and law enforcement operations. Unlike the BESD, IDS-MC's transactional data management capability conveniently collects, shares, matches and stores identity information immediately, allowing the user to connect to the Tactical Data Network, manage and submit collected data and receive responses and feedback on submissions. This improves on the legacy system, which sometimes took days to download data via a CD or DVD, and required Marines to transmit that vital identity information from a separately connected computing system. This process was not only logistically cumbersome, but the latency in data submission and response receipt created force protection mission challenges.

"The IDS-MC is more convenient because it connects directly to the Marine Corps' Tactical Data Network, allowing Marines to share data and submit biometrics and receive the responses effortlessly," said Sarah Swift, Identity Operations Team lead for Biometrics and Forensics Systems at MCSC.

To develop the IDS-MC, the Identity Operations Team first identified a need for a portable, easy-to-use system via feedback from Marines in the fleet. The system was created to directly address the specific needs of Marine Expeditionary Forces in a contested environment.

Using IDS-MC, Marines collect data by capturing fingerprints and iris and face images from a person of interest.



LCPL MASON ROY, USMC

A Marine stationed at MCAS Iwakuni, Japan, takes in the view from atop Mount Suribachi, Iwo Jima, Nov. 7, 2017. Multiple squadrons from the air station sent Marines to participate in the PME trip, which fostered esprit de corps and helped the Marines and Sailors better understand the island's historical significance.

Marines conduct a field user evaluation for the IDS-MC at Naval Support Facility Dahlgren, Va., on Nov. 17, 2015. Nearly two years later, in September 2017, MCSC completed fielding of the new state-of-the-art biometrics system, which helps deployed Marines identify and track the movement of individuals encountered on the battlefield.

That data can then be matched with pre-existing information onboard the system, either on a biometrically enabled watch list (BEWL) or other list, such as an access control list used for base force protection. The IDS-MC also has the capability to capture location, biographical information and any other reference data that may be useful to intelligence analysts.

The IDS-MC user submits biometric information to the Department of Defense's Automated Biometric Identification System authoritative database via a web portal, allowing data to be shared across the biometrics enterprise, and also aiding in the creation of the DOD extensive BEWL. The BEWL contains an ongoing collection of biometric intelligence that helps users determine what actions to take immediately when they encounter a person of interest. Additionally, the Marine Corps Intelligence Agency Identity Intelligence Analytical Cell (MCIA I2AC) reviews the IDS-MC user's biometrics submissions and other collected biographical and reference data and provides direct reports to the submitting Marines, giving them analysis and intelligence products for potential persons of interest.

"The BEWL helps Marines match



MONIQUE RANDOLPH, MCSC

nefarious people they might encounter anywhere in the world to the ones listed in the database," said Swift. "We support Marines by providing them the most up-to-date BEWL, and then they can collect a person's biometrics. If it shows up in the system as a match, they'll be notified with a pop-up on the device."

"All of this provides the Marine Air-Ground Task Force with the ability to rapidly and efficiently identify people encountered in the battle space in support of targeting, military intelligence, law enforcement operations and force protection," said Major Keystella Mitchell, project officer for IDS-MC.

In addition to identifying known threats, the system also collects information on

potential future threats and stores it for future reference. If an individual is a match in the system, Marines are able to immediately receive that information and use it to make informed, on-the-spot decisions.

"It can be difficult to determine who the enemy is because they truly blend in with their surroundings," said Mitchell. "The IDS-MC is a game changer and force multiplier as a connected system for the commander on the ground because they can identify the threat and take action much quicker than before."

In addition to the planned fielding of the IDS-MC system, an urgent system quantity shortfall was identified by the Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task



SGT AMBER I. SMITH, USA

PROMOTION—The U.S. Secretary of Defense, James N. Mattis, retired Marine general, promotes a Marine to staff sergeant after arriving at the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan, Dec. 4, 2017. The opportunity came during Secretary Mattis' tour of Egypt, Jordan, Pakistan and Kuwait to reaffirm the enduring U.S. commitment to partnerships in the Middle East, West Africa and South Asia.

Force and Marine Corps Forces Central Command. This required an unplanned increase in the number of production assets, which required a fielding reprioritization strategy, additional rapid procurement and integration. The Identity Operations Team adapted its strategy, and within two months of validating the requirement, it fielded the additional systems.

As of Dec. 11, 2017, the fielding of the IDS-MC system had led to a 154 percent increase in the biometric collections submitted to MCIA I2AC and resulted in 11 watch list “hits” in the first month.

Kaitlin Kelly, MCSC

ARFF Marines Donate Time, Energy to Harvey Relief

Marines with Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting, Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., volunteered in Houston, Oct. 6-14, 2017, in support of Team Rubicon’s “Hard Hustle” Hurricane Harvey relief efforts.

Team Rubicon is a veteran service organization that uses disaster response to help veterans reintegrate into civilian life, giving volunteers and emergency services personnel the opportunity to experience the camaraderie they enjoyed in the military while also supporting areas affected by natural disasters.

“Team Rubicon was created by veterans for veterans,” said Master Sergeant

Marcos Martinez, the ARFF staff non-commissioned officer in charge. “I knew our Marines would appreciate being amongst like-minded people.”

The Marines conducted home assessments, mucked out houses, removed dry-wall and flooring and retrieved personal belongings that had been lost in the floods.

“Being there with other Marines was nice,” said Lance Corporal Zachary Walter, an ARFF rescue man who volunteered. “We all have a standard for work ethic, and we motivated the other members of Team Rubicon to keep up and challenged them to do better and do more.”

Martinez presented the idea of volunteering to his Marines, even though none of them had any ties to the Houston area.

“I wanted to help support the community and give back,” said Walter. “I understand that in times of need like this, friends, families and neighbors come together and that’s what makes the feeling of helping even better—seeing the communities come together firsthand.”

The Marines used their own leave and their own money to volunteer in support of the cause.

“At the point when we found we had to take leave, we decided there’s no turning back and the people of Houston needed us more than we needed our leave,” said Walter.

Seeing the satisfaction of each homeowner after helping them restore their houses was the best part, said Lance Cor-

poral Dominic Phifer, an ARFF Marine who volunteered in Houston.

All the Marines agreed they grew closer as a unit and that the experience, during which they logged a total of 240 volunteer hours, was life changing. They are grateful for the opportunity and believe it will transfer back to their everyday lives as Marine Corps firefighters and as citizens.

“Taking your own leave is a hard thing to do, but it was definitely worth it,” said Walter. “Somebody will always have it worse than you do, and you should always be willing to help your friends and neighbors.”

Sgt Brytani Wheeler, USMC

26th MEU Marine Carries on Navajo Legacy

Lance Corporal Natema A. Yazzie, a member of the Navajo tribe, enlisted in the Marine Corps in 2015 and presently serves as an electrician with Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 162 (Reinforced), 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit.

Yazzie, who hails from Landing, Utah, joined the Marine Corps for a challenge and a chance to see what the world has to offer.

“I wanted to explore, and the Marine Corps seemed like the best choice for me,” said Yazzie. “I came from a small town and living in a reservation was different—my closest neighbor lived 5 miles away. I decided it was time for a chance and I went to the nearest recruiter.”



SGT BRYTANI WHEELER, USMC

ARFF Marines stationed at MCAS Miramar, Calif., Sgt Cole Hunsberger, Sgt Brandon Werth, LCpl Dominic Phifer, LCpl Nicholas Larsen and LCpl Zachary Walter, volunteered in Houston as part of Team Rubicon’s Hurricane Harvey relief efforts, Oct. 6-14, 2017.

It wasn't until she completed boot camp at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C., that Yazzie found out that her grandfather was a Marine veteran of World War II.

"It honestly surprised me at first," said Yazzie. "At first, I didn't know my grandpa served in World War II. He never talked about it until after I finished boot camp.

Yazzie's grandfather, Thomas Begay, was one of the Navajo Code Talkers during WW II—bilingual members of the Navajo tribe who were used to send messages in the Pacific theater. Even if the messages were intercepted, they were indecipherable to those who didn't know the language.

"The fact that Navajo was used in the military didn't surprise me," said Yazzie. "I knew the military used it and for that I'm kind of glad that it's a part of American history."

Yazzie said speaking Navajo is a vital part of her tribe's tradition and the language has a deeper meaning than just words—it involves a mutual respect and understanding of each other.

"It's completely different from English;



LCpl Natema A. Yazzie, right, an electrician with VMM-162 (Rein), 26th MEU, wasn't aware until after she completed recruit training that her grandfather, Thomas Begay, left, was a Marine veteran who served as one of the legendary Navajo Code Talkers during WW II.

it's difficult to explain," said Yazzie. "I speak to my entire family in Navajo—it's just the way I grew up. There are certain words and phrases that you wouldn't be able to say in English, but you can understand in Navajo. I think that is why no one could understand it, because the language is something you have to experience to understand."

In late November, Yazzie was at sea with VMM-162 aboard USS *New York*

(LPD-21) participating in Combined Composite Training Unit Exercise, the MEU's final preparatory exercise before their 2018 deployment.

"I'm excited for the deployment and what the future has for me," said Yazzie. "I always wanted to explore the world. Now I have the opportunity to do just that and follow in my grandfather's footsteps."

Cpl Juan A. Soto-Delgado, USMC



Crazy Caption Contest

Winner



"Remember that present I didn't get last Christmas? Well, this is payback!"

Submitted by
Jack McHugh
Hamilton, N.J.

This Month's Photo



(Caption) _____

Name _____

Address _____

City/State _____ ZIP _____

Dream up your own Crazy Caption. *Leatherneck* will pay \$25 or give a one-year MCA membership for the craziest one received. It's easy. Think up a caption for the photo at the right and either mail or email it to us. Send your submission to *Leatherneck* Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134, or email it, referencing the number at the bottom right, to leatherneck@mca-marines.org. The winning entry will be published in two months.

New Military Retirement System Explained

Opt-in Period Opens

One of the most wide-reaching and significant changes to military pay and benefits of the last 70 years went into effect on Jan. 1, 2018, with the implementation of the Uniformed Services Blended Retirement System (BRS). The new system blends aspects of the traditional defined benefit retirement pension system with a defined contribution system of automatic and matching government contributions through the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP).

Background

The Fiscal Year 2016 Nation Defense Authorization Act created the new BRS. All servicemembers who enter the military on or after Jan. 1, 2018, automatically will be enrolled in BRS and all members serving as of Dec. 31, 2017, are grandfathered under the legacy retirement

system—no one currently serving will be automatically switched to the Blended Retirement System. Though they are grandfathered under the legacy retirement system, Active Component servicemembers with fewer than 12 years since their Pay Entry Base Date, and Reserve Component servicemembers who have accrued fewer than 4,320 retirement points as of Dec. 31, 2017, will have the option to opt into the BRS. The opt-in/election period for the BRS began Jan. 1, 2018, and concludes on Dec. 31, 2018.

Nearly 1.6 million current servicemembers will have the option to remain in the current legacy high-3 retirement system or choose the BRS. Opt-in eligible servicemembers from all seven of the Uniformed Services will have an entire year to make their retirement system election. The open period for the majority of servicemembers

is from Jan. 1, 2018, through Dec. 31, 2018.

Marines may visit Marine Online (<https://www.mol.usmc.mil>) to opt into BRS. Servicemembers who believe they are eligible to opt-in, but do not see the opt-in option available online, should contact their local personnel/human resources office to verify eligibility.

The decision to opt-in is irrevocable, even if a servicemember changes their mind before the deadline on Dec. 31, 2018. If an eligible servicemember takes no action, they will remain in the legacy retirement system. Prior to opting in, servicemembers should take advantage of all available resources to assist in making an informed decision on the financial implications specific to their retirement situation. The DOD endorses several training and informational tools to support a servicemember's decision, to include the BRS Opt-In Course, the BRS Comparison Calculator and numerous online BRS resource materials. Marines can receive no-cost, personal support from an accredited personal financial manager or counselor available at their base's Military and Family Support Center or by calling Military OneSource at 1-800-342-9647.

The change to the retirement system is a key step in modernizing the Uniformed Services' ability to recruit, retain and maintain an all-volunteer force in the 21st century. For more information about BRS, visit <http://militarypay.defense.gov/BlendedRetirement>.

Compiled from DOD News Releases

Blended Retirement System Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How is the military retirement system going to change?

A: The National Defense Authorization Act outlines all the changes to the retirement system, which went into effect in January of 2018. Servicemembers who joined after 2006 but before Jan. 1, 2018, will have the choice of whether to stay with the existing system or opt into the new Blended Retirement System. Those who joined before 2006 will remain in the current system. To learn more about the BRS, take the training at http://jko.jten.mil/courses/brs/leader_training/Launch_Course.html.

Q: Why is this a good thing for servicemembers?

A: Currently, approximately 81 percent

Blended Retirement System Road to RETIREMENT

Is Your Route to Retirement Mapped Out?

Navigate your financial future with an informed decision about your military retirement plan options.

There is a new retirement system for the Uniformed Services beginning on Jan. 1, 2018. Many members serving as of Dec. 31, 2017, are grandfathered under the legacy system, but some will have the option to opt into the new system in 2018. If you have options, decide which path is best for you.

- 1 Are you eligible?**
 - Active duty**
 - Serving as of Dec. 31, 2017
 - Less than 12 years of total service, from your Pay Entry Base Date
 - National Guard and Reserve**
 - Less than 4,320 retirement points as of Dec. 31, 2017
- 2 Explore your options in 2017.**

Take the mandatory BRS Opt-In Course by Dec. 31, 2017: <http://jko.jten.mil>

Calculate the possibilities!

 - BRS Comparison Calculator: <http://militarypay.defense.gov/Calculators/BRS>
 - Calculator eTutorial: <http://militarypay.defense.gov/BlendedRetirement>

Get free, professional support from an accredited Personal Financial Counselor.

 - Locate one through your installation's Family Center.
 - Search online at:
 - <http://www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil>
 - <https://www.jointservicesupport.org/spn>
- 3 In 2018, you decide which direction is best for you.**
 - Remain in the legacy retirement system**
 - Retired pay after 20+ years is calculated at 2.5% x years served x high-3 months of basic pay.
 - Explore options like the Thrift Savings Plan and alternate investments to increase your retirement.
 - Opt into the Blended Retirement System**
 - Retired pay after 20+ years is calculated at 2% x years served x high-3 months of basic pay, with a lump sum option.*
 - The government contributes to your Thrift Savings Plan 1% of your basic pay automatically and up to an additional 4% matching contribution. Your TSP is portable after two years of service.
 - Continuation pay is offered mid-career for an additional service commitment.

* Via National Guard and Reserve, you need have 20+ qualifying years to receive monthly retired pay. To calculate equivalent years of active duty, divide your retirement points by 360.

January 1 2018

OFFICE OF FINANCIAL READINESS

More info on the BRS <http://militarypay.defense.gov/BlendedRetirement>

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The U.S. Uniformed Services Blended Retirement System

Active Component

still get their monthly annuity pay, but at a reduced amount. The annuity's formula is 2 percent times years served times the "high three" or the average of the highest 36 months of basic pay received. The blended retirement system annuity is close to the current retirement formula, which uses 2.5 percent as the multiplier.

Q: If I'm in the new blended system and retire after 20 years, will I still get an annuity?

A: Yes, for those who retire after at least 20 years of service, the retirement remains predominantly a defined benefit in which you will get monthly retired pay. Instead of being calculated at 2.5 percent times the average of your highest 36 months of basic pay, (or your last month of basic pay, if you are under the older, final-pay system), your monthly retired pay will be calculated with a 2 percent multiplier.

Q: What education will be provided and when can servicemembers opt in?

A: The first opportunity servicemembers had to opt-into the new system was on Jan. 1, 2018. In anticipation of the new system, the Department of Defense has begun work on three courses: a leader overview of the blended retirement system (fielded in June 2016); a course focused on those servicemembers with less than 12 years of service as of Dec. 31, 2017, who will be eligible to opt-in (fielded Jan. 1, 2017); and a course for our new accessions who entered the force on Jan. 1, 2018, and beyond, who are now under the new blended system (fielded Jan. 1, 2018). The courses targeted at those eligible to opt-in as well as the new recruits will include calculators so that servicemembers can make comparisons, as well as understand the impact and need to make contributions to the TSP under the new system. The courses also will take into account unique aspects for both the Active and Reserve Components.

Q: What should servicemembers deciding whether to change into the new system be most aware of?

A: Early retirement savings and the power of compounding interest are important life-long concepts that you will want to pay attention to and learn more about. Do your homework and stay tuned to the conversation. You should be as informed as possible and have all of your retirement questions answered before you make your decision.

Q: Do you think that a lot of servicemembers will leave the military with the new system, since

EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2018

Saving with the New Blended Retirement System

The Fiscal Year 2016 National Defense Authorization Act provides our military force with a modernized retirement plan built for retirement savings. Beginning in 2018, service members can get **automatic and matching Thrift Savings Plan contributions**, as well as a mid-career compensation incentive, in addition to **monthly retired pay for life**. All service members under the current system are grandfathered into today's retirement system, but some will be eligible to opt into the new Blended Retirement System.

Pre-2018 Retirement System:



$2.5\% \times \text{Years Served} \times \text{Retired Pay Base}$
after completing 20 years of service

Blended Retirement System Components

1 Automatic and Matching Contributions

Automatic contributions are seen immediately



You Contribute	DoD Auto Contribution	DoD Matches	Total
0%	1%	0%	1%
1%	1%	1%	3%
2%	1%	2%	5%
3%	1%	3%	7%
4%	1%	3.5%	8.5%
5%	1%	4%	10%

The DoD automatically contributes 1% of your basic pay to your Thrift Savings Plan after 60 days of service.

You'll see matching contributions at the start of 3 years through the completion of 26 years of service, and...

You're fully vested—it's yours to keep—after completing 2 years of service and it goes with you when you leave.

2 Continuation Pay

Received at the mid-career point



You may receive a cash payment in exchange for additional service.

3 Full Retired Pay

Received after completing 20 years of service



Calculate your retired pay base by averaging the highest 36 months of basic pay.

You'll gain this monthly annuity for life after completing 20 years of service.

Your Retirement System

Options for Collecting Your Retired Pay

Full retired pay as a monthly annuity



50% or 25% of monthly retired pay annuity bumps back up to 100% at full retirement age (67 in most cases).

If you joined the service or signed a contract to serve:

BEFORE January 1, 2006

You'll be grandfathered into the pre-2018 retirement system.

AFTER December 31, 2005 BUT BEFORE January 1, 2018

You'll have the choice to enroll in the Blended Retirement System or remain in the pre-2018 retirement system.

AFTER December 31, 2017

You'll be automatically enrolled in the Blended Retirement System.

You can find additional information at <http://militarypay.defense.gov/BlendedRetirement>

Sources: Sections 631, 632, 633, 634, and 635 of the Fiscal Year 2016 National Defense Authorization Act.

Revised: 9/2016

of those who join the military leave with no retirement benefit. Under the BRS, about 85 percent of servicemembers will receive a retirement benefit, even if they don't qualify for full retirement.

Q: How does the Thrift Savings Plan figure into the new system?

A: Blended retirement will enroll all servicemembers joining after January 2018 into the Thrift Savings Plan, with automatic and matching Department of Defense contributions. After completion of two years of service, the servicemember is vested and that money belongs to them. If they leave, it goes with them.

Q: I'm in the new blended retirement system. How long will the Department of Defense match my contributions?

A: The Department of Defense will contribute 1 percent of a servicemember's basic pay to their Thrift Savings Plan after 60 days of entering service and will begin

to match the servicemember's contributions, (up to an additional 4 percent when a service member contributes at least 5 percent), at the start of the third year of service. Both the Department of Defense automatic 1 percent and the matching contributions continue through the end of the service member's 26th year of service.

Q: What is the second part of the system, continuation pay?

A: After 12 years of service, servicemembers will receive a cash payment if they opt to stay in for four more years. The payment will be two-and-a-half months of basic pay for the Active Component member and half a month's basic pay for the Reserve Component member.

Q: What about the third part, the annuity?

A: The third part of the blended retirement system is a monthly annuity, similar to the 20-year retirement system now in place. Members who retire will



The U.S. Uniformed Services Blended Retirement System

Reserve Component

The Fiscal Year 2016 National Defense Authorization Act provides our military force with a modernized retirement plan built for retirement savings. Beginning in 2018, Reserve Component service members can get **automatic and matching Thrift Savings Plan contributions, a mid-career compensation incentive, and if they obtain 20 years of service, monthly retired pay** for life starting at age 60.* All service members under the current system are grandfathered into today's retirement system.

Effective Date: January 1, 2018



Retirement System Selection

- Reserve Component members with more than 4,320 retirement points will remain under the legacy retirement system.
- Reserve Component members with less than 4,320 retirement points as of December 31, 2017, will have the choice of whether to opt into the new Blended Retirement System or remain in the legacy retirement system.
- New accessions after January 1, 2018, will automatically be enrolled in the new Blended Retirement System.

Reservists and Guardsmen While Serving

Thrift Savings Plan Contributions

You Contribute	DoD Auto Contribution	DoD Matches	Total
0%	1%	0%	1%
1%	1%	1%	3%
2%	1%	2%	5%
3%	1%	3%	7%
4%	1%	3.5%	8.5%
5%	1%	4%	10%

The DoD automatically contributes 1% of your basic pay or Inactive Duty Pay to your Thrift Savings Plan after 60 days of service.

You'll see matching contributions at the start of 3 years through the completion of 26 years of service, and...

You're fully vested — it's yours to keep — after completing 2 years of service and it goes with you if you leave.

Continuation Pay

Received at the mid-career point



At the mid-career mark, you may receive a cash payment in exchange for additional service.

Retired Reservists and Guardsmen Eligible for Retirement Pay

Monthly Annuity for Life



Calculate your **retired pay base** by averaging the **highest 36 months** of basic pay.

You'll gain this monthly annuity for life after completing 20 qualifying years of service and attaining age 60*

*or earlier based on qualifying active service.

Collecting Your Retired Pay

OPTION 1 Full retired pay annuity beginning at age 60 or earlier based on credited active service

1

OPTION 2



25% or 50% lump sum and reduced monthly annuity at age 60* Monthly annuity bumps back up to 100% at full retirement age (67 in most cases).

they'll have money in their pocket and no incentive to stay?

A: Our analysis shows that current force profiles will not change when we reduce the retirement multiplier from 2.5 percent to 2 percent and offer government matching into the TSP. We will, however, need a continuation pay. This pay is similar to a retention bonus and targeted at the mid-career to ensure the necessary retention that maintains those force profiles. After two years of service, servicemembers can keep the Department of Defense contributions to their TSP account. Servicemembers will have the option to leave those contributions in the TSP or to roll them into another company or government 401(k) retirement plan. The current TSP rules apply for early withdrawal before age 59.5 in which the servicemember would pay a penalty and incur the associated tax liability for taking the funds out early.

Q: What reaction have you received from current servicemembers on the new plan?

A: Many servicemembers want to hear more details about how the new retirement system will work and how it impacts them and their families. That's why increased financial education and training will be essential to help servicemembers make wise financial decisions. We expect the new courses, which will include calculators for comparison, to be extremely helpful in guiding servicemembers' choices.

Compiled from Military One Source Releases



You can find additional information at <http://militarypay.defense.gov/BlendedRetirement>
Sources: Fiscal Year 2016 National Defense Authorization Act, sections 631, 632, 634, and 635

Created: 8/2016



FIVE-STEP BLENDED RETIREMENT SYSTEM (BRS) CHECKLIST TO SUCCESS

- STEP 1**
Determine your **eligibility**.
- STEP 2**
Take the mandatory **BRS Opt-In Course**.
- STEP 3**
Educate yourself on the BRS and use the BRS Calculator to analyze your estimated benefits.
- STEP 4**
Schedule an appointment to consult your installation personal financial manager/counselor.
- STEP 5**
Make your **decision** between January 1, 2018 and December 31, 2018.

www.militarysaves.org

MCRC Unveils “Battles Won” Sculptures



“Nation’s Call” is one of three sculptures used in the Marine Corps’ latest advertising campaign created by the J. Walter Thompson ad agency. The impressive details, as seen below, include depictions of other famous monuments.

COURTESY OF J. WALTER THOMPSON

By LCpl Naomi Marcom, USMC

Marine Corps Recruiting Command unveiled three sculptures inspired by the Corps’ most recent “Battles Won” advertising campaign at the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Triangle, Va., Dec. 13, 2017.

The bronze sculptures, entitled “Nation’s Call,” “Waged in Will” and “At Their Core,” embody the essence of the Corps by depicting Marines who are tangibly “clothed” in the history of the Corps and the legacy of those who came before.

“The mentality of a Marine is selflessness, camaraderie, brotherhood and kinship—all working together and fighting to the death for your fellow man,” said Kris Kuksi, world-renowned artist commissioned to create the one-of-a-kind sculptures for the Marine Corps’ latest national advertising campaign. “I wanted to capture the fighting spirit.”

The weapons, uniforms and machinery seen throughout the sculptures were meticulously crafted from toy soldiers, building blocks, model kits and 3-D printed accessories, which were painted to



COURTESY OF NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE MARINE CORPS

look like Marines in battle. The meticulous attention to detail of each sculpture is an impressive visual representation of the battles and challenges faced by Marines throughout the Corps' existence, and visitors to the Museum will marvel at the complexity and beauty of each sculpture.

"Kris really took the essence of the Marine Corps and materialized it through his imagination and into artwork," said Colonel Terence Trenchard, the chief of staff of MCRC. "Winning our nation's battles is one of our promises as Marines, and it can be seen here—in a physical sense—as a long-carried tradition and culture."

The "Battles Won" brand concept, which was released in March 2017 by MCRC and its advertising agency, J. Walter Thompson, was designed to convey the fighting spirit of Marines, the very essence of the Marine Corps.

"When I look at the statues, there's too much for me to take in at one time," Lin Ezell, the director of the NMMC, admiringly said. "I don't think you can figure it all out at one time. It'll take some revisiting."

It took approximately seven months for Kuksi to complete production of the sculptures.



"At Their Core" and the other sculptures are now on display at the entrance to the Combat Art Gallery at the National Museum of Marine Corps in Triangle, Va.

"MCRC is proud to donate these sculptures to the museum so that all people, not only Marines, can experience who we are, what we do and why it matters," Trenchard said.

Author's bio: LCpl Naomi Marcom is a combat mass communicator at the Marine Corps Recruiting Command.

Below: "Waged in Will" is especially evocative of the Marine Corps' many battles and the fighting spirit of Marines through the ages.



COURTESY OF J. WALTER THOMPSON



COURTESY OF J. WALTER THOMPSON



COURTESY OF NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE MARINE CORPS



COURTESY OF NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE MARINE CORPS

Artist Kris Kuksi created the sculptures, including "At Their Core," with the goal of portraying the fighting spirit of Marines.



LCPL MAXIMILIANO BAVASTRO, USMC

Sgt Timothy Benson, a drill instructor with “Kilo” Company, 3d Recruit Training Battalion, observes recruits during marksmanship practice at MCRD Parris Island, S.C., Nov. 28, 2017. A new fourth phase of recruit training has been implemented at both depots, emphasizing the importance of mentorship between drill instructors and new Marines.

Corps Adds Fourth Phase To Recruit Training

Recruits who began training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C., and Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, in November 2017 will be the first in the Corps’ history to tackle the new “fourth phase,” an additional period of training designed to better prepare them for success as Marines.

The Marine Corps has reorganized a portion of the 13-week recruit training to afford drill instructors additional time to mentor and lead new Marines. Among the slight modifications, recruits will tackle the Crucible, the notoriously demanding 54-hour challenge, a week earlier and then spend the two final weeks of training as Marines. The Crucible remains the culminating event for recruits as they earn the title “Marine.”

“Making Marines is one of the most important things that we do,” said General

Robert B. Neller, Commandant of the Marine Corps. “Earning the title is, and will remain, difficult. Our standards and requirements have not changed but as recruit training evolves we want to ensure we are preparing Marines for success in their follow-on training and service to our great country.”

The fourth phase will utilize the “six Fs” of Marine Leader Development framework: Fidelity, Fighter, Fitness, Family, Finances and Future. Marines will be in small groups covering subjects that are critical to success and growth in all aspects of their personal and professional lives.

Gen Neller added that the Corps is seeking more time for these new Marines to get used to the idea that earning the title “Marine” is just the beginning.

“We thought it was important that the drill instructor, the key figure in the development of these new Marines, had

a role to play in the transition,” said Gen Neller. “They were their drill instructors, but now they have to be their staff sergeant, their gunnery sergeant and we thought that was very powerful.”

As drill instructors transition from trainers of recruits to mentors of Marines, the expected result is a more resilient, mature, disciplined and better-prepared Marine.

“This is a normal evolution of the recruit training experience,” said Gen Neller. “We are trying to keep the very best of what we do now [in recruit training] and add something to make it even better.”

Sgt David Staten, USMC

Online Exchange Benefits Officially Open to Veterans

As of Nov. 11, 2017, approximately 18.5 million honorably discharged veterans now have a lifetime benefit enabling them to shop and make purchases from

military exchanges online, marking the first expansion of military exchange privileges since 1990.

“The Exchange is honored to open its virtual doors to millions of deserving veterans,” said Tom Shull, the director and CEO of the Army and Air Force Exchange Service.

“There are many generations of service-members who have not been properly recognized,” Shull added. “This new benefit acknowledges their service and welcomes them home. This is something veterans can enjoy the rest of their lives.”

Every purchase veterans make online will help improve the quality of life for those who wear the uniform today, Shull noted, as exchange earnings support programs such as combat uniforms below cost, fitness centers, child development centers and youth programs, outdoor recreation programs, and more.

“This is a virtuous cycle,” said Shull. “As a veteran myself, it is an honor to pay forward support to active-duty service-members and their families.”

Excitement for the new benefit was building for months prior to the official launch, thanks in part to social media publicity from Mark Wahlberg, Marcus Luttrell, Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson, Richard Rawlings and other celebrities. Prior to the Nov. 11 launch, AAFES officials said that more than 255,000 veterans had verified their eligibility for the benefit.

To verify eligibility and begin shopping, visit the Army and Air Force Exchange Service at www.shopmyexchange.com, the Marine Corps Exchange at www.mymcx.com, or the Navy Exchange at www.mynavyexchange.com. The benefit applies to online purchases only, not in exchange stores.

Chris Ward, AAFES

Military Chaplains Honored At Memorial Dedication Ceremony

Military chaplains were honored at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific during the Chaplains Memorial Dedication in Honolulu, Dec. 14, 2017.

The dedication began with a prayer.

After two years of phone calls and piles of paperwork, retired Chaplain Colonel Richard “Dick” Stenbakken, USA (Ret), co-chairman of the Chaplain Memorial Committee for the National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces, made the memorial a reality. Stenbakken donned a World War II captain’s uniform at the dedication.

Stenbakken said the memorial honors military chaplains from multiple faiths who have served in the past or are presently serving across the Pacific region.



SSGT MELISSA PARRISH, USA

Chaplains from the Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps, past and present, were honored at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu during the Chaplain Memorial Dedication, Dec. 14, 2017.

“It is essential that we remember what chaplains have done in the past, what chaplains are doing now and that we look into the future,” Stenbakken said. “Chaplaincy is the core and the heart of the values in any military branch. This memorial also is a reminder to the community that the chaplains were there and are there for their family members that have served.”

He added, “I hope this will be an ongoing reminder of commitment for chaplains. Their service has to be rock-solid and grounded just like this memorial.”

In honor of fallen chaplains, Rabbi Irving A. Elson, a retired Navy captain and the director of the Jewish Welfare Board Jewish Chaplains Council, read the famous eulogy delivered by Rabbi

Roland B. Gittelsohn. The eulogy was given for those who died at Iwo Jima and was read into the U.S. Congressional record in 1945.

“Here lie men who loved America because their ancestors generations ago helped in her founding,” Elson read. “And other men who loved her with equal passion because they themselves or their own fathers escaped from oppression to her blessed shores. Here lie officers and men, black and white, rich men and poor, together. Here are Protestants, Catholics, and Jews together ... Here, no man prefers another because of his faith or despises him because of his color. Here there are no quotas of how many from each group are admitted or allowed. Among these men there is no discrimination. No prejudices. No hatred. Theirs is the highest and purest democracy.”

Army Chief of Chaplains Major General Paul K. Hurley was a guest speaker at the ceremony. He reminded his fellow military chaplains in attendance of the importance of remembering the legacy of those that came before them in order to prepare for the mission ahead.

“This memorial is important,” Hurley said. “It is important to have a marker to remind us of what we are here for. As chaplains, we are here to take care of the souls and spirits of soldiers and their families. This memorial is for all chaplains. This is for everyone. This is a reminder of our past and how important it is to what we are doing now.”

SSGT Melissa Parrish, USA



SSGT MELISSA PARRISH, USA

This new memorial, honoring military chaplains from multiple faiths who are serving or have served in the Pacific region, was dedicated during a ceremony in Honolulu, Dec. 14, 2017.

Books Reviewed

IN THE WARLORDS' SHADOW: Special Operations Forces, the Afghans, and Their Fight Against the Taliban. By Daniel R. Green. Published by Naval Institute Press. 304 pages. \$26.96 MCA Members. \$29.95 Regular Price.

Success in Afghanistan is difficult to measure, let alone describe.

When President Donald Trump addressed the nation in August 2017 about his administration's new approach to the Afghanistan war, he said, victory would have a clear definition from now on: "Attacking our enemies, obliterating ISIS, crushing al-Qaida, preventing the Taliban from taking over Afghanistan, and stopping mass terror attacks against America before they emerge."

Following the speech, *Washington Post* reporter Aaron Blake wrote, "This is not a 'clear definition' of victory; it is a series of nebulous goals that pretty much any U.S. president would subscribe to."

The *New York Times* editorial board also quoted the same excerpt from Trump's speech and asked this question: "But what constitutes victory and will Americans fight on foreign soil until every terrorist is dead?"

Other media outlets had similar write-ups with the same questions.

The most refreshing part about reading Daniel R. Green's new book "In the Warlords' Shadow: Special Operations Forces, the Afghans, and Their Fight Against the Taliban," is that a definition of victory—one absent of supporting any political view of the Afghanistan war—is provided. The definition is clear, but complex.

Green, a lieutenant commander in the U.S. Navy Reserve, states it can be difficult for the government to describe victory to the American people.

He writes, "Too frequently, 'victory' is described in conventional terms, such as the number of Taliban killed and compounds destroyed, when actual 'victory' has more to do with the ability of the indigenous government to handle its own internal security threats in the long term."

Green's book is ultimately about how he developed a measurement of success for a U.S. program designed to empower local Afghan populations to protect themselves.

The book, which partly reads like a travel log, details his third deployment to Afghanistan in 2012. During that time, he served as a tribal and political engagement officer for Special Operations Task Force-South East, which oversaw the southern Afghanistan provinces of Uruzgan, Dai Kundi and Zabul.

Green goes to observe and assess a program called Village Stability Operations (VSO). Within this program, Navy and Army special operators worked with local communities to solve any tribal or political issues, as well as help create a local police force.

Green, in part, served as the strategic adviser on political and tribal dynamics of Uruzgan, a province he had spent time in during his first trip to the country in 2005 when he worked for the U.S. Department of State.

Upon his arrival, Green is given a complicated task of devising a new way to measure the success of the program—one that doesn't focus on counting the number of enemy killed or compounds destroyed.

As Green travels to different sites in Uruzgan, Dai Kundi and Zabul where the program is being implemented, he "arrived at a key insight."

"So much of how we thought and talked about the war revolved around what we did to the Afghans rather than what came from them," he writes.

Counting the amount of village meetings, the amount of money spent on development and the number of enemy killed doesn't mean anything if "Afghans continued to be on the sidelines."

"The real measure of the totality of our efforts was what the Afghans did on their own in security, development, and governance," Green writes. He states that allowing Afghans to be part of the solution in their villages was one of the missing components of the strategy in Afghanistan and that once the villagers willingly decided to defend themselves against the Taliban, you would start seeing them invest in the development of their own community.

"In the end, we protected a community while the Taliban controlled it," Green writes. "It was a subtle distinction, but it had enormous repercussions."

Green witnesses the program's success firsthand. But he also sees its struggles.

During his deployment, he visits various Village Stability Platform sites or small bases from which those who run the VSO program operate. One of these sites is VSP Khod within the Uruzgan province. The base overlooks a valley with 20 villages.

The team in charge of the site was having difficulty persuading village elders to support the local police program, which, in turn, meant they were having trouble recruiting villagers to join the program.

Green observes two factors that limited the team's success—time and location. That is, the amount of time a VSP site had been in an area and where the site was physically located.

"It was clear that the terrain made it difficult for one team to develop a relationship with each of the valley's twenty different villages," Green writes. "The site was also very new ... and its location on a plateau made it difficult for villagers to visit it or feel the effects of the security it provided."

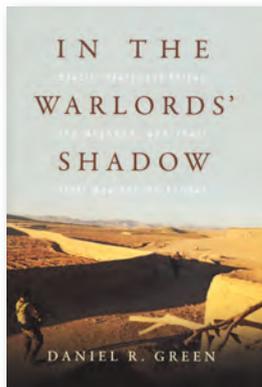
In contrast, Green describes another site called Gizab, which had a force of 400 Afghan local police that was both multi-ethnic and multi-religious. The chief of police for the area was a man named Lala, who "was aggressive against the Taliban."

Several factors contributed to Gizab's success, according to Green. These included its location—mountainous terrain that prevented insurgents from entering; the leadership of Lala; the local population's strong dislike of the Taliban; a good economy; and the fact there was one tribe in the area, which made it easier to organize the people.

Green's book provides entry into the real war being fought by America's military in Afghanistan. It's a war less about bombs and bullets—items that typically attract journalists, filmmakers, and book publishers—and more about convincing a diverse population of people (many from rival tribes and isolated regions) to protect their own communities and unite under a single government.

"In the Warlords' Shadow" doesn't have flashy scenes of military operations or firefights. Hollywood isn't likely to give Green a call, asking for the movie rights.

But the book grips the reader on an intellectual level, providing that same feeling of satisfaction that comes after



solving a riddle or a difficult math problem. Green's book provides an answer to a question so many Americans think there is no answer to: How do we win this war?
LCpl Kyle Daly, USMC

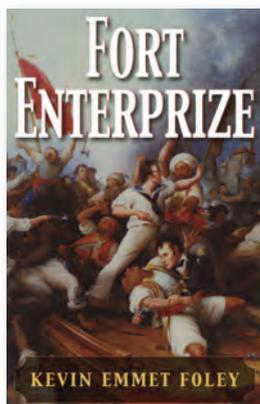
Author's bio: LCpl Kyle Daly is a Southern California native who joined the Marine Corps after working as an editor and reporter for various publications, including the Pacific Daily News in Guam.

FORT ENTERPRIZE. By Kevin Emmet Foley. Published by Hellgate Press. 228 pages. \$17.96 MCA Members. \$19.95 Regular Price.

Kevin Foley, a journalist turned novelist, has written a compelling and lively account of the military adventures of Lieutenant Presley O'Bannon in America's first armed clash with the forces of Islam. Lt O'Bannon first raised the Stars and Stripes over foreign soil. One need only recall the second line of "The Marines' Hymn," "To the shores of Tripoli," to transport any leatherneck to visions of his supreme self.

Foley's new novel, "Fort Enterprize," captures all the excitement of days long past, the age of the fighting sailing ships. During the administration of Thomas Jefferson, American merchant ships were being stalked and boarded, and in many cases, the Sailors were seized and taken as slaves by the Mediterranean Sea-based Barbary pirates. Working for Yusuf Karamanli, the Bashaw of Tripoli, their aim was to seek exorbitant tribute from nations sailing in their vicinity. The question for Jefferson was clear. Should America pay tribute or fight? The cagey President ordered several of our fledgling nation's armed frigates to the Mediterranean. Furthermore, he would also rely on a skilled negotiator to assess, and hopefully handle, the tricky diplomatic questions. Additionally, the president authorized an additional, some might say, bizarrely audacious enterprise.

William Eaton was something of a military adventurer. He knew the language, the customs, and the players of the Middle Eastern world. Eaton convinced Jefferson that he might be able to find Hamet, the elder brother of the current Bashaw of Tripoli, Yusuf, and restore him to his rightful place as the Bashaw of Tripoli. After locating Hamet, Easton, and his Marine counterpart, Presley O'Bannon, began to raise a rag-tag Arab army.



On the "stick" side of Jefferson's "stick and carrot" approach, the American Navy sailed the 36-gun frigate USS *Philadelphia*, into the Tripoli port as a show of force. The worst nightmare of every ship's captain is to run his ship aground, and, alas, Captain Bainbridge did just that. Quickly the Bashaw's admiral dispatched his pirates who boarded and captured the vessel and her crew. In one short adventure, the Bashaw had gained a first-class fighting vessel, but his real bargaining chip was the capture of 300 American Sailors. Yusuf now held the seamen and the ship for an exorbitant ransom.

A second American flotilla led by Captain Edward Preble commenced a bombardment of Tripoli. Lt Stephen Decatur, an aggressive naval officer, led a small raiding party into the harbor. In one of America's first special operations, Lt Decatur and his men boarded and successfully burned *Philadelphia* to the water line.

Meanwhile Eaton, supported by Lt Presley O'Bannon and a small contingent of Marines, and his motley force undertook an arduous 500-mile march across the desert to attack Yusuf at the key city of Derne.

Eaton, O'Bannon and their unlikely army finally were ready to attack the city. With the able assistance of the offshore naval bombardment, the attack commenced. Finally, and with amazing effort, Eaton's ragged band achieved their goal. It was here that Lt O'Bannon raised Old Glory over a non-western nation and carved the name, Fort Enterprize into the wall of the fallen city's fort.

The Bashaw quickly reconsidered his position and a new agreement was struck by the American negotiator. After two wretched years, what was left of the 300-man crew of USS *Philadelphia* was released.

The Barbary War heralded the emergence of the U.S. Navy as a worldwide force in readiness. It saw the American flag planted, in victory, in a foreign nation, outside of the Western Hemisphere. Naval gunfire was successfully utilized in collaboration with a battle fought on land.

Foley's novel is a pleasure to read. It skips along with a joyful pace of a well-written historical novel. However, and as Foley clearly states in his notes, he took considerable literal license in the

telling of this story. Aside from that, "Fort Enterprize" is easy to read and pleasing to ponder.

Bob Loring

MARINES NEVER CRY: Becoming a Man When it Mattered. By Timothy C. Hall. Published by Banyan Tree Press. 346 pages. \$17.96 MCA Members. \$19.95 Regular Price.

Zeke Hammond has many reasons to cry as he encounters overwhelming obstacles from his earliest days when he is deserted by a father he never really knew. Rescued by grandparents from his tough family situation, their farm life helps instill within him the values, drive and coping skills he will come to depend on when he joins the Marine Corps after high school.

His independent spirit is tempered at Parris Island but in the Corps, and with the help of his fellow Marines, he finds exactly what he had been searching for in their tough, demanding world. After completing infantry training, he looks forward to becoming a "grunt" and heading to Vietnam as a skilled rifleman with his fellow Marines.

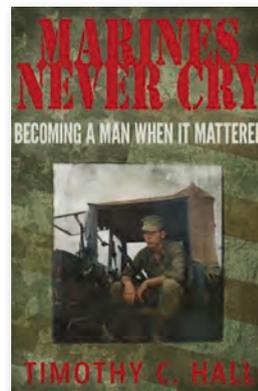
Unfortunately, he disclosed during his boot camp

interview that he had driven a truck on grandfather's farm; he soon found himself driving 5-ton 6x6 cargo trucks and, later, what he called BATs—big-ass 26-wheelers—in Vietnam. There, Zeke finds that only his innovative mind and quick wits guarantee his survival when he encountered some illogical and often dangerous trucking missions and questionable leadership. But he also had a new set of combat skills he quickly developed and employed to survive snipers, road mines, ambush, and night attacks ... just like those "grunts" he admired so much.

But Zeke had other reasons to cry after losing many Marine pals to enemy fire. In addition, he endured the death of his beloved grandfather and the shocking death of his fiancée. Each had to be emotionally handled by a combat-hardened Marine who returned to civilian life with the trauma and memories of war fresh and seething in his brain.

All of us who survived the Vietnam War will relate to Zeke in this gut-wrenching work of fiction that was inspired by actual events. It will make you laugh, get mad and maybe even cry.

Col Bob Fischer, USMC (Ret)



DPAA Identifies Remains of WW II Marines

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) recently announced that the remains of several U.S. Marines, unaccounted for since World War II, have been identified.

U.S. servicemembers who died in the Battle of Tarawa were buried in a number of battlefield cemeteries on Tarawa. In 1946 and 1947, recovery operations were conducted and the remains that could not be identified were interred in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu, Hawaii. Recently DPAA began the process of disinterring those remains for identification.

The Marines whose remains were disinterred and identified are:

Sgt William D. Ball Jr., 21, of Hollywood, Calif. He was assigned to Company B, 1st Battalion, 2d Marine Regiment, 2d Marine Division.

PFC Sam J. Kourkos, 20, of Independence, Kan. He was assigned to Co M, 3d Bn, 8th Marines, 2dMarDiv.

Pvt Archie W. Newell, 22, of Aberdeen, S.D. He was assigned to Co C, 2d Tank Bn, 2dMarDiv.

At the time of the post-war recovery operations, many of the remains on Tarawa were determined unrecoverable.

Through a partnership with History Flight, Inc., a nongovernmental organization, DPAA also recovered multiple sets of remains from Betio and is in the process of identifying those remains.

The Marines whose remains recently were recovered and identified are:

PFC Albert Strange, 18, of Mammoth Cave, Ky. He was assigned to Co E, 2d Bn, 8th Marines, 2dMarDiv.

PFC Donald R. Tolson, 20, of Bakersfield, Calif. He was assigned to Co F 2d Bn, 8th Marines, 2dMarDiv.

Compiled from DPAA news releases

Remains of USS *Oklahoma* Marine Identified, Laid to Rest

The Defense POW/MIA (DPAA) recently announced that the remains of a Marine, unaccounted for since World War II, have been returned to his family for burial with full military honors.

Private Vernon P. Keaton, 18, of Lubbock, Texas, was buried in Lula, Okla., in November 2017.

Pvt Keaton was assigned to USS *Oklahoma* (BB-37), which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. *Oklahoma* sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Keaton.

From December 1941 to June 1944, Navy personnel recovered the remains of the deceased crew; the remains of those men were interred in the Halawa and Nu'uaniu cemeteries in Hawaii.

In September 1947, tasked with recovering and identifying U.S. personnel killed in the Pacific theater, members of the American Graves Registration Service (AGRS) disinterred the remains of U.S.

casualties from the two cemeteries and transferred them to the Central Identification Laboratory at Schofield Barracks in Hawaii. The laboratory staff was able to confirm the identifications of only 35 men from *Oklahoma*. The AGRS subsequently buried the unidentified remains in 46 plots at Honolulu's National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific.

In April 2015, at the direction of the Deputy Secretary of Defense, DPAA personnel began exhuming the remains of USS *Oklahoma* Sailors and Marines for analysis.

DPAA scientists used mitochondrial DNA analysis as well as circumstantial evidence to identify Pvt Keaton's remains. DPAA

John T. Barber, 73, of Cottonwood, Ariz. He was a Marine who served from 1963-1967, including a tour in Vietnam.

Walter E. "Jake" Barndt, 89, of West Palm Beach, Fla. He enlisted in the Marine Corps toward the end of WW II. He later ran the family moving company.

William K. Carter, 92, of Mount Olive, Ala. He enlisted when he was 16

and served for 21 years. During WW II, he fought in the battles for Guadalcanal, Bougainville, Guam and Okinawa, where he was wounded. During the Korean War he saw fighting at Inchon, Wonsan and the Chosin Reservoir, where he was wounded again. His awards include two Purple Hearts.

William J. Cary, 78, of Monroe Township, N.J. He enlisted in 1957 and went to boot camp at Parris Island. After leaving the Marine Corps in 1963, he began a 25-year career on Wall Street.

Sgt David L. Cavanaugh, 24, Twenty-nine Palms, Calif. He was a squad leader with Co K, 3d Bn, 7th Marines, 1stMarDiv.

He enlisted in 2012 and went to boot camp at MCRD Parris Island. He deployed to Afghanistan in 2014 with Wpns Co, 1st Bn, 2d Marines. In 2015, he deployed to the Pacific with Wpns Co, 1st Bn, 2d Marines. While deployed, he earned the designation of French Nautical Commando.

MSgt Roger C. Clements, 88, of Advance, N.C. He served from 1946-1966, mostly at duty stations in the Southern California area.

MSgt Max E. Cribelar, 90, of Jacksonville, N.C. During the Korean War he fought at the Chosin Reservoir and suffered severe frostbite on his feet, hands and ears. He was a member of the DAV, VFW and the Chosin Few.

GySgt Robert C. Cummings Jr., 91, of Canton, Ohio. He served in the Marine Corps Reserve for 23 years. He belonged to the MCL and was an active volunteer with Toys for Tots.

MSgt William T. Cummings Jr., 81, in Trenton, N.J. During his 21 years in the Marine Corps, he served two tours in Vietnam with VMO-2 and HML-167. He later was an administrator for the VA.

Cpl Russell Deihl, 72, of Fresno, Calif. He was a Marine who served from 1963-1967. He was a veteran of the Vietnam War.

Teddy Draper Sr., 93, in Prescott, Ariz. He was one of the Navajo Code Talkers who served in the Marine Corps during WW II. He saw action in the Pacific theater.

LtCol Jean A. Gruhler Jr., 82, in Edgewater, Md. He was designated a naval aviator in 1963. During the Vietnam War he flew 264 combat missions in the F-4 Phantom with VMFA-232 and VMFA-542. He also flew the F-8 Crusader and the A-4 Skyhawk. His awards include the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Navy and

Marine Corps Medal, the Bronze Star with combat "V" and 21 Air Medals.

Norris "Frank" Houser, 89, in Gilbert, Ariz. He enlisted when he was 18. He later fought in the Korean War. During his 20-year Marine Corps career, he had assignments in Guam, the Philippines and Southern California.

Capt Henderson B. "Buck" Jones, 82, of Idabel, Okla. He was a Marine who served from 1954-1974 and saw action during the Vietnam War.

Sgt Harry Kilpatrick, 85, of Ambler, Penn. He was a Marine who served during the Korean War.

Cpl Albert J. LaBrie, 91, of Chicopee, Mass. He was a Marine who served during WW II.

David W. Land, 101, of Columbus, Ga. He was a Marine who served from 1934-1938 and returned to service during WW II, when he was with the MarDet for USS *Bennington* (CV-20).

Edward A. LeViness, 92, in Flagstaff, Ariz. He joined the Marine Corps in 1943 and was assigned to the 5thMarDiv. He fought on Iwo Jima and Okinawa and later saw action in the Korean War. He later attended college using the GI bill, and earned a master's degree in biology. For 30 years he was a range and livestock specialist at the University of Arizona.

George H. Luby, 93, of Denver, Colo. He was a student at UCLA when he enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1943. He served in the South Pacific during WW II and after the war, he served in Japan.

Cpl Gary Markwardt, 72, of Newport, Wash. He was a Marine Corps veteran of the Battle of Khe Sanh.

Ballard G. Marsh, 96, of West Jefferson, N.C. He was a Marine who served in the South Pacific. He was wounded in the Battle of Okinawa.

Frank H. McFadden, 96, of Roanoke, Va. He was a Marine pilot who served in WW II. He flew 113 combat missions in the South Pacific.

Charles Meringolo, 93, of Lakewood, N.J. During WW II he served with 4thMarDiv in the Pacific. He fought in the battles of Saipan, Tinian and Iwo Jima where he was wounded.

Capt Lois Meyer, 97, of Poulsbo, Wash. She was a Marine who served during WW II.

GySgt Larry R. Thomas, 67, of Mesquite, Texas. During his Marine Corps career, he was a DI at MCRD San Diego. He also served at MCB Camp Pendleton and had a tour on Okinawa.

PFC James J. "Jack" Walton, Tempe, Ariz. He enlisted after the attack on Pearl Harbor and fought on Guadalcanal.

LtCol James B. Wilkinson, 87, in Dallas, Texas. During the Vietnam War he was a battalion commander and saw action in Khe Sanh. After retiring from the Marine Corps, he worked as a financial consultant for Merrill Lynch and held several management positions with the company. His awards include a Legion of Merit with combat "V." He was a frequent contributor to the *Marine Corps Gazette* and *Leatherneck*.

George B. Willie Sr., 92, of Leupp, Ariz. He was a Navajo Code Talker who served with the 2dMarDiv. "Our nation will continue to honor and pay tribute to the Navajo Code Talkers, such as George Willie Sr., for countless generations to come," said David Shulkin, Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

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 or n.lichtman@mca-marines.org. 



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SOUND OFF
[continued from page 7]

two former enlisted pilots in the Marine Corps. It seems like Bud had about 40 years of active duty service.

In 1990 the Marine Corps Air Transport Association was formed. Bud was among the first to join and was at every reunion we had until his health started failing. He eventually passed away at age 99.

During Vietnam and the years I flew with Bud he never flew as a co-pilot. He was always the aircraft commander. He was the pilot that had his KC-130-F shot down while landing at Khe Sanh during Tet in 1968 and managed to stay off the runway keeping the field open. That crash made the front cover of *Life* magazine. He received his 5th Distinguished Flying Cross for that action as well as a Purple Heart for the wounds received.

Keeping in mind that I retired more than 43 years ago, my information and dates may be a little off. I maintained contact with Bud until his death. He is buried at the Mandan National Cemetery in Bismarck, N.D.

Henry "Bud" Wildfang was probably one of the best pilots I ever flew with.

MSgt Con Shuck, USMC (Ret)
Granbury, Texas

1979 Marine Corps Marathon

In your 100th Anniversary "Sound Off," Sailor Joe Barone wrote about his feelings during the running of the Marine Corps Marathon. I ran that race the year after he did and finished 780/6,467 with a time of 2:57:04 and experienced the same feelings as he did. This being my third consecutive marathon in three weeks (the other two were also three-hour marathons) I earned the nickname "Ironman" from my fellow runners.

Bill Ober
USMC, 1961-1967
Huntington, N.Y.

Young Grandpa

I read the letter "Young Gramps" in the November 2017 issue and wanted to submit my story. My granddaughter was born November 1976, one year and four months after I retired from our beloved Corps. I was born in July 1938. That makes me a grandpa at 37 years and 4 months.

GySgt Bob Bladerson, USMC (Ret)
Camp Lejeune, N.C.

A Memory from the Old Corps

After reveille at 0530 at Camp Lejeune, N.C., the radio in the squad bay was on and what were they playing? "Nothing

could be finer than to be in Carolina in the morning."

I was stationed at Camp Lejeune from 1947-1951 with some overseas time. It seemed like that was the song we hit the deck for roll call.

Sgt Daniel Villarial, USMC
Bedford, Va.

Rocks and Shoals

The article "Rocks and Shoals: Naval Discipline in the Old Corps," by Colonel Harned in the September 2017 issue brought back memories. I myself fell afoul of the "Articles for the Government of the United States Navy" as a young private first class, having received a Deck Court for returning six hours late from liberty. Fortunately, no brig time was served. I still have a copy of the Articles that were posted on the bulletin board of each barracks. They were removed and discarded when the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) came into effect. I managed to hold on to one.

I've shown the Articles to Marines of later years when they complained about the "unfairness" of UCMJ, and they've been shocked at the harshness of the Articles. For instance, sleeping on watch, disobeying orders from a superior officer or leaving your post without proper relief

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APRIL 3- 13 WWII Philippines Bataan Cabanatuan Corregidor	APR 21- MAY 3 50th Anniversary of 1968 I-Corps & the Battle of Dai Do	JUN 30- JUL 12 50th Anniversary of Operations Scotland II & Robin - I-Corps
	APR 28- MAY 11 50th Anniversary 1968 Operations I-II-III-IV Corps "Saigon to the DMZ"	JUL 7- 16 Spain Military & Cultural Exploration Madrid Post Tour Barcelona
	MAY 19- 28 100th Anniversary of WWI - 1918 Yanks into the Fray!	JUL 7- 16 WWII Italy - 75th Anniv of Operation Husky Invasion of Sicily
	MAY 25- JUN 3 100th Anniversary of WWI 1918 Devil Dogs & Dough Boys!	AUG 2- 11 Guadalcanal & Tarawa
	MAY 27- JUN 9 74th Anniversary of D-Day & Battle of the Bulge Belleau Wood & Paris too!	AUG 2- 12 Imperial China Beijing - Xian - Shanghai
	JUN 1- 9 74th Anniversary of D-Day: Normandy to Paris	AUG 19 - 31 50th Anniversary I-Corps Operations Mameluke Thrust & Maui Peak

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try and Corps. 100 years ago, in 1917, my grandfather and my son's great grandfather started the tradition, and in 2017 my son continues serving our great country as an infantryman in our great Corps.

Semper Fi and God bless our current Marines serving this great country.

Cpl Edward F. McMahon Jr.
 West Roxbury, Mass.

Have a question or 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

were punishable by death. No differentiation between time of war or peace.

As a small aside, I don't know when we started to capitalize Marines, but in the Rocks and Shoals the word is marines.

GySgt Paul Santiago, USMC (Ret)
 Jackson, N.J.

100 Years and Four Generations Of Marines

I just wanted to share a proud part of my family's history. My son, Kevin, recently graduated from Parris Island, N.C., on June 9, 2017, as a member of Platoon 2045, "Golf" Company, 2d Battalion, becoming the fourth generation of enlisted Marines in our family.

My grandfather, James, joined the Marine Corps in 1917 in Boston after serving several months along the Texas and Mexican border in 1916 with the Massachusetts

National Guard during the Pancho Villa Expedition. He served a two-year hitch in the Corps with duty aboard USS *Virginia* and also served on the Panama Canal during World War I.

My father, Edward Sr., was a Korean War Marine who served in the First Marine Air Wing in Korea in 1953, flying aboard the Flying Boxcar C-119, flying all over the Korean Peninsula supporting the Marines on ground.

I joined the Corps in 1985 and was activated as a Marine Reservist in support of Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm in 1991 as a member of the 25th Marines as a Field Radio Operator. I also joined the Massachusetts National Guard like my grandfather, but I joined due to the attack on our country on Sept. 11, and served in Iraq and Kuwait.

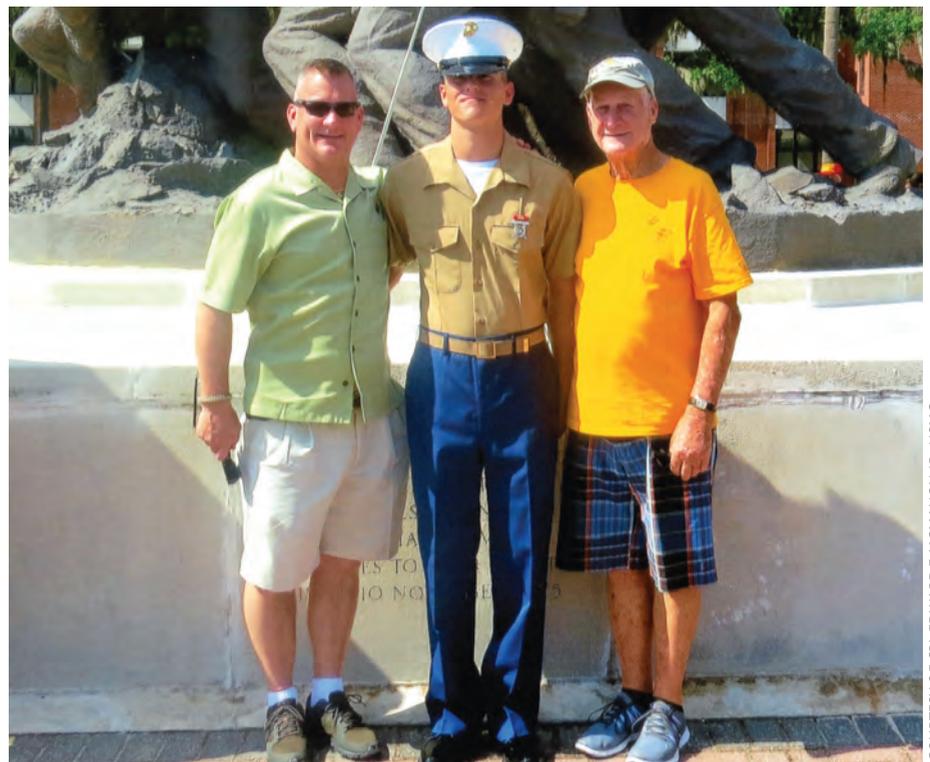
My son is now an 0311 serving his coun-

The Marine Corps Association & Foundation is pleased to announce that prints of "Semper Fidelis," will be on sale at The MARINE Shop in March.

Artist Nicole Hamilton, who created the painting for the 100th anniversary cover of Leatherneck, will be signing a limited number of the prints available for purchase.—Editor



COURTESY OF CPL EDWARD F. MCMAHON JR., USMC



COURTESY OF CPL EDWARD F. MCMAHON JR., USMC

Four generations of Marines shown far left to right: James McMahon, Edward McMahon Jr., Kevin McMahon, and Edward McMahon Sr.

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Reader Assistance

Edited by Sara W. Bock

Reunions

• **Iwo Jima Survivors (Marines, Navy, Coast Guard, Army Air Corps)**, Feb. 15-17, Camp Pendleton, Calif. Contact Dan Zepeda, (951) 201-6251, zepeda012@msn.com.

• **Marine Corps Aviation Assn. Don E. Davis Squadron (Aviation Logistics)**, March 15-18, Myrtle Beach, S.C. Contact Wayne Miller, (973) 441-3636, millerwayne559@gmail.com.

• **1/27 (1stMarDiv FMF, RVN, 50th Anniversary Reunion—all other 27th Marines battalions welcome)**, July 18-22, Alexandria, Va. Contact Felix Salmeron, (469) 583-0191, mar463@aol.com.

• **2/4 (all eras, 50th Anniversary of victory at Dai Do—Gold Star family members welcome)**, April 30-May 3, Quantico, Va. Contact Becky or Frank Valdez, (714) 306-2329, fxala@hotmail.com.

• **B/1/5 and C/1/5 (RVN, 1966-1967)**, are planning a reunion. Contact SSgt Jim Proulx, USMC (Ret), (904) 343-4850, bertojotol@gmail.com.

• **Support Co, 3d Engineer Bn (RVN, 1967-1968)**, Sept. 11-13, Ocean City, Md. Contact A.J. Folk, 215 Sweetwater Lane, Newmanstown, PA 17073, (610) 589-1362, ajfpa@comcast.net.

• **1st Provisional Marine Brigade (“The Fire Brigade,” Korea, 1950)**, is planning a 65th anniversary reunion. Contact Col Warren Wiedhahn, USMC (Ret), Military Historical Tours, 13198 Centerpointe Way, #202, Woodbridge, VA 22193, (703) 590-1295, jwiedhahn@aol.com, www.miltours.com.

• **Marine Corps Security Forces, Naval Weapons Station Earle**, Sept. 28-30, Colts Neck, N.J. Contact Dusty Wright, (618) 553-2205, slickstuff@nwcable.net.

• **Battle of An-Nasiriyah (15th Anniversary)**, March 23-25, Fort Worth, Texas. Contact Dion Brugger, tftreunion@gmail.com, www.tftreunion.org.

• **TBS, Co H, 8-68 (50th Anniversary and Memorial Plaque Dedication)**, June 6-10, Quantico, Va. Contact Capt Terrence D. Arndt, (314) 308-5020, tdarndt@gmail.com.

• **TBS, Co K, 9-68**, is planning a reunion. Contact Jim Stiger, (206) 999-1029, jimstiger@earthlink.net.

• **TBS, Co F, 6-79**, is planning a reunion. Contact LtCol Tom Conners, USMC (Ret), (919) 303-2697, (919) 418-5757, tconners3@yahoo.com.

• **Warrant Officer Screening Course, 1st Plt, Co D, January 1974**, is planning a reunion. Contact Capt Joseph C. Chiles, USMC (Ret), (619) 729-9562, joseph.chiles@gmail.com.

• **“Kilo” Co (Plts 277, 278, 279 and 280), Parris Island, 1961**, is planning a reunion. Contact MSgt Martin D. Smith, USMC (Ret), 10 Lee Ct., Stafford, VA 22554, (540) 720-3653, martann843@gmail.com.

• **Plt 98, Parris Island, 1948**, is planning a reunion. Contact SSgt Jim Proulx, USMC (Ret), (904) 343-4850, bertojotol@gmail.com.

• **Plt 171, Parris Island, 1966**, is planning a reunion. Contact J.P. Kuchar, 33 Sheridan Ave., Metuchen, NJ 08840, (732) 549-6468, jpkuchar@mac.com.



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• **Plt 244, Parris Island, 1967**, is planning a reunion. Contact former Sgt J.D. Croom III, (704) 965-8521, jcroom47@aol.com.

• **Plt 245, San Diego, 1965**, is planning a reunion. Contact David S. Alvarez, (209) 735-2601, srt8o06@yahoo.com.

• **Plt 266, Parris Island, 1962**, is planning a reunion. Contact Donald A. Welch, 129 Hawthorne Pl., Ithaca, NY 14850, (607) 256-0554, don814u@hotmail.com.

• **Plt 340, Parris Island, 1963**, is planning a reunion. Contact Garrett W. Silvia, (508) 992-7392, gwsil@comcast.net.

• **Plt 431, Parris Island, 1945**, is planning a reunion. Contact 1stSgt George P. Cavros, USMC (Ret), (262) 782-7813, gcavros88@gmail.com.

• **Plt 1040, San Diego, 1968**, is planning a reunion. Contact Stephen Norpel, 206 N. 7th St., Bellevue, IA 52031, (563) 451-8417, snorpel@yahoo.com.

• **Plt 1059, San Diego, 1967**, is planning a reunion. Contact Dave Jamieson, (805) 896-7404, daveyo_jamieson@msn.com.

• **Plt 2023, San Diego, 1983**, is planning a reunion. Contact Jeffrey R. Johnson, 3751 Merced Dr., Unit 4D, Riverside, CA 92503, jrj430@yahoo.com.

• **Plt 2030, Parris Island, 1965-66**, is planning a reunion. Contact John E. Lyford, (518) 654-6073, reniejohn@roadrunner.com.

• **Plt 2077, San Diego, 1966**, is planning a reunion. Contact SgtMaj Raymond Edwards, USMC (Ret), 100 Stephens St., Boyce, LA 71409, sgtmajedretired@gmail.com.

• **Plt 2086, San Diego, 1966**, is planning a reunion. Contact Bill Kennedy, (707) 527-8319, wm.kennedy98@yahoo.com.

• **Plt 3042, San Diego, 1968**, is planning a reunion. Contact Gary Berry, (614) 679-1499, tagpresident@verizon.net.

• **Plt 4035, "Papa" Co, Parris Island, 2000**, is planning a reunion. Contact Tammy (Manyik) Epperson, (571) 451-7263, tammy.epperson@gmail.com.

• **Marine A-4 Skyhawkers**, Nov. 1-4, Pensacola, Fla. Contact Mark Williams, 400 Howell Way #102, Edmonds, WA 98020, (425) 771-2030, rogerwilco14@gmail.com, <http://a4skyhawk.info/article/notices>.

• **VMFA-212 "Lancers" (1975-1981 and beyond)**, May 3-5, 2019, San Antonio. Contact J.D. Loucks, vmfa212reunion@aol.com.

Mail Call

• Carmen Aguilar, 1802 Morales St., Corpus Christi, TX 78416, (361) 933-7670, to hear from Marines who served with her husband, **PFC Jose R. AGUILAR**, who was with **1stMarDiv in Korea, 1950-**

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1951. He was wounded twice and was held as a POW in China for 72 days.

• Capt Herb Sparks, (270) 646-0474, to hear from **1stLt Paul ROQUES**, **1stLt Jim WIRE** and **1stLt Phil SOUSA**, who were members of **TBS, Co C, 3-71**.

• Matthew Nodine, 3630S 150W, Pleasant Lake, IN 46779, (260) 668-2132, nodineandson@yahoo.com, to hear from **MajGen O.K. STEELE, USMC (Ret)**.

• Jane Frost, (703) 638-2414, gtjane@cox.net, to hear from **GySgt DUBIEN**, **Tap CALDWELL**, **W. ROCHE**, **Maj VANHARN**, **Robert TOLLIVER**, **Ralph DOWES**, **Radar THOMPSON**, **Steve EASTER**, **"Chief," BREWER**, **CROFTON**, **GySgt Deleon PACE**, **Maj WEINBERNER**, **Bill WALRETH**, **Louie H.W.**, **GySgt SHEAR**, **Todd SCHLUETER**, and any **Marines who lived in the barracks at Camp Smith, Hawaii, 1973-1974**, when her brother, **PFC Thomas FROST**, was stationed there.

Wanted

Readers should be cautious about sending money without confirming authenticity and availability of products offered:

• Joe Joseph, 9075E 700 N, Fremont, IN 46737, (260) 495-7066, bears_fan1951@

yahoo.com, wants a **recruit graduation book** for **Plt 2040, San Diego, 1970-1971**. Drill instructors were **SSgt MCCORMICK**, **Sgt MAHAN** and **Sgt PRENTISS**.

• Mike Pomakis, mannoli@pobox.com, wants a **unit photo** of **Communications Plt, 2/2, December 1967**.

• Brenda Pizzi, bambrose66@yahoo.com, wants **photos or a recruit graduation book** from her husband, **Joseph A. PIZZI Jr.**'s platoon, which graduated at **Parris Island in October 1966**. She is unsure of the platoon number.

• Philip Jablonski, jabber328@hotmail.com, wants a **recruit graduation book** for **Plt 3064, San Diego, 1970**.

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 s.bock@mca-marines.org, or write to Reader Assistance Editor, *Leatherneck* Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134. 📧

Saved Round

By Sam Lichtman



MCT ERIC LOCKWOOD, USN

PRESERVING USS MAINE TODAY—Throughout much of the history of modern amphibious warfare, Marines have come to appreciate the artillery support provided by heavy naval guns. As one of the finest battleships of its time, *USS Maine* (ACR-1) was equipped with six 6-inch 30-caliber guns along with a variety of other armament. One of these guns, on display outdoors for decades at the Washington Navy Yard, Washington, D.C., was sent to Clemson University’s Warren Lasch Conservation Center in Charleston, S.C., in 2016 to be restored to its former glory. The project, scheduled for completion this spring, involves replacement of missing parts, rust removal, and repainting the gun to match the original color of the ship.

When *Maine* was commissioned, it represented a new level of technology in American seafaring vessels. With a displacement of 6,682 tons and a main armament consisting of four 10-inch breechloaders in two fully enclosed turrets, *Maine* and her

Sailors and Marines were prepared to neutralize almost any naval threat. The ship’s sudden, violent sinking under mysterious circumstances while moored at Havana in February 1898 initially was attributed to sabotage; this increased tensions between the U.S. and Spain and ultimately helped to ignite the Spanish-American War.

When the ship was temporarily raised in 1912 for the recovery of its crew’s remains, the 6-inch gun and the forward observation mast were removed and placed on display. The mast, now undergoing separate conservation work, is part of the memorial to *Maine*’s fallen Sailors and Marines at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Va.

After the conservation is completed, the gun will be returned to the Naval History and Heritage Command where it likely will be housed in the National Museum of the U.S. Navy.

To read more about *USS Maine*, see page 44. 🦋