APRIL 2016

MAGAZINE OF THE MARINES

Leatherneck

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Enlisted-to-Officer Selection Rates Are on the Rise

Legendary Fighter Pilot "Fokker" Rietsch

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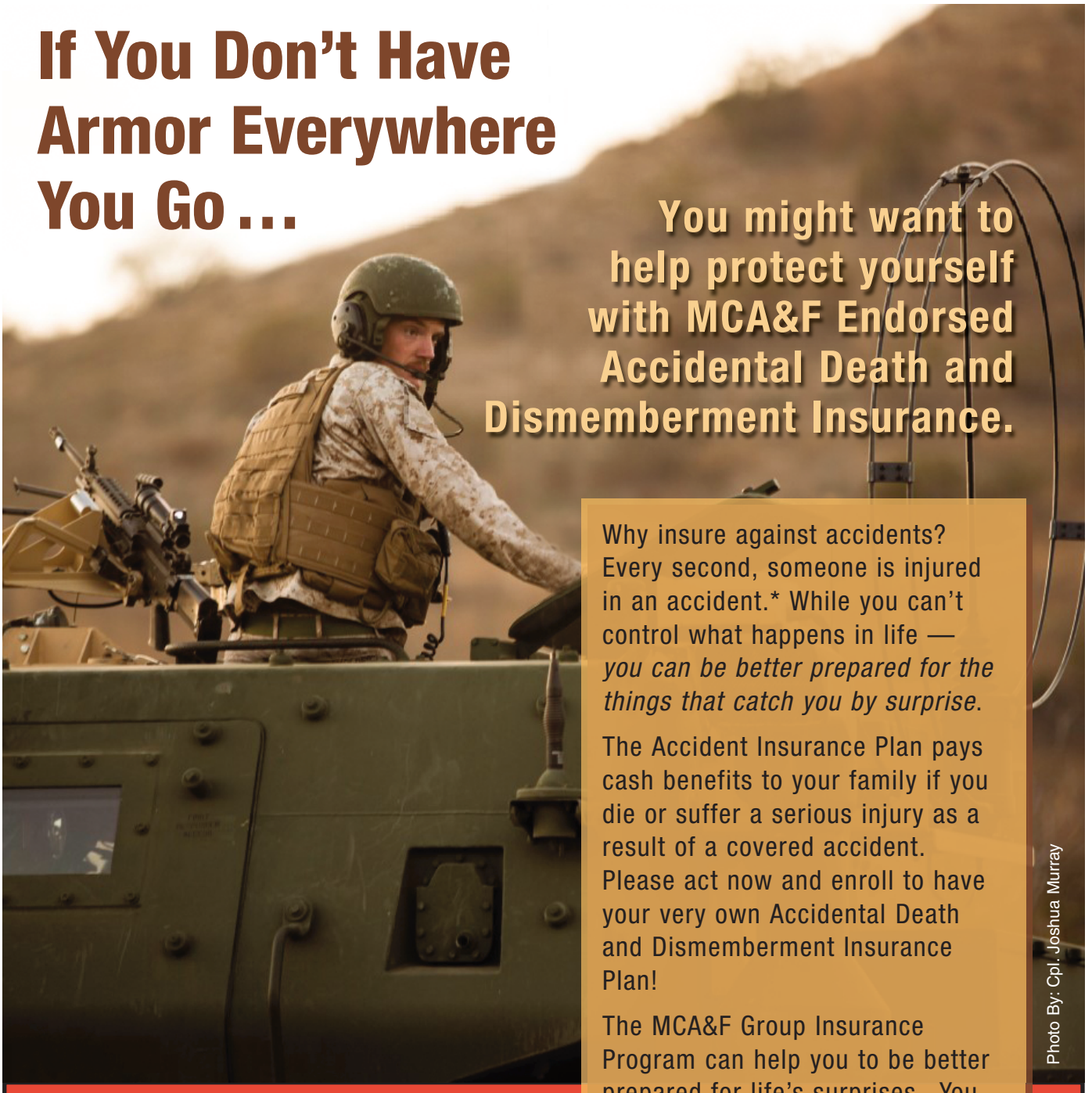

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PHOTO BY GYSGT TOMMY R GORDON, USMC

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APRIL 2016, VOL. XCIX, No. 4

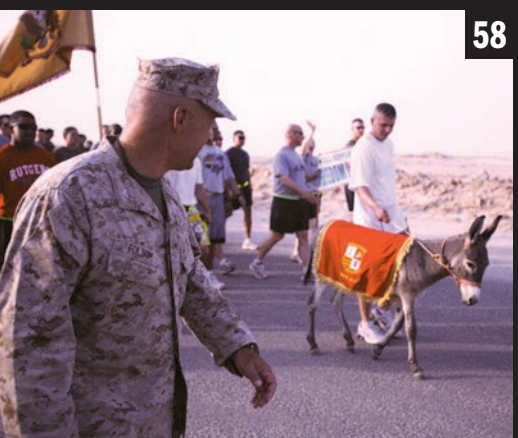
Contents

LEATHERNECK—MAGAZINE OF THE MARINES

FEATURES

DEPARTMENTS

COVER: Marines with Amphibious Assault Platoon, Company E, Battalion Landing Team 2d Bn, Sixth Marine Regiment load amphibious assault vehicles aboard USS *Oak Hill* (LSD-51), July 19, 2015. Photo by SSgt Bobby J. Yarbrough, USMC. Copies of the cover may be obtained by sending $2 (for mailing costs) to *Leatherneck* Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134-0775.



Sound Off

Compiled by Patricia Everett

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 e-mail 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 e-mails must contain complete names and postal mailing addresses. Anonymous letters will not be published.—Editor

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.)*

In May 1969, I was an 18-year-old kid from New York City when I put my feet on the yellow footprints at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C. My first set of drill instructors were relieved soon after we began training because a malcontent boot had written to his congressman alleging physical abuse. Ultimately, the DIs were cleared, and the boot was separated from the Corps. The replacement DIs, Staff Sergeant Cummings, SSgt Para and SSgt Harold Rector, took us through the remainder of our training and turned us into Marines.

The DI whom I remember most was then-SSgt Rector. He taught me much, but most importantly, he taught me about character, integrity, judgment and confidence. I still can hear him shouting as we drilled in preparation for graduation: "Private Lisi—you're walking!"

In 2010, I returned to Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C., to be the reviewing official for a graduation and walked through my old squadbay. The memories of my boot camp experience flooded my senses, and I was an 18-year-old "maggot" once again. I decided I wanted to find my old DI. I wanted to find Harold Rector.

Returning to New York City, I made inquiries through a number of Marine Corps social networks and got a lead from a Marine who had served with my DI in Vietnam. He told me Harold Rector lived somewhere in Maryland. Having spent 24 years in the New York police department, within a day or two, I had a phone number and address, but it took another day or two for me to muster up the moxie to make the call. I finally did.

The phone rang several times before it was picked up. A female voice came on the line. The woman told me she was married to Harold Rector, and he was a Marine, a retired gunny. Unfortunately, he was not at home. I asked permission to call back, and we arranged a time when she was sure the gunny would be home. I was thrilled.

I dialed the phone and had butterflies in my stomach. "Hello." It was a voice I hadn't heard in 41 years but recognized right away. It was Gunny Harold Rector. We spoke for about 10 minutes, joking about Parris Island and the perspectives of the boot versus the drill instructor. We talked about our lives since 1969. He retired as a gunny and went to work for the NSA. I retired as a captain from the NYPD and became an actor. The gunny apologized because he did not remember me. I told him it wasn't important that he didn't remember me, but it was very important that I remembered him!

COURTESY OF JOE LISI

Gunny Rector is buried in Virginia's Arlington National Cemetery.

At the end of our conversation I thanked him for all he had done for me. I wanted him to know that I credit him for all the success I have had in my life. Every year since our reunion telephone call we would exchange Christmas cards and short notes. Two days before Christmas 2015, my cell phone rang. I could see on the phone the call was coming from Maryland. My heart sank. It was the gunny's wife who told me the gunny had passed. I began to cry. Not since the death of my dad had I felt such a significant loss. After my father, Harold Rector was by far the most influential man in my life.

GySgt Harold Rector is buried in Section 60 at Arlington National Cemetery alongside his comrades in arms, a truly befitting resting place for this outstanding Marine.

Rest in peace, Gunny.

Joe Lisi
New York, N.Y.

Saluting MOH Heroes

In the December 2015 *Leatherneck*, there is a short discussion about saluting Medal of Honor heroes out of respect. This made me think of saluting sergeants major. When I was at Parris Island in the summer of 1964, our drill instructors instructed us to always salute a sergeant major out of respect.

At the recent Marine Corps Birthday Ball, I spent some time talking with a sergeant major selectee. I asked him about saluting sergeants major, and he said the practice had been abandoned years before he joined the Corps. Can the editor shed some history on this practice?

In my five years in the Corps, I always saluted sergeants major, and they always returned the salute.

Sgt Bill Bernstrom
Bangkok, Thailand

• I've asked numerous retired and veteran Marines about the practice of saluting sergeants major, and all said they had never heard of such a tradition. So, I'll ask our readers—was anyone else ever taught to salute sergeants major?—Editor

A "Colourful" Exchange

Thank you for the interesting story in the January issue by Sara W. Bock, "A 'Colourful' Exchange: Royal Marine PT Instructor Brings His Expertise to OCS." I am familiar with the Officer Candidates School area at Quantico, Va., as I was a

candidate in the Junior Platoon Leaders Class program there in the summer of 1955 ("Roadguards Out!") and have visited many times since.

I am not familiar with Brown Field. Who is it named after? And the obstacle course described is not "The Quigley," designed and developed in 1967 by Lieutenant Colonel William J. Quigley, USMC (Ret), based on his combat experiences in Korea and Vietnam. I served with LtCol Quigley in 1961-62 at Camp Schwab, Okinawa while with "Stormy" Sexton's BLT 3/3.

I hope the colour sergeant's training for today's candidates also includes "The Quigley."

H.A. Phillips
USMCR, 1959-62
Wilmington, N.C.

• Brown Field is named after 2ndLt Walter V. Brown who was killed in a plane crash in 1921 at the old Airfield #2 aboard Marine Corps Base Quantico. The course shown in photos accompanying the article is a standard Marine Corps obstacle course; the Quigley is a different course. Our February issue included a picture of LtCol Bill Quigley and Col Julie Nethercot, the current commanding officer of OCS, at the course which bears his name.—Editor

VMTB-232 "Red Devil" Squadron

In 1944 we were on Ulithi Atoll. During a night patrol, three TBMs flew into the ocean. One survivor was a First Lieutenant Fox. He was given the option to return to CONUS; he refused and went to the Battle of Okinawa with the squadron. There at the coral strip, Kadena, on a close air support mission flying about 50 feet above Sugar Loaf Hill, a ground mortar blew off one wing [of his plane]. He crashed on the Japanese side of the battle line.

We went to the site and tried to find his body but found nothing. His name on the wall at the Punchbowl in Honolulu marks his status, missing in action. This Christmas I remembered.

GySgt Paul Moore, USMC (Ret)
Keaau, Hawaii

Post Korea

In reference to Master Sergeant Mallie P. Honeycutt's "Sound Off" letter in the January issue titled "Between the Wars, It Was Old Corps Hard," I would like to add my own experience in the First Marine Division from April 1954 to September 1956 from Korea to Camp Pendleton, Calif.

I joined Weapons Company, 3d Battalion, First Marine Regiment in March 1954 as an ammo bearer in the Heavy Machinegun Platoon. Our weapon was the M1917A1

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Browning water-cooled, .30-caliber machine gun. Our squad consisted of five or six men: squad leader, gunner, assistant gunner and usually two or three ammo bearers. Personal weapons were the .45-cal. pistol for the gunners and the M1 rifle for everyone else. Two squads made up the section and three sections made up the platoon.

Our position was just south of the Demilitarized Zone near Libby Bridge on the Imjin River. The nearest town was Munsan-ni.

We lived in a tent camp about a half mile from the bunkers and trenches of what had been the main line of resistance at the time of the Armistice in July 1953. We always were armed and carried ammo. On bunker duty and on patrol we wore steel helmets, flak jackets and full cartridge belts. There was always the threat of a "jump-off" by the Chinese. Our biggest excitement was in May 1954 when we embarked for a Marlex training exercise.

The ship's captain announced that we had been alerted to stand by to proceed to Hanoi in French Indo-China. Our mission was supposed to have been to intervene in the ongoing battle at Dien Bien Phu between the French and the Viet Minh. While we were idling, the French surrendered and the intervention was cancelled.

Thirty years later I met a former paratrooper who told me that at that moment in time, May 1954, the 101st Airborne was mobilized and flown to airfields in California to await the word to proceed to Indo-China.

Other than that incident, my one-year tour in Korea was routine. We stood watch, trained, played ball, drank beer and waited for something to happen. Food was generally frozen something with dehydrated something else. On holidays we ate fresh eggs.

The winter was cold, sub-freezing all winter, but we wore the latest in cold-weather gear: thermal underwear, arctic trousers with linings, wool sweaters, arctic parka with lining and fur hood, pile-lined "bunny hats," thermal (bunny) boots and wool-lined arctic mittens. The boots were made of rubber which kept heat and perspiration in, necessitating a change of socks every four hours. Changing socks in subfreezing weather is a challenge. Wet socks were pinned under our armpits inside the parka.

The First Marine Division returned to the States in the spring of 1955 to Camp Pendleton, Calif.

In those days, Southern California was a paradise—swimming, surfing, horseback riding and cruising the bars and streets of L.A. All of these were a liberty hound's dream. The 1stMarDiv reverted to a five-day workweek. Every weekend was a liberty weekend.

There was cold-weather training in the Sierras where the weather was similar to Korea in winter. Interesting, most of us already had experienced the Korean winter without the benefit of prior cold-weather training.

I left active duty in September 1956 as the section leader (two squads) in the very same HMG section I joined in March 1954. I spent 30 months in the same outfit. When I joined I was 19, about the same age as most of my section mates. When I left I was 22—older than my platoon leader.

Cpl Richard J. Brennan
USMC, 1952-56
Wallkill, N.Y.

Regarding the January "Sound Off" letter by Master Sergeant Mallie P. Honeycutt, "Between the Wars, It Was Old Corps Hard," I thought we wore field scarves, not neckties, for what it's worth.

1stSgt William L. Stephens, USMC (Ret)
Alexandria, Va.

I joined the Marines in 1945 at the age of 17 as a four-year regular. It was quite an experience to say the least, and I ended up staying in 12 years. During that time I served in Okinawa, Korea, China, Hawaii, Guam and Puerto Rico and all over the Caribbean.

During those years I ran across many old salts, but the ones whom I remember the most seemed really old to me at the time. In particular, I served with three or four staff sergeants who joined the Marines between 1917 and 1919 during World War I. Those men were some of the best Marines I've ever met, and I dare to say that they were one-of-a-kind leathernecks—the kind of Marine who was, unfortunately, a dying breed at the time.

All of those men spoke with a European accent, and I later found out that they were immigrants who joined the Marine Corps soon after landing in the United States. What amazed me the most, however, was that none of them could read or write. In fact, we got paid in cash twice a month back then, and we stood in line to receive our pay. Those staff sergeants signed with an "X," and the pay officer (normally the officer of the day) would have to sign to verify that they were indeed the recipients.

As we know, the ability to read and write is nothing more than a product of formal education, and it does not have anything to do with true intelligence. Those staff sergeants weren't just handed stripes. They earned them and they earned them

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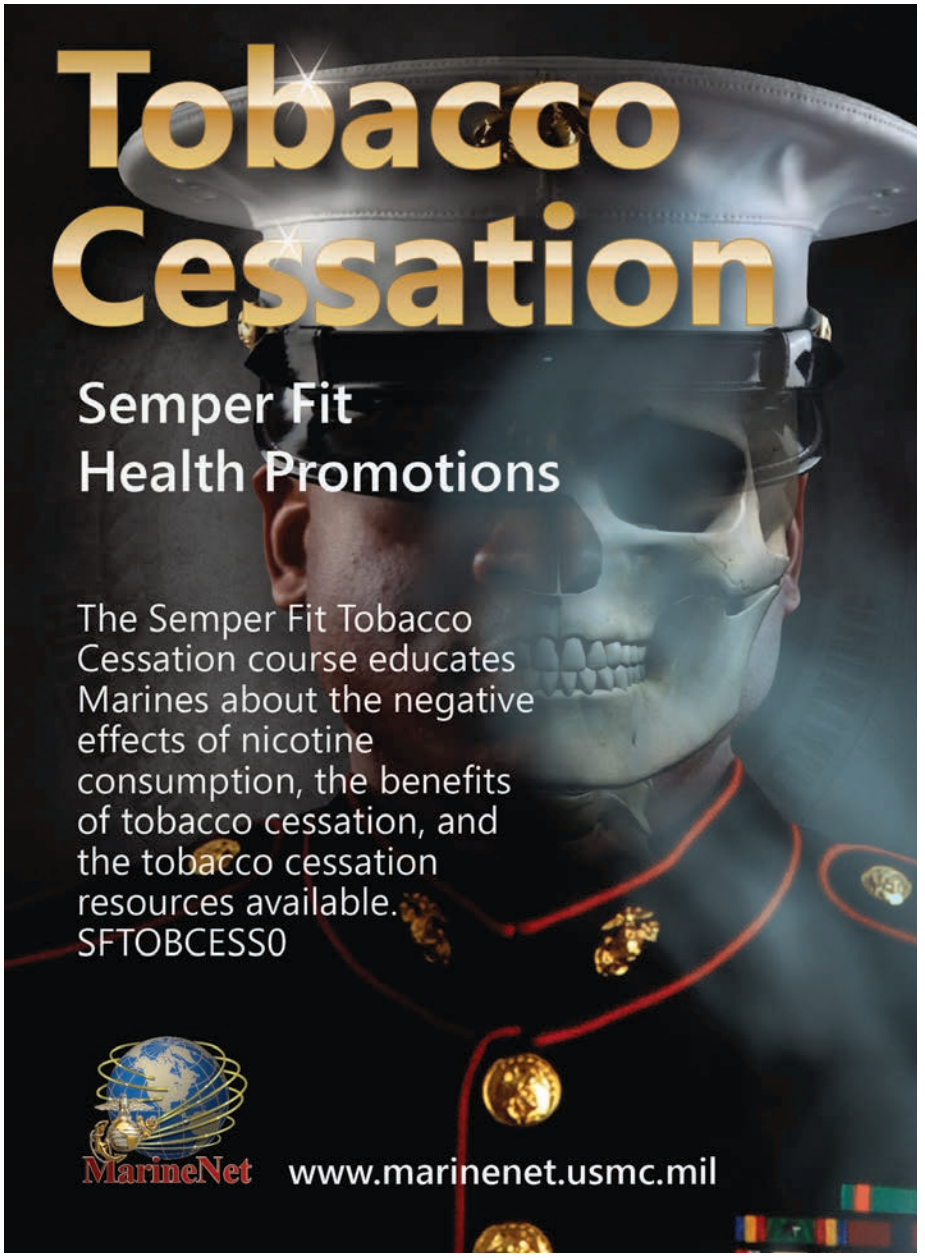

by being the best Marines in the whole damn Corps.

They knew every aspect of the Marine Corps and were outstanding leaders who gave their all to make sure young men like me could survive. They knew every weapon and could tear down, repair and put any of them back together while blindfolded. They were excellent at teaching the young Marines based upon their years of experience in the Corps. You could say they were true Marines—they lived and breathed the Marine Corps and followed every order to a "T." And they expected nothing less from us.

The pathetic part was when they reached 30 years of service or reached the age of forced retirement they were required by regulations to retire. The men I knew had no family. They were married to the Marine Corps. It was the only life they knew. Retirement meant separating them out of the only life they knew. That was probably the most difficult thing those salty leathernecks ever had to do since joining the Marines. Knowing them, I'm sure it was.

I remember one staff sergeant in particular (the last one I knew) who retired at Camp Lejeune, N.C., in 1948. He had no one to go home to; nowhere to go. So, instead of leaving behind the life he once knew, he got a room in Jacksonville, and each day he would show up at 5 a.m. just to watch us. He showed up at morning muster and he was around all day, just standing around and watching us.

So, I write all of this as a reminder that we should never forget those true warriors who dedicated their lives for country and Corps. They may have felt like they were forgotten when they had to retire, but they never were.

MSgt Mallie Honeycutt, USMC
Goldsboro, N.C.

Disservice to Sgt John Basilone

I entered the Marine Corps on Feb. 10, 1954, at Parris Island, S.C., and did my boot camp and made it into the Corps. I worked hard to make a good Marine. Well, I was successful and went to Camp Pendleton, Calif., then on to North Camp Fuji, Japan. I was in 0331 machine guns and trained until 1955 when I came back to the States. I was put into the Military Police at North Island Naval Air Station, San Diego, Calif., and was discharged in 1958. I really went for the Marines and learned all I could about the Corps. I worked very hard at it. I joined the Marine Corps League and have been very active in it.

While reading my March 2015 *Leatherneck* ("Sound Off"), I came across a letter that disturbed me some. Under the picture of Major General Smedley Butler and his two Medals of Honor, you went on to say that he and Sergeant Major Dan Daly were the only Marines to ever earn two MOHs; thereby, doing a disservice to Sgt John Basilone, who also won two Medals of Honor. I have his story written by his niece and autographed by her. John was one hell of a Marine, and he did not deserve to be left out. I do not want to detract from MajGen Butler and SgtMaj Daly, but give honor to someone who deserved it also.

I read the magazine each month cover to cover and am proud to be a Marine. I belong to Marine Corps League Baltimore Detachment #565, Baltimore, Md. Visit some time and see our museum. Items from the Spanish-American War to present are there.

Sgt Daniel Donnelly
Parkville, Md.

• You're right, John Basilone was a helluva Marine, but he holds the distinction of being the only enlisted Marine to receive both the Medal of Honor (for heroic actions on Guadalcanal) and the Navy Cross (received posthumously for extraordinary heroism on Iwo Jima).—Editor

VA Hearing Aids

I just got through reading Joe Gabrielli's letter in my January *Leatherneck*. He served in Korea in 1953 with the 155 mm howitzer. He stated, "I assume I may be eligible for VA hearing aids at some point." Please pass my hearing aid story on to him.

I served from 1959 to 1963. Yes, I was a peacetime Marine but still went through all the various firepower: M1 rifle, BARman, 3.5 rocket launcher and machine-gunner. My whole tour was infantry. And I served in all three Marine Corps divisions of the time. We had lots of maneuvers and war

games. I even served aboard USS *Boxer* (CVS-21) during the Cuban Missile Crisis Blockade in October 1962.

It wasn't until I got out and got older that I discovered my history caught up with me and I started experiencing what is called tinnitus, or ringing in the ears. I am now 73 years old, and about three years ago, an Army vet caught me at a gas station gassing up my car, came over and struck up a conversation. He saw my Marine Corps jacket and baseball cap and asked if I had ringing in my ears, which I replied yes. He told me to check out the VA and get hearing aids. So, having been under a VA doctor's care, my primary care doctor granted me to have a hearing test through the audiology section of the VA.

Now with that result I was awarded the best set of hearing aids on the market. And, they work better than I could have imagined. But the best part is now I have been declared 100 percent disabled in my hearing, and with that came a monthly disability check as well as a nice retroactive check.

I strongly encourage Mr. Gabrielli to contact both the VA and the VA Coalition for securing the testing and getting the hearing aids. If you are financially able, try a public hearing doctor for testing to use as supporting information to the VA. Hope this helps, Joe. I suspect that with the name Gabrielli, you're an Italian. Well, so am I. We could be paisans!

Anthony Tonda
Pasco, Wash.

This letter is in response to the one by J.E. Schneider in the February "Sound Off" regarding his experiences with hearing loss that is service connected. My problems started during training in 1970. After IRT, I was assigned further training as a machine-gunner, 0331. I also fail to remember any call for hearing protection, short of placing cigarette filters into your ears. I trained on ranges and in the field without special hearing protection.

I was able to get a "rest" from loud noises from July 1972 until December 1974 while I was assigned to embassy duty. This is where I met Colonel Fox, then a captain. He was my company executive officer when I was stationed in Moscow, USSR, in 1972.

I returned to the States in January 1975 and returned to a rifle company as a weapons platoon sergeant. Loud noises were commonplace in the training of that platoon. I became the weapons platoon commander in May 1975, prior to reporting to Officer Candidates School in Sep-

[continued on page 66]

In Every Clime and Place

Compiled by Sara W. Bock

HOKKAIDO, JAPAN

Winter Warriors Fire Up the Spirit Of Brotherhood

U.S. Marines and Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) soldiers waded through frozen creeks and seemingly unending fields of snow in the remote Yausubetsu Training Area, Hokkaido, Japan, during Exercise Forest Light 16-2, which ended Feb. 6.

The semiannual exercise, which involves elements of III Marine Expeditionary Force and the JGSDF, is intended to strengthen military partnerships, solidify regional security agreements and improve individual and unit-level skills between the two nations.

Forest Light builds upon the U.S. Marines' ground combat capabilities while maintaining the Corps' strategic presence in the Pacific. The exercise includes force-on-force training at the platoon and company levels; helo-borne operations; and unit-level training events that test expeditionary warfighting capabilities within III MEF and refine the homeland defense capabilities of the JGSDF.

"A strong Japan means a strong America," said Captain John J. Dick, the company commander of "Kilo" Company, 3d Battalion, Fifth Marine Regiment. "Our partnership is essential for regional security."

The exercise also helps provide training opportunities for elements like 3/5, which was augmenting III MEF as part of the unit deployment program (UDP).

"We also learned how they execute regimental, battalion and company operations, while we offered back our own experiences and guidance based from Afghanistan and Iraq," said Capt Dick of working with the JGSDF.

The benefits extend down to the tactical level, where troops feel the greatest impact.

"Forest Light absolutely benefits the Marine Corps tactically," said Major Jose J. Pereira, the assistant operations officer for 4th Marines, which 3/5 is currently supporting. "It is very hard to plan and execute a mission when there is a language barrier, but, due to exercises like this, it sets the bar for issues we may run into the next time we work with our partners and allows us to continue to overcome these obstacles."

The exercise helps boost security for the region and strengthens ties between the U.S. and Japan.

"The significance of this exercise is twofold," said Dick. "One, it increases our ability to cooperate, and two, the strong partnership here will provide stability to the region."

According to Pereira, the greatest benefit of Forest Light is building the personal relationships that help the Japanese soldiers and U.S. Marines overcome obstacles together.

"Building these personal relationships now means that the day a combined task force is called upon to work together, they will already be familiar with each other's procedures," said Pereira. "They will be able to work together under duress, such as an earthquake, typhoon or other natural disasters."

Forest Light included cultural events designed to build lifelong friendships between the two nations' forces. During the exercise, the Marines visited a museum and a temple and watched the Japanese soldiers perform ceremonial martial arts with swords and play traditional Taiko drums. Capt Dick said the experience was new to him and his company, which he said has never worked with the JGSDF before.

"Like any other industrial country, they are professional [and] disciplined, and it was a unique opportunity to work with an enthusiastic military that is honing its skills in defense and for the freedom of its people," said Dick.

Because 3/5 currently is forward deployed in the Pacific through the UDP, the battalion's Marines don't have to sacrifice their ability to rapidly respond to support operations when conducting training exercises like Forest Light.

"From Okinawa to Fuji and now to Hokkaido, the experience has been eye-opening to the Marines on the UDP from 3/5," said Dick. "The UDP program we are

CPL TYLER GIGUERE, USMC

In subzero temperatures, Marines provide security for a JGSDF CH-47 Chinook during Forest Light 16-2 in Yausubetsu Training Area, Hokkaido, Japan, Feb. 1.

U.S. Marines and JGSDF soldiers spring forward to "capture the flag" during a snowball fight as part of Forest Light 16-2, Jan. 31. Forest Light is a semiannual exercise between the JGSDF and III MEF. (Photo by Cpl Tyler Giguere, USMC)

on right now, I think, should set the tone for how UDPs are conducted in the future. It truly emphasizes the expeditionary mindset that the Marine Corps has, taking us to any clime and place."

Cpl Tyler Giguere, USMC

AL TAQADDUM, IRAQ

Marines, Coalition Forces Take On New Advise and Assist Mission

Things have changed a bit around Al Taqaddum Air Base in Iraq since the 2011 withdrawal of U.S. troops in Anbar Province. What once was a busy hub for aircraft now houses components of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), including the 8th Iraqi Army Division and the Anbar Operations Command (AOC).

The AOC is staffed by Iraqi military leaders and is the center of operations in the Anbar Province. It moved to Al Taqaddum shortly after the fall of Ramadi last summer.

A team of U.S. advisors arrived in Al Taqaddum to form a task force shortly after President Barack Obama's June 10, 2015, announcement of the augmentation of U.S. troops in Anbar Province to advise and assist Iraqi forces in operations in the Ramadi area.

"We have [servicemembers] that have experience in specific areas, and they provide advice in the form of planning and coordinating combat operations for the ISF to execute them here in Ramadi during the counterattacks," said Colonel Christopher J. Douglas, commander of Task Force Al Taqaddum (TFTQ). "The assistance we provide is specifically in the form of intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance flights and air support and strikes that are provided by coalition aircraft."

TFTQ currently operates out of Camp Manion in Al Taqaddum. It is a U.S.-led coalition force composed of Marines and sailors from II Marine Expeditionary Force and augments from Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force–Crisis Response-Central Command, as well as U.S. soldiers with 1st Infantry Division, airmen with U.S. Air Forces Central Command, and components of the Australian and Italian armed forces.

U.S. Marines are embedded full time as advisors to the AOC. The Americans work, eat and sleep at the AOC compound, providing around-the-clock "advise and assist" support.

A Marine advisor explained that Iraqi troops call in from the front lines to the AOC through their individual command operation centers to report encounters, firefights and intelligence data. As advisors, the Marines help to coordinate operations, such as airstrikes and counterattacks, on the spot. However, Iraqi leaders ultimately approve all strikes and operations.

"This is an important mission at the strategic level because Daesh [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)] is believed to be a threat to [the U.S.] at some point. … If they were given freedom of operation and were able to take over large portions of territory in Syria and Iraq and have access to money and influence, [ISIL would] potentially be able to strike us back in the U.S.," said a U.S. Marine and primary advisor to the 8th Iraqi Army Division. "On a more operational level, we've been partners with Iraq since the invasion in 2001, so we are here to support them, keep them as a viable country, and a big portion of it is having a legitimate military capable of defending its borders and kicking out threats like [ISIL] and things like that, which provides stability to the region."

Aside from providing assistance to the AOC, members of the task force also work alongside the 8th, 10th and 16th divisions of the Iraqi army, as well as the Anbar

SGT RICARDO HURTADO, USMC

Cpl John Kennedy, a team leader with "Bravo" Co, 1/7, SPMAGTF–CR-CC, performs a radio check during a patrol in Al Taqaddum, Iraq, Jan. 1. Marines with SPMAGTF–CR-CC are responsible for the force protection of some Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve bases within the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility.

National Police and the Iraqi Counter-Terrorism Service.

TFTQ has played a significant role in the Ramadi counterattacks, helping to ensure that the ISF have the right tools to defeat the enemy.

"Another big component that TFTQ does is that it provides medical care. It's huge, because it provides the will to right," said a U.S. Marine advisor to the AOC. "They know that when they are fighting and something happens to them there is medical help fairly close and they are going to be taken care of."

The medical team for TFTQ is composed of U.S. soldiers with the 772d Forward Surgical Team, the 115th Combat Support Hospital and U.S. Navy corpsmen with II MEF and SPMAGTF–CR-CC.

TFTQ takes any opportunity to provide training to Iraqi units stationed at Al Taqaddum or nearby.

"The environment we are in right now is not a learning environment. We are very much in an operational environment where training is not the primary focus," said a U.S. Marine primary advisor to the 8th Iraqi Army Division. "That being said, there are training opportunities. With the 8th Iraqi Division, we've conducted artillery training, communication training, medical training, explosive ordnance disposal and engineer training, all uniquely with 8th Division because they are based out of [Al Taqaddum] already."

According to Col Douglas, since the arrival of the task force to Al Taqaddum, the progress has been noticeable and steady, and that despite setbacks, "the ISF have remained strong, have executed counterattacks and retaken any ground that they lost."

Members of the task force remain confident in the ability of the ISF to effectively use the training and tools provided as part of the advise and assist efforts.

"We are side by side in the fact that we want them to be as successful as if we were out there doing it ourselves," said a U.S. Marine advisor to the AOC. "We are aiding them with assistance, we are providing eyes in the sky, we are providing them with bombs on target, and that gives them the confidence that they are not in the fight alone."

TFTQ is part of Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve, which was established to eliminate ISIL and the threat it poses to Iraq, Syria, the region and the wider international community.

Sgt Ricardo Hurtado, USMC

BRIDGEPORT, CALIF.

2d LAAD Bn Conquers Mountain During Cold-Weather Exercise

More than 800 leathernecks participated in cold-weather training in the Sierra Nevada Mountains during Mountain Exercise 1-16 at Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center (MCMWTC) Bridgeport, Calif., Jan. 4-23.

Nearly 80 of the Marines were from 2d Low Altitude Air Defense Battalion, Second Marine Aircraft Wing, based at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, N.C. The exercise was designed to be a warm-up for Exercise Cold Response 2016 in Norway, a NATO-level exercise involving 10 countries who pit themselves against each other in a simulated force-on-force live exercise in a cold, harsh environment.

"The training serves as a predeployment requirement for mountainous terrain or cold-weather climates," said First Lieutenant Craig Waldman, the executive officer for Battery B, 2d LAAD Bn. "We are covering basic mobility, movement over terrain, patrolling and setting up basic defensive positions and offensive tactics such as ambushes and deliberate attacks in this environment. … Finally, during

CPL JASON JIMENEZ, USMC

Cpl Robert Schmitt, 2d LAAD Bn, sews an Arctic camouflage net during cold-weather training at MCMWTC Bridgeport, Calif., Jan. 21. The intense training in the Sierra Nevada Mountains was a warm-up for Exercise Cold Response 1-16 in Norway.

A "Red Hat" instructor teaches Marines how to properly use a sled and sled equipment at MCMWTC Bridgeport, Calif., Jan. 21. Nearly 80 Marines with 2d LAAD Bn participated in the two-week exercise. (Photo by Cpl Jason Jimenez, USMC)

our culminating event, there will be practical application, like an attack, casualty evacuation and avalanche rescue."

The first challenge the Marines encountered was acclimating themselves to elevations that exceeded 8,500 feet above sea level.

"The obvious dangers in the cold weather are frostbite and hypothermia, the most common injuries," said Waldman. "But with it being such high elevation, Marines who aren't properly acclimated can get altitude sickness, which would lead to a casualty evacuation of that Marine off the mountain."

Altitude sickness is the term for the effect of climbing altitude at a rate exceeding the appropriate acclimatizing process after an individual reaches 8,000 feet above sea level.

The MCMWTC instructors, also known as "Red Hats," provide the necessary training needed to overcome the treacherous terrain and frigid challenges. From ice-cold condensation on their tents raining down on the Marines while they slept, to having to boil the snow around them to have clean water, they endured the little challenges that constantly gnawed at their willpower during Mountain Exercise 1-16.

"Wintertime is 90 percent mental and 10 percent physical," said Sergeant Jarrod Bolden, a mountain warfare instructor at the MCMWTC. "A hike is a hike, but when you add the winter element, your mind goes into overdrive and a lot of people burn out and do not have the mental strength to get through it."

In preparing the Marines to fight in different climates around the world, the cold-weather training pushed them to their breaking points in order to strengthen their resolve.

"Some Marines are from warmer parts of the country and are not used to exercising in a cold environment—you still have to be a leader and deal with your biggest opponent: yourself," said Bolden. "Everyone dreads coming to Bridgeport, but once they leave, they are a better unit because of what they went through."

Cpl Jason Jimenez, USMC

UTAPAO, THAILAND

Partner Nations Share Ideas, Solutions During Cobra Gold Evacuation Training

On Feb. 17, U.S., Royal Thai, Malaysian and Japanese armed forces practiced noncombatant evacuation operations during Exercise Cobra Gold 16 in Utapao, Thailand.

Cobra Gold is a multinational exercise designed to increase cooperation and interoperability among partner nations through the creation of solutions for common challenges.

During the evacuation training event, leathernecks with Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 262 set up an MV-22B Osprey as a static display, while the other partner nations displayed their own evacuation capabilities.

"This is the civic action portion," said First Lieutenant Danilo O. Rodriguez, the officer in charge of the evacuation control center (ECC) with 31st Combat Logistics Battalion, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, III Marine Expeditionary Force. "There's humanitarian assistance and disaster relief that goes into this entire Pacific region. We can't ignore that by focusing only on kinetic action. In this case, it allows us to be prepared for the next typhoon that hits the Philippines or the next disaster that hits Nepal."

Rodriguez is part of a team that is designed to mitigate casualties during those types of disasters.

"We have the ability to liaison with the embassy representative in the nation we are deployed to," said Rodriguez. "We have the ability to extract upward of 300 or more citizens."

CPL WILLIAM HESTER, USMC

An MV-22B Osprey sits on display for Thai, Malaysian and Japanese servicemembers and spectators during a noncombatant evacuation demonstration as part of Exercise Cobra Gold 16 in Utapao, Thailand, Feb. 17.

During Cobra Gold, Rodriguez and his team worked with VMM-262, Marine Aircraft Group 36, First Marine Aircraft Wing, III MEF, which was deployed in May 2015 to provide immediate aid in Nepal after a devastating earthquake.

"The Osprey gives those coordinating at the embassy, MEU and MEB levels different options they wouldn't normally have with just a helicopter or C-130," said Lieutenant Colonel Matthew A. Baldwin, the commanding officer of VMM-262.

Traditional helicopters can be very limited based on weight and range during supply- and evacuation-focused missions. The Osprey has the ability to travel farther with a bigger capacity for supplies or personnel.

"The Osprey is a very popular aircraft," said Rodriguez. "Other nations are always curious about it, which is one of the reasons we wanted to have it out here. [The other militaries] can actually board it and have a tour of the capabilities it offers."

During the practice, the armed forces of Malaysia, Thailand and Japan demonstrated their own capabilities by using fixed wing aircraft and traditional helicopters.

"I believe all of us being here have taken away from each nation as far as how they execute their own portion of the ECC," said Rodriguez. "My Marines came here well-prepared for this type of exercise, but being able to work with other nations is a new and great experience. I know they'll be more prepared in a bilateral type of environment in the future."

Cobra Gold, in its 35th iteration, is a multinational exercise designed to advance regional security and ensure effective responses to regional crises by bringing together a robust combined task force from partner nations sharing common goals and security commitments in the Asia-Pacific region.

Cpl William Hester, USMC

■ CAMP LEJEUNE, N.C.

EOD Training Prepares Marines For Future Operations

Leathernecks with Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Company, 8th Engineer Support Battalion conducted an improvised explosive device (IED) access training exercise at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., Jan. 29. Instructors evaluated Marines on their ability to safely locate and dispose of an IED while suppressing the full capabilities of the threat.

Members of the unit received information about a simulated situation in which an eyewitness reported a potential IED. The EOD technicians then searched the surrounding area for additional threats as a safety precaution.

"The purpose of this training is to familiarize everybody with the different styles of devices," said Staff Sergeant Nicholas Graham, a team leader with the unit.

All of the simulated IED situations that the EOD technicians conducted during the training exercise were based on real-world situations, explained Graham.

The Marines used an MK-2 Mod 1 Talon robot to assess the situations and identify possible explosives before sweeping the area with an IED detector. The MK-2 robot allows Marines to get visuals on a threat without endangering themselves.

"By doing these types of real-world scenarios, it is going to make more capable EOD technicians that are able to respond to any sort of explosive hazard," said Graham.

After the area was deemed secure, Marines used a percussion-actuated neutralizer connected by a non-electric shock tube to safely destroy the threat. The device is used to fire a special type of 12-gauge shell with water to dispose of an IED by shattering and dispersing the contents of the pipe bomb IED.

EOD Marines then gathered the contents of what was left of the IED to determine what substances were used and learn how the enemy planned to detonate their IED.

"What I'm hoping the Marines take away from this event is the skills needed to handle each device and each scenario in a safe way," said SSgt Ryan Harris, a team leader with EOD Co, 8th Engineer Support Bn. "When we come across [an IED scenario] in a real-world situation, everyone is confident and can safely handle [the threat]."

Knowing the enemy's capabilities helps Marines prepare for similar situations in the future.

LCpl Aaron Fiala, USMC

LCPL AARON FIALA, USMC

An MK-2 Mod 1 Talon controlled by Marines with EOD Co, 8th Engineer Support Bn, is used to acquire initial visuals of an IED during a training exercise at MCB Camp Lejeune, N.C., Jan. 29.

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TASK UNIT RAIDER

Unit Proves the Value of Marine Corps Special Ops

Part II
By Dick Camp

Task Unit Raider was assigned direct-action operations when it arrived in Iraq in late April 2004. "We were going to serve as one of the four direct-action forces for the theater under Naval Special Warfare Task Group in Baghdad," Lieutenant Colonel Craig S. Kozeniesky, the commander of Task Unit Raider, explained. "We ramped up from April into May … [and] then concentrated on high-value targets."

By June, Task Unit Raider had completed six highly successful direct-action operations against anti-coalition forces in Baghdad, the capital. However, just as "Raider" established an increasingly effective battle rhythm, it was ordered to stop offensive actions and take on a new mission. "We were sucked into the PSD [personal security detail] mission in Baghdad," Major Wade M. Priddy, Task Unit Raider's fires officer and later operations officer, said.

Personal Security Detail

"The last week in May," Maj Priddy explained, "I got a warning order to provide security for one of the deputy prime ministers for 48 to 72 hours until other forces could be pulled in from around the country to perform the mission." Anti-coalition forces were targeting the country's leadership and had succeeded in assassinating one of the vice presidents with a car bomb. The Multi-National Force-Iraq, often referred to as the "Coalition Force," was concerned that Iraqi Security Forces were not up to the task. Within the space of 96 hours, Task Unit Raider was assigned the mission. Gunnery Sergeant Ryan P. Keeler said, "We were bummed out that we were taken off the cycle of knocking down doors and pulling people out in the middle of the night."

GySgt John A. Dailey said that PSD was not something the unit had trained for, but "it was something that I felt we needed some knowledge on, so I'd read everything I could get and talked to people who had done it." He received advice from a former platoon commander who was in the Secret Service, and the State Department conducted classes on how things were going to run.

Captain Eric N. Thompson was assigned as agent in charge of Task Unit Raider's security detail for Vice President Rowsch Shaways. "During that time I was at his side at all times. I handled his day-to-day schedule and organized his itinerary, part of which involved flying to Irbil in Northern Iraq where I experienced some of the Kurdish culture and learned about the Kurdish Democratic Party. It was an extremely enlightening experience to see the internal workings of the Iraqi interim government."

Dailey and Keeler, along with Staff Sergeant Benjamin J. Cushing, were assigned as the advance party. "We would roll up ahead of time in civilian clothes and get an idea of emergency escape routes," Keeler explained. "I was there to identify possible landing zones in case we needed to get the vice president out of there quickly."

Dailey said, "It was my job to check out the hotel he was going to be staying in. Initially he lived out in the town, and because he was a Kurd, it wasn't in his best interests to stay there. We went to the hotel and identified different escape routes and how we would get him out and all the basic things that you would look for if you were a bad guy that wanted to go after him." Dailey also checked out the other venues where Shaways went. "We'd arrive early and just coordinate the arrival and the whole process," he said.

Capt Thompson admitted that the assignment was "downright scary running through various parts of Baghdad, delivering this guy [Shaways] to his hotel and to different meeting sites, knowing that he is probably one of the foremost targeted guys on earth." Capt Daniel B. Sheehan recalled that "driving through downtown Baghdad to pick Shaways up or take him somewhere made for an interesting trip. The roads were packed, and if somebody got in the way, we just pushed them out. It was a dynamic couple of days." After a week during which Task Unit Raider successfully protected the Iraqi vice president, the unit was reassigned to direct-action missions. "After we transitioned back from PSD, we ran an additional 16 missions," Thompson said.

GYSGT RYAN KEELER, USMC

Task Unit Raider was assigned as the personal security detail for an Iraqi vice president for a short time until reassigned to direct-action missions in Baghdad. The mission was not one the heavily armed Marines trained for, but they quickly adapted and excelled throughout the assignment.

Direct Action

According to Joint Publication 3-05, in the context of special operations, direct action (DA) consists of: "Short-duration strikes and other small-scale offensive actions conducted as a special operation in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments and which employ specialized military capabilities to seize, destroy, capture, exploit, recover, or damage designated targets. Direct action differs from conventional offensive actions in the level of physical and political risk, operational techniques, and the degree of discrimination and precise use of force to achieve specific objectives."

"We started running missions on a fairly regular basis," recalled Capt Thompson, "taking down insurgent cell leaders that were conducting attacks against coalition forces and against the interim Iraqi government." Master Sergeant Keith E. Oakes explained, "Our [direct-action] mission was to capture or kill the bad guys. Capture being the priority to get information from these guys, and from that standpoint, we were 98 percent successful."

"The idea is not to shoot a single shot, and that happened on every raid except one. It was primarily due to surprise and planning," said LtCol Kozeniesky.

Objective Revenge

"Two or three weeks after the Nick Berg beheading," MSgt Terry M. Wyrick explained, "we had a source that told us that there were a couple of guys out there with direct information about him. They were part of the cell that did it." Nicholas "Nick" Berg was an American freelance telecommunications contractor who went to Iraq after the invasion and was abducted and brutally beheaded by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a militant Jordanian Islamist. "The ghastliness of it pretty much pumped everybody up … [and] we wanted to exact a little revenge," Wyrick said. "We knew these guys were little fish, but they might help us get the big fish."

The target "was located in the trashy neighborhood of Baghdad," MSgt Oakes explained. "There was a lot of trouble up there. Whole convoys had been whacked numerous times. The Iraqis seemed to have a free rein." The Raiders were provided identification of the target building to include a clear handheld image of the building frontage. Wyrick described the target as "a two-story building on a corner, set back from the street, surrounded by a fence. The bad guys were in a corner room on the second floor. A UAV [unmanned aerial vehicle] picked up what we thought were sentries on the roof."

LtCol John P. Piedmont, USMCR wrote in "Det One, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Special Operations Command Detachment, 2003-2006": "With all of [this information] taken into account, Major [Craig S.] Kozeniesky directed that the assault force attack with the maximum possible shock and violence and ensure that the second floor and roof were secured at the same time as the ground floor was being assaulted."

LTCOL JOHN PIEDMONT, USMC

Capt Eric N. Thompson, shown here in October 2004 at the detachment's compound at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., was Det One's first reconnaissance platoon commander.

The assault was "fairly dynamic," according to Wyrick. "Picture three vehicles going over the fence at the same time, three teams unmanning the vehicles, and [two teams] moving to the breach point as one team is throwing flash-bangs and climbing up a ladder to jump up on a ledge," he said. The team had to get over a 6-foot-high wall to get up on the ledge. The trouble was there was a 4-foot gap between the ladder and the ledge. "Staff Sergeant Alex N. Conrad gets all the way to the top, puts his feet on the top rung and leaps for the balcony."

The team threw flash-bangs in the windows to keep the targets' heads down so Conrad wouldn't get shot. He made the leap with 60 pounds of gear on, and the rest of the team burst into the house, capturing the targets as well as documents and large amounts of money.

Daylight Raid

Near the end of its deployment, Det One conducted a daylight raid, which violated its normal nighttime operating policy. "We would plan an operation between 0200 to 0400 when there was little or no action," LtCol Kozeniesky explained. The daylight raid was "definitely out of the norm for us," Oakes said. "It was probably the most exciting and dynamic raid we did because most of our raids were done in the wee hours of the morning in order to hit these guys when they were sleeping and there was not a lot of traffic."

Capt Thompson explained: "We couldn't just drive there in gun trucks, like we had done for all our other missions in the wee hours of the morning. We had to go there surreptitiously, using indigenous vehicles and box trucks. It was a risky mission because the guys would not be able to

GYSGT RYAN KEELER, USMC

Members of Det One prepare for Operation Revenge, a mission to capture or kill the insurgents who brutally murdered Nicholas Berg, an American contractor killed by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
WASHINGTON, D.C 20350-1000

The Secretary of the Navy takes pleasure in presenting the NAVY UNIT COMMENDATION to

MARINE CORPS SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND DETACHMENT ONE

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

For exceptionally meritorious service in support of Combined and Joint Special Operations Task Force-Arabian Peninsula from 19 April 2004 to 3 March 2006. The personnel of Marine Corps Special Operations Command Detachment ONE consistently displayed a high level of professionalism, while forward deployed to the Iraqi theater of operations, and during post deployment tactical experimentation for the design of a permanent U.S. Marine Corps component to Special Operations Command. Demonstrating tenacity and esprit de corps, unit personnel conducted a sustained and unprecedented demonstration of Marine Air Ground Task Force principles during a successful execution of a full range of special operations missions. Taking full advantage of their advanced skills, unique training, and specialized equipment, the Marines and Sailors of Marine Corps Special Operations Command Detachment ONE aggressively sought opportunities to locate and destroy an elusive enemy, inflicting significant damage on the Iraqi insurgent movement, resulting in the safe and expeditious transfer of authority to the Interim Iraqi government and safety of principal government officials. Detachment ONE's accomplishments proved conclusively that the Marine Corps could operate at the level of other special operations units and contributed directly to the Secretary of Defense's decision to add a U.S. Marine Corps component to Special Operations Command. By their truly distinctive achievements, personal initiative, and unfailing devotion to duty, the officers, enlisted personnel, and civilian employees of Marine Corps Special Operations Command Detachment ONE reflected great credit upon themselves and upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service.

Secretary of the Navy

The Secretary of the Navy awarded the Navy Unit Commendation to the Marines and sailors of Det One for their exceptionally meritorious service as a pilot program designed to assess the value of assigning Marine Corps special operations forces to the U.S. Special Operations Command.

fight from these vehicles. … We could have really been screwed."

However, the team had Bell OH-58 Kiowa helicopters providing overwatch and gunship support and gun trucks following several hundred meters behind them. MSgt Oakes said tenaciously, "If anybody would have been insane enough to take a shot at us, it would have been quite the firefight. … It would have been bloody!"

The target was someone "everybody wanted—SEALs, OGA [other government agency]," MSgt Oakes said. LtCol Kozeniesky described him as "a key leader and facilitator in an IED [improvised explosive device] cell, which had tentacles throughout Baghdad that were responsible for quite a number of IEDs in the northern part of the city."

"The SEALs had been chasing this guy forever," Oakes said. "They missed him many, many times. … They just could not pin him down." The target never slept in the same place, and if he thought the SEALs were close, he would hole up in a mosque, which at the time was off-limits to Americans. "He is surviving because he knows the way we operate," explained Oakes. However, the detachment's human exploitation team (HET) was able to nail down a profile on the target. "He would frequent a café, and they found someone willing to sell him out," Oakes explained. "We had a phone rigged up on the [informant's] belt so he didn't have to call. He just had to hit a button and send a text message."

The raid force staged at the international airport because it was only supposed to be 12 minutes to the target, which was right in the Mansoor District of Baghdad, one of the nicer places in the greater metropolitan area of the city. "It took longer," Oakes lamented, "probably 40 minutes. We were not used to going down streets that were packed full of vehicles at 30 miles per hour. The traffic was insane; we almost came to a halt many times. People were everywhere." GySgt Dailey's team was in the lead vehicle. "We went in a van that we'd put a curtain across the front. Everybody else was in the back of a panel truck," he said.

The team spotted several lookouts who pulled out cell phones and talked on them as they drove by. "We thought we were getting busted and had lost the element of surprise," Oakes said. That was apparently not the case. It helped that the driver, SSgt Glen S. Cederholm, was wearing a

dishdasha [traditional Iraqi garment] and had a mustache and beard.

"We rolled right up in front of the restaurant without tipping our hand," Thompson said. "There were over 60 people eating lunch, and no one even noticed us until the doors were flung open and guys clad in desert utilities stormed out of the vehicles." In no more than 30 seconds, the Raiders locked the building down and covered all the exits, while a unit of the Polish special operations force, known as the *Grupa Reagowania Operacyjno Mobilnega* (*GROM*), blocked the back alley with vehicles. GySgt Dailey's team sealed off the front of the building, keeping anyone from coming down from the second floor, while the rest of the team went after the target.

Polish Special Operations Force

Poland's elite counterterrorism unit, known as Task Unit Thunder, worked closely with Det One. "The *GROM* ran 10 direct-action operations with us," LtCol Kozeniesky said. "They're just [a] world-class Tier 1 counterterrorism force, and we had a great relationship with those guys."

"Our guys covered the table where he was sitting," Capt Thompson described. The target just sat there. "We seldom encountered anyone willing to fight when they're looking down the barrel of multiple M4s, guys dressed in body armor, and this guy was no exception. He knew that if he made so much as an evil look at us, that his brains were going to be up against the wall!"

The target attempted to drop a lot of things out of his pockets—an enormous amount of cash and cell phones, but they were quickly retrieved. "There were eight guys at the table, but none of them did anything other than what they were told; they just raised their hands, put their hands behind their backs and got flexi-cuffed and blindfolded." The captives were loaded quickly in the box truck and taken back to the team's headquarters for interrogation. The informant also received the same treatment. "We had to protect his identity," Oakes explained. "Eventually we pulled him off to the side, and he positively identified the cell leader."

Homeward Bound

The detachment executed two more raids—both were "dry holes"—before standing down and preparing for the trip home. The advance party flew to the United States in mid-September, while the last of the detachment departed on Oct. 1.

As a proof of concept, the three-year life-span of Detachment One was highly successful. Lieutenant General Jan C. Huly, Deputy Commandant for Plans, Policies and Operations, stated: "It was a great proof-of-concept under some trying and actual combat conditions, and they did very, very well. And I think that the Marine Corps and the nation owe them a debt of thanks for what they did in blazing the trail for the Marine Corps component to the Special Operations Command." In recognition of the unit's "exceptionally meritorious service," the Secretary of the Navy awarded Det One the Navy Unit Commendation.

Author's note: The direct-action missions cited in this article are representative of the many raids Det One conducted. Space precludes including all of them.

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 latest e-book, "The Killing Ground: A Novel of Marines in the Vietnam War," is available online at Amazon.com, and 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 only daytime raid of Det One's deployment was conducted with the assistance of the Polish *GROM* and resulted in the capture of the target, an elusive insurgent leader operating in Baghdad.

GYSGT RYAN KEELER, USMC

Corps Seeks More Applicants For Enlisted-to-Officer Opportunity

By CWO-4 Randy Gaddo, USMC (Ret)

The Marine Corps is seeking active-duty and reserve enlisted Marines for the Enlisted Commissioning Program (ECP).

Qualified women and men who have proven they possess the mettle to be Marines have an excellent opportunity for selection if they apply now, due to the current needs of the Corps.

"We know that there are some very talented Marines who are qualified to be officers, and we are increasing the numbers we are selecting from the enlisted ranks to be officers—but in order to do that, I need applications," explained Lieutenant Colonel Matthew Kessler, head of Officer Programs at the Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC) in Quantico, Va.

While available slots have increased, the number of applicants has remained steady; as a result, the selection rate has skyrocketed. In fiscal year 2012 there were 69 applications and only 16 selections, or 23 percent. In FY15, there were 88 applications and 62 selected—a 70 percent selection rate. Thus far in FY16, 39 Marines have applied and 37 have been selected for a phenomenal rate of 95 percent. The last selection board for the program in FY16 convened in March; the first FY17 board is slated to convene in early July. Applications will be due on or about May 23.

LtCol Kessler oversees all of the Marine Corps' enlisted-to-officer programs, which include the Marine Enlisted Commissioning Education Program (MECEP), the service academies and Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps. However, ECP offers inherent opportunities that benefit both the Marine and the Marine Corps.

"Qualified ECP applicants are proven performers who have demonstrated they are able to adapt to the Marine lifestyle and do well," said Kessler. He added that ECP Marines are more likely to graduate from Officer Candidates School (OCS) than candidates in other officer programs, so it's a better opportunity for the Marine's success and more efficient for the Marine Corps.

"The benefit to the Corps is that with ECP, we get them now," Kessler said. He amplified his comment, adding that the entire process, from application and selection to OCS and commissioning, can all occur within one fiscal year.

"For example, those being selected from the March board will go to OCS in the fall and will be commissioned by November 2016," Kessler said.

ECP is for enlisted Marines who already have a bachelor's or advanced degree, which is a key advantage in putting qualified officers in the field more quickly.

"If they have already shown proclivity to lead and do well as enlisted Marines, and they have shown they have academic ability by already having a college degree, and they are inclined to become an officer, we want them to apply and see if they have what it takes," Kessler said.

Kessler said he thinks the reason ECP applications are not increasing involves a lack of awareness of changes that have occurred in recent years.

SSGT KEN MELTON, USMC

SSgt Patrick Poorbaugh, the first Marine in 40 years to be commissioned from Columbia University, takes the Marine officer oath during his commissioning ceremony in the Low Memorial Library Rotunda, Columbia University, New York, N.Y., May 21, 2015.

LCPL ERASMO CORTEZ III, USMC

OCS candidates lift a log through an obstacle during an exercise on MCB Quantico, Va., Nov. 20, 2015. Members of class OCC-220 graduated and were commissioned as second lieutenants after 10 weeks of physically and mentally demanding training.

As the drawdown has begun to recede over the past 18 months, the number of officer accessions has increased and the ECP pipeline was opened wide.

The drawdown of the past few years forced the Corps to reduce the number of slots available for ECP to ensure slots are available for other mandated officer programs such as MECEP or service academies, which are multiple-year programs. "The programs we can turn off are those that happen in the current year, and ECP was one of them," said Kessler.

As the drawdown has begun to recede over the past 18 months, the number of officer accessions has increased and the ECP pipeline was opened wide. In FY13 only five selections were made for ECP, the lowest number from FY12-16; in FY15, however, 62 enlisted Marines were selected for ECP.

ECP requirements for active-duty or reserve (Selected Marine Corps Reserve or Active Reserve) Marines are very similar. Both must have at least a bachelor's degree and be at least a lance corporal with one year left on their contract. If selected, each Marine must then successfully complete the 10-week Officer Candidates Course, followed by the 23-week curriculum at The Basic School, both at Marine Corps Base Quantico.

There are some differences between requirements for active-duty and reserve applicants. Enlisted Marines who believe they meet minimum requirements should consult Marine Corps Order 1040.43B or Marine Administrative Message (MARADMIN) 098/15 to see complete guidelines. Kessler said that the order has been updated recently, consolidating all the enlisted-to-officer programs into one document so potential applicants can evaluate which best suits them.

"Applicants can go to the Marine Corps Recruiting Command website, download the application, inform their chain of command that they are applying and get the ball rolling," said Kessler. "The application process does take some effort,

RON LUNN

Sgt Steven Burrell received the Marine Corps Association and Foundation's Victor E. Johnson Uniform Award as the top prior-enlisted graduate of his officer candidate class, Nov. 24, 2015. After the graduation parade, Sgt Burrell, his wife, Alix, and daughter Mila were joined by Chris and Anne Bird, right, and Mrs. Bird's mother, Mrs. Mary Hill, far left, the daughter of Victor Johnson.

but we try to make the requirements and the process as clear as possible in the MARADMIN."

Selected Marines can be assigned to any military occupational specialty (MOS) depending on the needs of the Corps. If a Marine has the inclination to stay in the field of his previous enlisted MOS, consideration will be given if it makes sense to capitalize on his experience. "The staff at The Basic School will work with them and guide them in that process," Kessler said.

Not all Marines who apply for ECP will be selected; however, as long as they continue to meet the qualifications, they are encouraged to reapply. "If they take actions to improve their record, such as additional academic courses or improving their physical fitness scores, the selection board takes that into account," Kessler explained. "They are more likely to be selected if they improve their record over time. The board wants to see evidence that they can handle the physical demands of OCS and that they have the academic ability to do well at The Basic School and to excel as an officer."

The average age of successful ECP candidates ranges from 25 to 29, and although the max age is 30, that can be waived to 35. They have a PFT score of 275 or above, a good grade point average in their degree program and good proficiency and conduct markings or fitness reports. Essentially, the board is looking for solid performance, day in and day out.

According to Kessler, letters of recommendation and endorsements from their command are essential elements of a successful application package.

"If a company commander or first sergeant takes the time to write a letter saying positive things about what a Marine did in the fleet, the board will take that as ground-level truth, because a leader of Marines is saying positive things about the applicant," said Kessler. "They aren't putting their name on it unless they mean it."

Not all Marines who apply for ECP will be selected; however, as long as they continue to meet the qualifications, they are encouraged to reapply.

He added that as the application makes its way through the applicant's chain of command up to the one-star level, the endorsements should be "enthusiastically recommended" to be competitive.

Kessler said commands do an excellent job of screening their Marines when they apply and ensure they are current on requirements. However, at times good applicants may be left out because they weren't the command's No. 1 selection.

"What we don't want is for commands to artificially stymie someone from applying," he said. "If they meet the minimum requirements and are good Marines but may not be their No. 1 choice, forward the package and let the selection board decide whether that Marine should be considered."

There are some red flags that potential applicants should avoid. Tattoos are one of them, and applicants should be cognizant of current Marine Corps rules on them. "Any visible tattoos, especially in PT gear, will be a problem," said Kessler. "Tattoos in visible areas such as the wrist, forearm or leg will either make the Marine ineligible or may be viewed negatively by the board."

Some applicants may be concerned with a negative incident on their record, but it may or may not be considered a negative element. A number of considerations are taken into account, such as the seriousness of the incident and how long ago it occurred—the more time between the event and the application, the better. How the Marine performed after the incident also is important. "If the Marine has sustained good performance, it may outweigh the negative incident," Kessler said.

The Marine Corps is taking an active approach to seeking out applicants, according to Kessler.

"Last year, we contacted about 27,000 Marines who could potentially be eligible for any of the enlisted-to-officer programs and encouraged them to apply," Kessler noted. "We look across the Marine Corps at Marines who are qualified and send out individual e-mails to them. In addition, we brief all the professional military schools at Quantico, such as the Staff NCO Academy and EWS [Expeditionary Warfare School]. So when staff NCOs or captains talk to their Marines they have up-to-date information."

Kessler and his staff work diligently to identify and recruit the most talented individuals for service as an officer of Marines. The ECP has proven to be an outstanding option since many of the Corps' finest leaders began their careers on the yellow footprints at Parris Island and San Diego.

Author's bio: CWO-4 Randy Gaddo, USMC (Ret), a Leatherneck *contributing editor, was a combat correspondent as an enlisted Marine and later a public affairs officer. He retired from active duty in 1996 and now operates his own writing-based business, RGCommunications, and is a freelance photojournalist.*

SGT BRYAN NYGAARD, USMC

2ndLt Jasmyn Smith has her gold bars pinned on by her mother, Elsy, and BGen Russell A. Sanborn, the director of Marine and Family Programs, at her commissioning ceremony at the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Quantico, Va., June 6, 2014. Smith initially served as an enlisted leatherneck in the Marine Corps Reserve.

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Corps Connections

Compiled by Sara W. Bock

Houston, Texas

3dMarDiv Veterans Raise Funds, Honor Association Chapter's Namesake

COURTESY OF STEVE WALDNER

Members of the Lance Corporal Richard A. Anderson Chapter of the Third Marine Division Association, based in the Houston-Galveston, Texas, area, attended a dedication ceremony for a new headstone at the resting place of the chapter's namesake in Houston, Aug. 23, 2015. Anderson was a Houston native who posthumously was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions while serving with Company E, 3d Reconnaissance Battalion, 3dMarDiv, Aug. 24, 1969, in the Republic of Vietnam.

The Marines of the 3dMarDiv Association chapter didn't just attend the ceremony—they were responsible for making the entire project happen. When it came to the attention of the chapter members that Anderson's grave was marked by a simple flat footstone, they wanted to ensure that he was memorialized in a manner befitting a Medal of Honor recipient. To purchase the headstone, they raised money, which included contributions from four different chapters of the Marine Corps League; the Galveston chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution; the Pearland Lions Club; and Marines from across the nation.

LCpl Anderson's brother, Les Anderson, pictured third from the left, was in attendance at the dedication ceremony, which was conducted by leathernecks from 1st Battalion, 23d Marine Regiment, Fourth Marine Division.

Submitted by Steve Waldner

COL SCOTT SLATER, USMC (RET)

Little River, S.C.

Veterans Take Care of Their Own

Members of the Carolina Borders Marine Corps League Detachment #1036 presented a check for $1,000 to Marine veteran Scott McMorror and his wife, Christine, at their home in Little River, S.C., in November 2015. McMorror's home was severely damaged by flooding, and the Marines of the newly formed detachment didn't hesitate to offer assistance. In addition to financial support, McMorror's fellow Marines also volunteered time and labor to help repair the damage. McMorror has since become a member of the Marine Corps League.

Pictured from the left are Lee Schell; the detachment commandant, Jerry Branscome; Scott McMorror; Bob Quinn; Larry Lippincott; Christine McMorror and Jim Harrington.

Submitted by Sgt Frank Rinchich
USMC, 1955-59

Harlingen, Texas

COURTESY OF MARINE MILITARY ACADEMY

MMA Honors Iwo Jima Flag Raiser

Marine Military Academy (MMA), located in Harlingen, Texas, held a battalion review and wreath-laying ceremony in honor of Iwo Jima flag raiser and South Texas native Corporal Harlon Block, on what would have been his 91st birthday, Nov. 6, 2015.

More than 150 guests were in attendance, including Chris Boswell, mayor of Harlingen; David Suarez, mayor of Weslaco, Texas; Dennis Kulvicki, president of Star Day Foundation; and the guest of honor, World War II veteran and Iwo Jima survivor Glen Cleckler, who was Block's best friend.

Block, a native of Weslaco, was captured on film by photographer Joe Rosenthal on Feb. 23, 1945, during the flag raising on the island of Iwo Jima. Of the six men who raised the American flag, Block was the one at the base of the flagstaff. The Marine never saw the famous photo—he was killed in action March 1, 1945. His gravesite lies behind the Iwo Jima monument on the MMA campus.

Submitted by Andi Atkinson

COURTESY OF MSGT ROBERT D. CASTO, USMC (RET)

Wooster, Ohio

Disabled Veterans' Team Receives Support From Local MCL Detachment

The Chesty Puller Marine Corps League Detachment #269 of Akron, Ohio, presented a check for $2,000 to the Ohio Warriors Sled Hockey Team in Wooster, Ohio, Nov. 14, 2015. The team, made up of disabled veterans, includes Master Sergeant Robert D. Casto, USMC (Ret), who is a member of the detachment. Presenting the check are Marines Dan Moore, Don Whitaker, Randy Patterson and Tom Shuber.

Submitted by MSgt Robert D. Casto, 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 photographs from events like the ones featured here. Send them to: Sara W. Bock, *Leatherneck* Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134, or e-mail them to s.bock@mca-marines.org. Submission does not guarantee publication, and we cannot guarantee the return of submitted photographs.

Vietnam: Combined Action Company

By Sgt Frank Beardsley, USMC
Reprinted from April 1966

The Chinese communist master of guerrilla warfare, Mao Tse-Tung, teaches that one of the most important ingredients for a successful "war of national liberation" is the support of the people. In his words, the people are the "sea in which the partisan fish swims."

And he instructs that this support need not be given voluntarily to be effective. Terrorism, he says, is an effective tool to gain this vital necessity if the people do not voluntarily give it.

This "tool" of Mao's is being used today by Viet Cong guerrillas in much of the Republic of Vietnam. Villagers are tortured, maimed, even murdered, by the insurgents to force the compliance of the people with their dictates.

The typical Vietnamese villager cares little for politics or ideological causes. His biggest worry is raising enough food to feed his family and earning enough to provide for their other necessities.

In areas controlled by the communists, he sees his sons conscripted into the VC forces; sees much of his hard-won rice crop confiscated as "taxes" by the guerrillas.

As long as the VC control his village, they hold over him and every other person in it the power of life and death. Defying a communist order or refusing to pay his "taxes" brings quick punishment from his communist masters.

Any hope of winning a war against the guerrillas must separate the insurgents from the people, dry up the vital "sea" they desperately need to survive, break up the Red domination of the villages.

This is being accomplished by various means in different parts of Vietnam.

In the northernmost Marine enclave in Vietnam, Hue-Phu Bai, it's being done very effectively by a unique company of Marines and local militia.

Four villages surround the U.S. base at Phu Bai with a combined population of more than 16,000. Responsible for their security, and indirectly, for the security of the air base, is the Combined Action Company (CAC), originated by the 3d Battalion, Fourth Marine Regiment, and currently operated by the 2d Bn, 1st Marines.

The CAC numbers only 91 enlisted men, including four Navy corpsmen. Two Marine officers, a Vietnamese army officer and fewer than 100 Popular Forces or local militiamen make up the rest of the force.

Commanding the company since September [1965] is its

LCpl Thomas E. Reilly, right, discusses reports on enemy activity in the area with his squad leader, Sgt David W. Sommers, on Sept. 21, 1965, as two members of the Popular Force look on.

USMC HISTORY DIVISION

originator, Captain John J. Mullin Jr. The captain was the civil affairs officer for 3/4 when the battalion landed at Phu Bai to provide security for the base. In midsummer, the battalion's Tactical Area of Responsibility was expanded to include the four villages, which up to that time had been fair game for the VC. The situation was a familiar one in Vietnam: friendly forces controlled the villages during the day; the VC controlled them after dark.

"Ordinary patrolling wasn't enough," Capt Mullin said. "We knew we had to offer more security to the people than we were doing by patrolling."

Mullin's suggestion was to put a squad of Marines in each of the villages on a permanent basis to live in them day and night.

Major Cullen B. Zimmerman, 3/4's executive officer, bought the idea and developed the actual plans for setting up the company. His proposals were approved by the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel William W. Taylor, and the CAC, then known as the 1st counterinsurgency platoon, was activated.

USMC HISTORY DIVISION

Cpl Ronald S. Newman, 3/4, takes cover during a sweep of the Hue-Phu Bai District.

Command of the new unit was given to First Lieutenant Paul Ek, a Vietnamese-speaking Marine borrowed from the Third Marine Regiment specifically for this purpose. He served as the company's commanding officer until his rotation home in September.

Appointed company executive officer was Lt Nguyen Dien Doung, former psychological warfare officer for the local district chief.

Members of the four CAC squads were selected from volunteers from the four companies of 3/4.

"Every man was hand-picked," Lt Ek said. "Because of the magnitude of the job, I picked men who were mature, intelligent, who possessed leadership capabilities and tact.

"Tact was the most important qualification," he added.

The squads, each commanded by a sergeant, underwent a week of preparation before moving into the villages. It was a busy week. In the mornings, the troops attended classes in spoken Vietnamese, Vietnamese government organization and village relations. In the afternoons and evenings, the individual squads made recon patrols of their village areas to familiarize themselves with the terrain and to give the villagers an opportunity to become accustomed to them.

At the end of the week, on Aug. 3, the squads moved into the villages.

Village number two, a complex of three hamlets with 2,200 residents, became the new home of a squad led by Sergeant David W. Sommers. Named Thuy Tan, the village lay a couple of miles southeast of the U.S. base and 4 miles inland from the Gulf of Tonkin.

The building Sommers and his men would occupy was a small three-room concrete brick house located near the center of the village. In front of it, across a narrow road, rice paddies stretched out to a river a mile away. Behind the house, a tree line partially blocked another smaller rice paddy complex.

Sommers had his men set up sandbag fortifications at each corner of their area, including one checkpoint on the road itself.

The Marines were not quickly accepted by the villagers. The residents of Thuy Tan were suspicious of the newcomers and doubtful of their commitment and ability to protect them from the nightly maraudings of the VC.

USMC

Appointed as the 11th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps in 1987, SgtMaj David W. Sommers served as one of the first CAC squad leaders during the Vietnam War and was responsible for more than 2,200 civilians in the village of Thuy Tan.

Up to the time of the Marines' arrival, Thuy Tan's defense force consisted of some 20 Popular Force (PF) troops. The PF is a home guard or local militia, normally employed in protecting the village in which they live. Most of the members were veterans of years in the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) and were experienced and battle-tested in the anti-communist struggle. The PF's command post was located several hundred meters down the road from the Marines' command post.

When CAC was formed, the PFs of the four villages, by special order of the ARVN commander of the Hue-Phu Bai sector, were placed under the operational control of the Marines.

"Winning over" these tough little fighters was the first task of the Marines.

"We learned from each other," Sommers said. "When we first started going out on night patrols and ambushes, they complained we made too much noise. By slightly revamping our equipment, we were able to meet their standards of silence."

The Marines instructed the PFs in small

unit tactics and specific military skills necessary in defense of the village. They instilled new confidence in the home guard that made them more aggressive guerrilla fighters.

It didn't take long for a warm bond to form between the Americans and the PFs. Several weeks after their arrival in Thuy Tan, the Marines decided to expand their living area by building a Vietnamese-style thatched hut. The PFs watched them struggle for a while with the unfamiliar bamboo and straw, then moved in and took over the construction.

Another quick friend the Marines met was an elderly woman they immediately named "Mama-san." She showed up at their hut a couple of days after they arrived, carrying a big box of bread and soft drinks to sell to them. After that first day, Mama-san became a regular fixture.

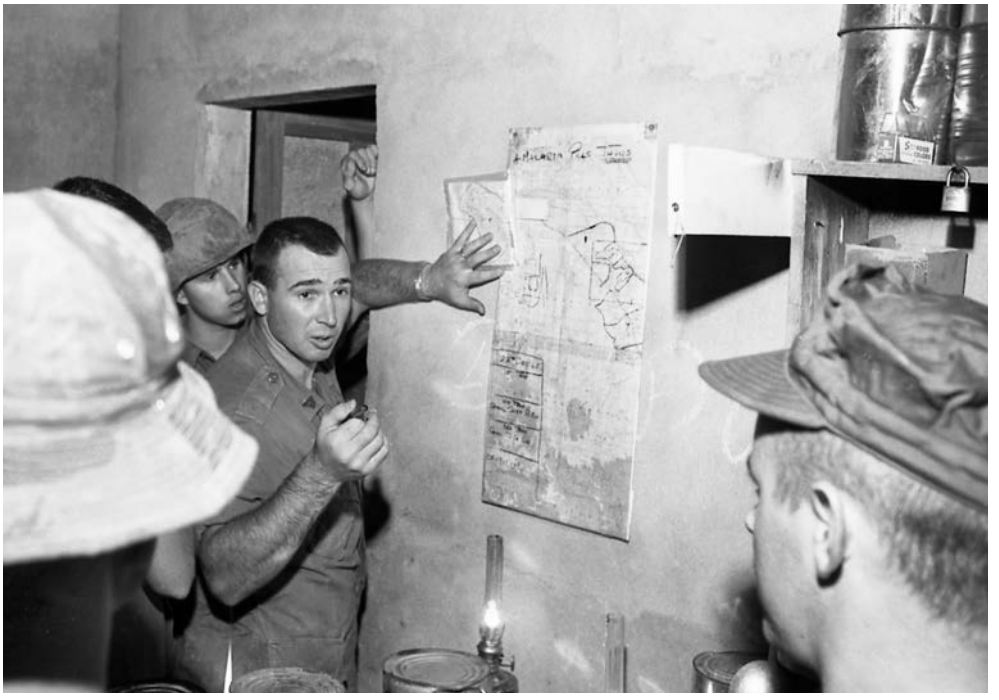
In those first few weeks, three youngsters also "adopted" the Marines. The youths picked up English quickly and acted as interpreters until the Americans could learn enough Vietnamese to converse with the villagers.

Through their close association with the PFs, their aggressive patrolling to keep the village free of VC, and a warm recommendation from Mama-san, the squad gradually began to win over the villagers and become accepted members of the community.

In December, 3/4 was rotated to Okinawa, and members of the squad who had completed their overseas tours were returned to the States for reassignment. Sgt Sommers and nearly half his squad were among those leaving. The others volunteered to remain longer with CAC to continue their job in Thuy Tan. They proved invaluable when replacements from the new battalion, 2/1, arrived to fill the vacancies in the village. The "old hands" were able to pass on much of what they'd learned in their months there, and it made the transition very smooth.

Sommers' relief was Sgt John J. Cooney, right guide of the 1st platoon, "Golf" Co, 2/1. It didn't take him long to become familiar with the area for which he was now responsible. In addition to the regular nightly patrols and ambushes, Cooney instituted a crash program of recon patrols during the day for himself and the other new men. He also worked at learning the Vietnamese language and, after a week, was able to make himself understood by the village PF commander.

The local police chief and an interpreter listen to 1stLt Paul R. Ek as he gestures toward a suspected VC stronghold. Ek was the first commander of the CAC, initially known as the 1st counterinsurgency platoon. (Photo courtesy of USMC History Division)



Sgt John J. Cooney briefs his squad prior to setting out on a night combat patrol. Cooney relieved Sommers as the squad leader responsible for Thuy Tan when 2/1 relieved 3/4 in December 1965. (USMC photo)

It didn't take the VC long to begin probing the squad after the replacements arrived. Their third night in the village, two men on an observation post (OP) spotted movement near the squad's area. Since the village was under a strict dark-to-dawn curfew, anything moving at night was considered VC. The men on the OP opened fire, and the intruders hit the deck. As soon as the shooting started, Cooney radioed for illumination. Less than three minutes later, the first flare popped overhead to light the area. A couple of minutes later, the PF contingent came racing up the road from its CP. They began a sweep of the area where the VC had been seen, but found nothing. Somehow the elusive guerrillas had gotten away.

Cooney's first job every morning is to prepare the overlay for his next patrol or ambush. He plans the nightly operations himself, based on intelligence he gets from the villagers, the district police chief, or Capt Mullin.

On the overlay, he must mark his patrol route, noting specific checkpoints and ambush sites and the times he expects to arrive and depart from each. In addition, he plots pre-planned artillery

concentrations on the overlay and supplies the coordinates for the artillery unit which will be supporting him. Standard concentrations are plotted around the squad CP every night; others are planned to cover possible ambush sites along the patrol route.

"The artillery is probably the only reason the VC haven't tried to overrun us," Cooney said. "The artillery could chop them to pieces before they ever reached us. And we could handle those who get through the artillery until reinforcements could be brought up."

Their artillery support is so vital that Cooney has instructed each man in the squad on the procedure for requesting fire missions and adjusting them on target.

Another factor which prevents the VC from launching a full-scale attack on the squad CP is Cooney's policy of never doing anything on a set schedule. One night the squad may depart on patrol immediately after dark; the next night they may wait until 0100 before moving out.

Even meals are eaten at different times each day.

"We try not to set a pattern in anything we do," said Cooney. "If we did, for example, start moving out at the same time each night, it wouldn't be long before 'Charlie' would be waiting for us, and we'd be zapped hard.

"This way, by doing everything at different times every day, we keep 'Charlie' guessing about what we're doing and where we are."

In order to prevent any possible leaks of information to the enemy, Cooney briefs the PFs on the night's operation when they arrive at the squad CP just before dark.

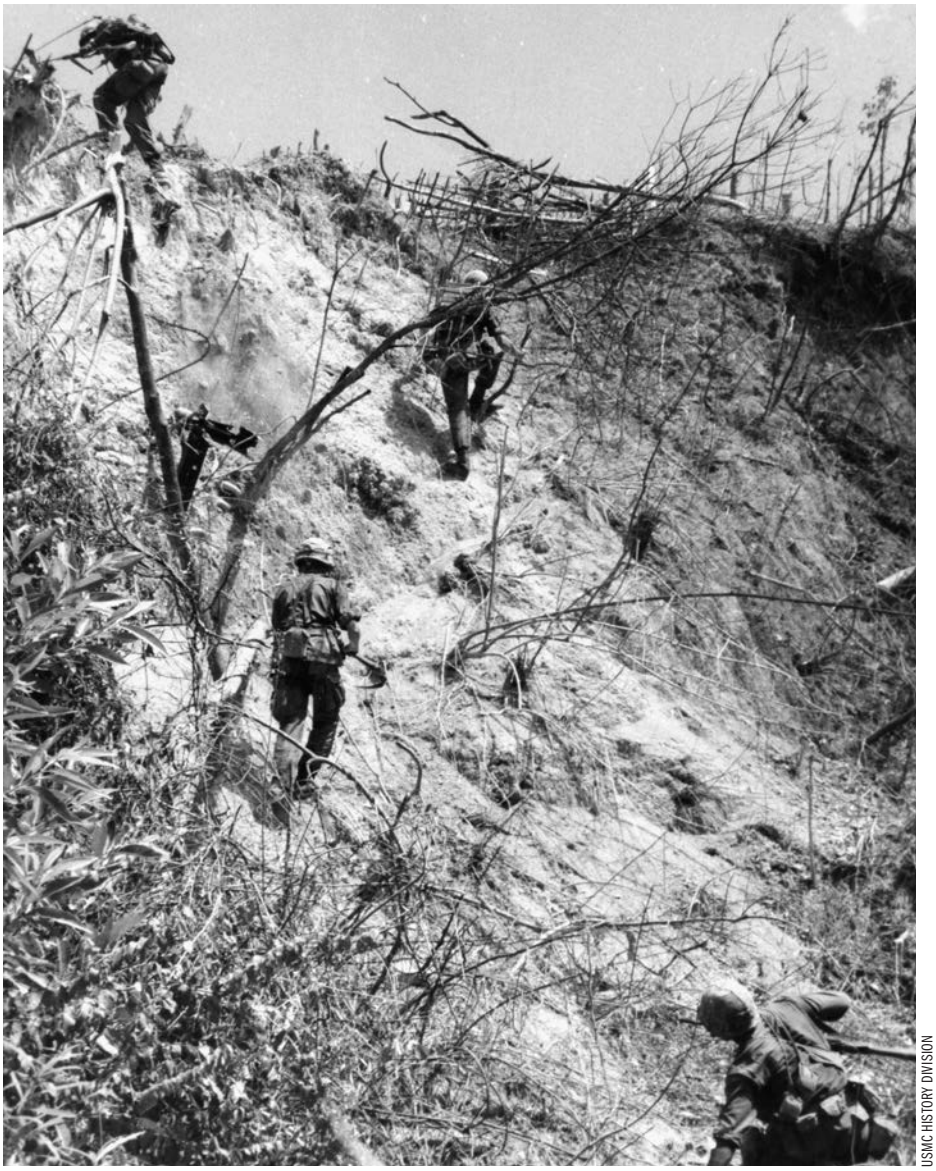
Sometimes, he takes all the PFs with the Marines; on other nights, he leaves most of them to provide security at the squad CP. This, too, is part of the policy of not setting a pattern.

The squad never moves at night without at least one PF.

"We always use a PF as point," Cooney said. "For some reason, most of the PFs seem to sense the VC before the rest of us can see or hear them. And not only this, they know the area much better than we do because they've lived here all their lives."

In addition to its combat patrols and ambushes, the squad also is responsible for the security of village officials. In many of the outlying villages in Vietnam, the village chief and his assistants spend only the daylight hours in their villages. To remain after dark courts death at the hands of VC assassination squads. That's why most of them spend the night in larger towns where they can be protected.

This isn't the case, however, in the four villages in which CAC operates. The officials live in the villages day and night, and it's up to Cooney to ensure that VC assassins don't murder the authorities in Thuy Tan. This is an every night job for the Marines and the PFs. Occasionally, the group of village leaders spend the night at the Marines' CP, but usually they stay at one of the villagers' homes in the area. The location is secret, and the chief's host doesn't know he'll have company until the group arrives after dark. A bodyguard of Marines or PFs stays with the officials during the night.



USMC HISTORY DIVISION

While the CAC conducted its new mission, the rest of the Marines from 3/4 continued a more traditional fight, complete with support from the First Marine Aircraft Wing.

Since the squad operates every night, Cooney has established standard operating procedures (SOP) for equipment and tactics on patrol.

For example, on every patrol or ambush, each man carries a minimum of one "Willie Peter" or white phosphorus grenade, two fragmentation grenades, six or seven magazines loaded with tracers every other round, and an extra bandolier of ammunition.

Cooney explained the reason for the WP grenades and tracers: "Documents we've found on the VC indicate they hold great fear of white phosphorus tracers."

The point man in the column always carries a shotgun loaded with double-O buckshot; the second man in the column and one man in each of the other fire teams mounts a WP grenade on his rifle with a crimped cartridge in the chamber and a fully loaded magazine in his weapon. Thus he can fire the grenade, then follow it up immediately with 20 rounds of automatic fire. All the M14s carried are equipped with selector switches, allowing them to be fired on full automatic. In a firefight, everybody fires the first magazine on automatic, then everybody except the designated automatic rifleman in each fire team switches to semi-automatic fire.

USMC HISTORY DIVISION

PFC W.F. Kouprny guards local Vietnamese villagers cutting rice in a rice paddy.

USMC HISTORY DIVISION

LtCol William W. Taylor, commanding officer of 3/4, left, and assistant village chief Vang, far right, listen intently as Kim Le Bat, Thuy Phy village chief, second from right, shows MajGen Lewis W. Walt, commander of III Marine Amphibious Force, the location of one of 11 artillery concentration areas.

Each man in the squad has camouflaged utilities and covers. No canteens or steel helmets are worn because of the noise they make. When possible, the men utilize camouflage make-up to better blend into the shadows.

Should the patrol run head on into a VC patrol during a night operation (and this is by far the most common form of contact between the VC and the CAC squads), the SOP calls for the lead fire team to hit the deck and fire straight to their front. The second fire team deploys to the right and the third to the left, with every man firing to his front. This covers the path or road and avenues of escape on either side of it.

Protecting the people from the VC is not the only way in which the CAC squads serve their villages. Each squad has instituted a civic action program to try to improve living conditions in its village.

In Thuy Tan, Cooney's men are building playground equipment for the village school. They have assisted the villagers in constructing sanitation facilities and instructed them in sanitation procedures in an attempt to eliminate causes for disease. Clothing and soap are distributed to people who had little of the former and none of the latter. Much of the relief supplies have been sent to Thuy Tan by a lady in Anaheim, Calif., Mrs. Barbara Verrinder. Verrinder collects soap from hotels and motels and clothing from her neighbors in Anaheim. She turns her collections over to Marines at Marine Corps Air Station El Toro, and they deliver them to Phu Bai.

And more relief shipments should be on the way. Soon after arriving in the village, Cooney and his second fire team leader, Corporal Robert D. Ward, wrote a letter to newspapers in their hometowns, explaining the job they are doing and asking for any help possible from the folks back home.

An important part of the civic action program is the medical attention provided the villagers by the squad's corpsman, Hospital Corpsman Third Class Jack C. Hill Jr.

Sick call begins for the villagers at noon every day and continues until "Doc" has no more patients. On an average day, Hill treats upwards of 50 people for ailments ranging from cuts and skin ulcers to colds and arthritis. He has one patient with tuberculosis and another recovering from a gunshot wound in the hip.

Most of his patients are children, who stop by with a cut finger or a scratched leg. Doc is a favorite with the kids, and they continue to come back daily, even after their reason for coming is healed. They still get a smile from Hill and a bar of soap.

"Most of the troubles people come here with could be prevented by using soap and water," Hill said. "A buffalo boy, who drives water buffalo through filthy rice paddies every day, can count on having any cut or leech bite become infected.

"But if he would wash the wound with soap and water, and keep it clean for a few days, he'd have no trouble.

"That's why we're trying to educate the people, especially the kids, in proper health and sanitation procedures, and why we give so much soap away. And the best thing about the program is that it's paying off. We see more kids every day walking past the house here on the way to school with clean faces and hands."

When Hill discovers someone seriously ill that he can't help with his limited facilities, he requests the person be evacuated to the field hospital back at the base for treatment.

Hill also accompanies the squad on all operations.

And, like every other man in the squad, he has a price on his head. The Viet Cong have put a bounty on each man in the

company, from Capt Mullin on down, but so far, no guerrilla has collected it.

They still keep trying, however.

Cooney only had been in Thuy Tan a week when the VC again probed his CP. Lance Corporals Harry E. Bates and Gary W. Martinson were manning one of the rear OPs about midnight when they heard dogs barking in the village.

"The dogs are our distant early warning device," Cooney had said earlier. "Despite what you hear about how great the VC is as a night fighter, we've found him to be pretty bad. He doesn't move quietly and his noise alarms the dogs."

Fifteen minutes after the barking started, Bates and Martinson saw four shadowy forms slip across the path 40 meters away. They opened fire and heard one of the VC moan. Another of the enemy fired one round at the OP. The rest of the squad poured outside and added their fire to that of Bates and Martinson. Cooney fired 15 rounds, covering the area, from his M79 grenade launcher.

He shouted to the radioman, Private First Class Robert B. Knutson, "Call for illumination!"

But while they waited for the flares, they again heard the dogs barking, close at first, then farther away. By the time the illumination arrived, there was nothing to be found except a broken bush and marks on the ground, indicating a body had been dragged away.

Thirty minutes after this action, the squad moved out on the night's operation, a four-hour ambush on a likely VC approach route.

Apparently, the firefight chased away the VC, for the squad saw nothing on its ambush. The Marines came home just before dawn, tired and wet, and a little angry that the VC had again escaped them.

But not all the VC get away. Since it was formed last August, the men of CAC have killed 10 VC, confirmed by body count. They estimate another 10 were killed and their bodies removed by survivors. The company has captured 30 confirmed VC, including one wounded.

Most of the 30 were captured after villagers provided information on their whereabouts. Many of them were taken into custody in the village markets as they tried to buy food.

The villagers are quick to tell the Marines of any VC activity in the area. Usually it's only a matter of minutes after a villager learns of information until the Marines know about it.

It wasn't always like this. It took time for the people to realize that the Marines were capable of protecting them and were willing to fight the VC to keep the village free.

"The villagers know," as Cooney put it, "that if the Marines ever pulled out of here, the VC would move back in and torture and kill them for collaborating with us.

"That's why we had to convince them we were going to stay.

"They don't help us because they're afraid of us, but because we're now their friends and they know we're here to assist them."

This estimate was reinforced by Capt Mullin. "The Marines and the people have attained a relationship seldom seen in such a situation."

He continued, "The CAC company has cured a large area of the battalion's Tactical Area of Responsibility with a minimum of troops deployed."

Eventually, the company hopes to have the village defense forces strong enough to resist the VC without our assistance.

But until that day comes, the Combined Action Company will continue to guarantee the freedom and safety of 16,000 loyal South Vietnamese.

USMC

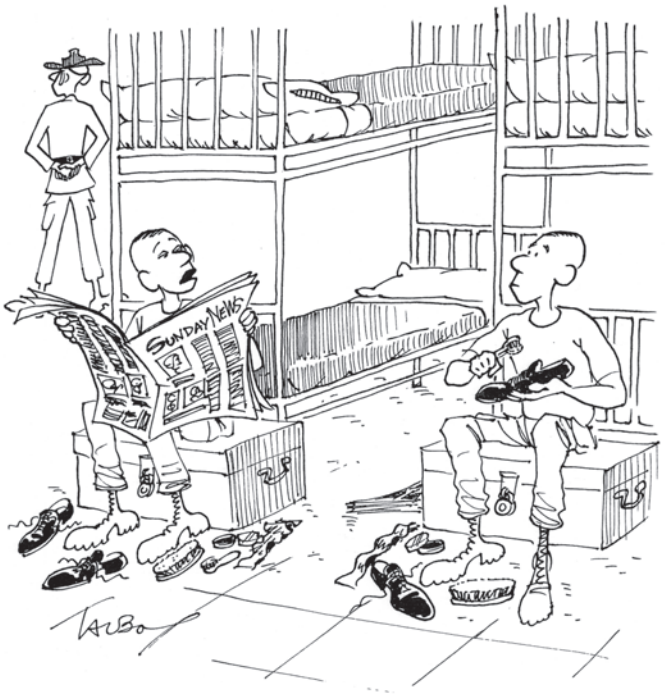
Sgt Cooney and Cpl Bob D. Ward make friends with the local children by distributing candy. Thuy Phy's children were some of the first villagers to welcome the Marines, and a few even acted as interpreters.

Leatherneck Laffs

"We could put it on eBay and say it's slightly used."

"We had a round go wide in artillery practice yesterday, sir."

"Mommy, is Daddy a vegetarian now?"



"I hope I don't forget my username and password before we graduate."

"I can't imagine how things could get any worse."

"Do you have any others—with more spikes?"

A Voice for Victims

How the Victims' Legal Counsel Organization Is Changing the Face of the Military Justice System

By Sara W. Bock

Many of the clients who walk into Major Michael G. Ankrum's office each day are junior Marines.

"You're one of the only lance corporals who has a major working for him or her," he likes to tell them.

There's little doubt that those words speak volumes to his clients, all of whom have come forward as victims of sexual assault and other serious crimes.

Ankrum, a judge advocate and Regional Victims' Legal Counsel (VLC) stationed at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., has one primary interest in mind: his client's. The legal process can be daunting for victims, who may not always understand what their rights are, how the military justice system works, or what actions are required to achieve their desired outcome. That's why having an expert in their corner can make all the difference.

In recent years, the Department of Defense has unveiled a series of new policies, procedures and programs designed to do two things: eradicate sexual assault among the ranks of the military services and create a climate that allows victims of these and other serious crimes to report them without fear of retaliation on both social and professional levels.

One of the DOD's most recent initiatives prompted the creation of the Marine Corps Victims' Legal Counsel Organization (VLCO), a program that operates within the military justice system and is designed to provide legal advice and representation for victims of sexual assault and other crimes, including domestic assault and hazing.

On Aug. 14, 2013, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel issued a memorandum that directed the military departments to establish a special victims' legal advocacy program. General James F. Amos, then-Commandant of the Marine Corps, subsequently established the Marine Corps VLCO.

From the outset, the Corps established 10 VLCO offices around the world and designated 16 active-duty judge advocates and two reserve judge advocates as VLCs. The organization has grown to a current strength of 18 active-duty judge advocates.

Before the program's inception, the military justice system had no provisions for victims to receive their own legal counsel. To an extent, the prosecutor represents the victim's interests during the court-martial process, but by no means is the prosecutor's sole purpose to provide support to victims and help them navigate the legal process.

"As a prosecutor, it's the United States v.

COURTESY OF VLCO

The judge advocates of the VLCO stand outside the MCAS Miramar, Calif., Officers' Club during their annual training symposium in January. The organization is made up of 18 active-duty judge advocates, as well as numerous legal service specialists and civilian paralegals.

'Whoever,' " said Captain Jeffrey Palmer, VLC at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, N.C. "So you represent the people of the United States, the U.S. government, and essentially you're prosecuting a court-martial that was convened, probably by their CO [commanding officer] or commanding general."

Rather than being viewed as the CO's legal counsel, the VLCs make it clear that they work solely in the victim's best interest. And while they seldom stand up and argue during the actual trial, they advocate for the victim during every pre-trial hearing and help translate legal jargon and documents so that the victim can make informed decisions.

"The first thing I tell [my clients]: 'I don't care what your CO wants, I don't care what the defense counsel wants, I don't care what the prosecutor wants. I only care what you want,' " Palmer said. "They don't have to worry about what they tell you, that it's going to get back to the command. … They have their own 'person,' " he added.

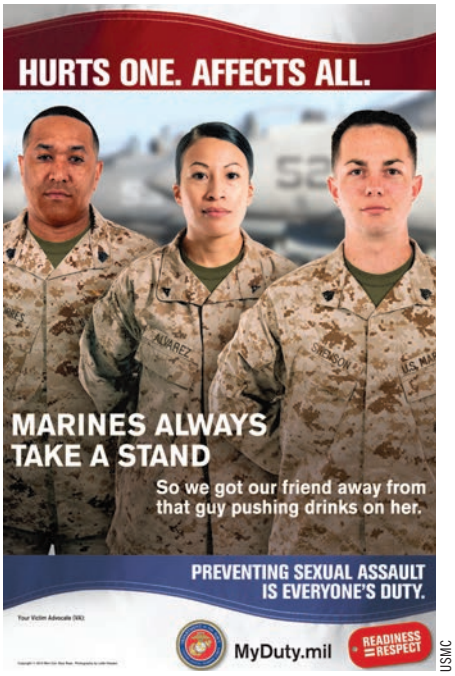
Captain William Mossor, a VLC at MCB Camp Lejeune, recalls that when he formerly worked as a prosecutor in a sexual assault case, none of his clients ever called him to ask how the case was going—likely because they didn't feel comfortable enough to do so. Now that he's a VLC, his clients call him often, and he contacts them frequently as well, giving them updates from either the trial counsel or Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS).

In fact, during his time as a prosecutor, he and his counterparts didn't get to talk to the victim until the investigation was complete.

"I feel like there's a lot of value—for the legal system it's helped out a lot, but for the victim it's really helpful to have somebody," Mossor said.

He added that he reminds his clients that at any point in the process, they have the right to decide they don't want to proceed further. For many victims, taking it one step at a time is the best approach. Mossor encourages them to think ahead to when the legal process is over. Will they wish they had done things differently? It's a process that is intended to make clients feel comfortable and feel justified for wanting whatever outcome it is they want from the process. VLCs consistently inform clients of their rights as a victim, which are detailed in Article 6(b) of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ).

"A VLC's primary responsibility is to empower and enable a victim to voice their concerns and priorities … [and to] ensure that a victim of sexual assault or other serious crime has a say in how they are treated in the military justice system. Victims benefit by having their own lawyer to navigate and challenge a complicated legal system that may ignore or underappreciate the emotional, physical, personal and professional implications of being sexually assaulted," said Colonel Katherine M. McDonald, officer in charge of the VLCO, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps.



USMC

In an effort to reduce sexual assault and increase reporting of such offenses, posters like the one pictured here are hung in buildings on bases and stations worldwide.

"They don't have to worry about what they tell you, that it's going to get back to the command. … They have their own 'person.' "
—Capt Jeffrey Palmer

By providing victims with their own judge advocate—a captain or major designated specifically as a Victims' Legal Counsel—the victims "can be confident that their VLC has their interests in mind and no one else. They do not work for the trial counsel. They do not work for the command. They do not work for the defense," said McDonald, who, as the OIC of the VLCO, reports directly to the Staff Judge Advocate to the Commandant of the Marine Corps.

Programs like the VLCO have helped the Corps tremendously in its efforts to erase the stigma that too often has been associated with the reporting of sexual assault. And while many victims may fear that by coming forward with an accusation, they may become the object of social or professional retaliation, the VLCs of the VLCO East region, led by Ankrum (the regional VLC), say that they very rarely see it happen to their clients—and when it does, the commands deal with it swiftly.

A large part of the program's success may be attributed to the hand-selection of the VLC, who must demonstrate maturity, strong leadership attributes and effective communication skills, said McDonald.

A VLC must go through an interview, pass a detailed screening, have at a minimum six months in a trial billet (either defense or prosecution), have worked on a contested sexual assault case and trial, and attend a certification course.

Maj Ankrum had previously served as a prosecutor and was traveling home from a deployment to Afghanistan in early 2014 when he got a phone call with some news about his next assignment. He would serve as the first VLC at Camp Lejeune. He didn't know anything about the newly formed organization, but he did what any good Marine does—go where you're told to go and do a good job at it, he said.

Supporting and representing victims quickly became more than just a "job" to Ankrum, so much so that after his initial tour was over, he requested to stay on as the regional VLC of VLCO East, which covers Camp Lejeune; Cherry Point; MCAS New River, N.C.; and Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C.

During fiscal year 2014, the first year of its existence, the VLCO made itself known in the military justice system. And while Ankrum probably would like to say that, as a VLC, he was welcomed into the process by his peers on the trial counsel and the defense, he said that during the first few courts-martial he attended, the defense objected to his presence.

"The judge heard them out and ultimately ruled in accordance with the law that no, sorry, the Victims' Legal Counsel is going to be here," Ankrum recalled, adding that the VLCs' relationship with the defense and the prosecution has come a long way since then. Even today, they work hard to prove their legitimacy.

Capt Palmer was acting as a prosecutor on a sexual assault case at MCAS Cherry Point in 2014 when he first worked with a VLC. Coincidentally, it was Ankrum.

"I don't know, this seems unnecessary," Palmer recalled thinking to himself about the VLC. But as he worked on the case, with Ankrum representing the victim, he said he immediately realized the value of the VLCO. Today, Palmer works for Ankrum as the VLC at Cherry Point,

spending his days assisting victims and advocating for them throughout the legal process.

"When I was a trial counsel, I would explain the entire military justice process [to the victim] in 30 minutes—and how much do you think a victim retains of that? Absolutely nothing," said Ankrum. With the establishment of the VLCO, victims have the opportunity to meet with their legal counsel 10 to 20 times, on average. According to Ankrum, the opportunity to build rapport is crucial during the legal process.

The clients serviced by VLCs are not limited to active-duty servicemembers, but also include dependents and DOD civilian employees, among other eligible victims.

The VLCs work closely with Uniformed Victim Advocates (UVAs), Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARCs), representatives from the Family Advocacy Program (FAP), and with the command of each unit on their base or station.

Since most sexual assaults and other offenses are reported directly to those individuals, they in turn refer the victims to the VLCs, who help them understand what their rights are as victims, allowing them to make an educated decision about what steps they would like to take and what outcome they would like to see at the end of the process.

In the military, reports of sexual assault can be classified either as restricted or unrestricted. A restricted report allows the victims to disclose the details of the assault to specific parties so they can receive medical care and counseling—but they do not wish to go through the investigative process. By filing an unrestricted report, they allow the legal aspect to come into play.

According to Ankrum, most clients who walk through his door with a restricted report will choose to go unrestricted after learning what their rights are as a victim and what services are provided them by the VLC.

> Unlike the other military services, whose VLCs help only victims of sexual assault, they believe they do a lot of good in providing counsel to victims of domestic abuse and hazing.

Initially, most victims just want to know what their options are.

"I've never had a client that's come to me on the first day … say, " 'This is what I want.' They either don't have any idea what they want, partially because they don't even know the options. I think for a lot of victims, it's like walking into a restaurant and they don't give you a menu, and a waiter comes and says, 'What do you want for dinner?' And you say, 'Well, what do you serve here? What kind of restaurant is this?' So they want to know options," said Palmer, adding that he strives to make his clients feel like their desired outcome is legitimate within reason.

From the initial NCIS interview to the pretrial motions process, to working with the victim's command and sometimes even arranging expedited transfers for the victim to allow them to "start over" in a new unit or at a new duty station, the VLC is there every step of the way. Some of the cases never go to trial for various reasons. The victim may be satisfied with an expedited transfer or, if the evidence against the accused is sufficiently strong, they may wish only to see them administratively separated from the Corps. In most cases, the victim understandably doesn't want to attend the hearings that lead up to the trial, so the VLC will attend on the client's behalf and then relay a summary to the client afterwards.

All the staff judge advocates in the VLCO typically have a caseload of between 20 and 30 cases at a time, and they spend a substantial portion of their time translating pretrial agreements (known in the civilian world as plea bargains) to their clients, said Palmer. While the victim doesn't have the final say in whether a pretrial agreement is offered to the accused, the convening authority does allow the victim to have input. If the accused accepts a pretrial agreement, the victim

LCPL MICHAEL THORN, USMC

Marines with Third Marine Aircraft Wing discuss new approaches to sexual assault prevention training with Stacey Willis, SARC at MCAS Miramar, Calif., Jan. 21, 2014. The judge advocates of the VLCO work closely with their region's SARCs and UVAs to ensure that no victims fall through the cracks of the military justice system.

SARA W. BOCK

From the left, Capt Dirk Daza, Maj Michael Ankrum, Capt William Mossor and Capt Jeffrey Palmer stand in a courtroom at MCB Camp Lejeune, N.C., Feb. 25. The four judge advocates serve as the VLC for Camp Lejeune and Cherry Point.

can avoid testifying at a court-martial.

"It [the pretrial agreement] is a pretty big stack of paper, and if you handed it to your client and said, 'Here you go, tell me what you think about this,' they just wouldn't know," Palmer said.

Since it is still a relatively young program, the VLCs who have helped pioneer it have faced a few challenges, aside from working to establish their legitimacy in the eyes of their military justice system peers.

Presently, gaining access to information regarding the case can prove to be a challenge for the VLC because the victim doesn't get a copy of the entire investigation. The convening authority—the command—is concerned that if the victim sees all statements that have been made about the case, their testimony may be impacted in one way or another. Ankrum said that the access to information has improved over the past two years, as the trial counsels are realizing that communication with the VLC is a good thing.

"Initially it was, 'I can't tell you anything'; now it's 'this is what we're seeing with the case," Ankrum said.

Mossor echoed Ankrum's sentiments, saying that he envisions that as the program grows and becomes more legitimate to the other attorneys, the VLC will be granted more access to the information regarding the case, ultimately helping the client make even more informed decisions.

Another challenge relates to the expedited transfer process. Since many victims are transferred before the court-martial takes place, the VLCs spend a good deal of time traveling and attempting to network with the trial counsels at various duty stations around the world so that they can effectively represent their clients—both those who have left their duty station and those who have arrived there as a result of an expedited transfer.

The VLCs attend various symposiums throughout the year, most notably at the National Crime Victim Law Institute at Lewis & Clark University in Portland, Ore. According to Mossor, it's extremely useful to see what the civilian legal field is doing in terms of working with victims and helping victims.

"In some things we're very much ahead of what the civilians are doing," Mossor said.

Interacting with attorneys who have spent decades advocating for victims allows the VLCs to consider new approaches to the same tasks.

"In some ways, they think 'outside of the box' a lot more," Palmer said of his civilian counterparts. "I wonder how we can keep pushing our 'box' to make it bigger—all in the name of assisting victims," he added.

Ankrum, Palmer and Mossor say they are proud of how much the VLCO has accomplished over the last two to three years. Unlike the other military services, whose VLCs help only victims of sexual assault, they believe they do a lot of good in providing counsel to victims of domestic abuse and hazing.

"We've been very aggressive, I think, with making sure that we take care of our Marines and our Marine families," Ankrum said. "We pushed our envelope early, and we continue to do it now in the interest of our client, not in the interest of our own self-worth, but to assist the client as best we can."

By ensuring that no victim "falls through the cracks" of the justice system, the VLCO has helped ensure organizational change, reinforcing the idea that the Corps does not and will not tolerate sexual assault. And, perhaps more importantly, that it cares about victims and will provide them with a voice that will speak for them when they can't, or don't want to, speak for themselves.

SGT W. ZACH GRIFFITH, USMC

SgtMaj Don Gallagher, then-sergeant major of 3d MAW, signs his boot print on a "Leadership Stomp Out Sexual Assault" banner at MCAS Miramar, Calif., April 20, 2011. Over the past several years, the Corps has taken on the issue of sexual assault prevention and response in a variety of ways, including the creation of the VLCO.

YOUR FINANCIAL GPS

We'd never been so lost.

On a European vacation a few years ago, my family (okay, I) made the mistake of trying to find our hotel with the aid of a foreign language paper map.

What should have been a 20-minute trip turned into a two-hour fiasco.

Lesson learned. After a short nap, we found the nearest electronics store and spent a couple hundred dollars on a new GPS.

What does that story have to do with financial advice? Well, it's all about the beauty of the GPS; without it, we didn't know exactly where we were or how to get where we wanted to go.

Do you know where you are and where you're going with your money?

Unfortunately, there's no financial GPS that allows you to hit the power button and get all the answers, options and directions. But there is something that can help: a financial plan.

"THE KEY IS TO GET STARTED TODAY. FIGURE OUT WHERE YOU ARE AND WHERE YOU WANT TO BE."

– JOSEPH "J.J." MONTANARO
CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ practitioner

Here are three key elements that should be part of your plan:

Insurance review. Health, life and property insurance can help protect you from financial catastrophe. Assessing both what you have and what you need is critical, and that's especially the case if you're navigating some big changes (job, baby, etc.). Updating your protection plan during major life changes is also important.

Spending plan. Budget, spending plan, cash flow management — whatever you call it, make sure you have a game plan to save money and spend less than you earn.

Short- and long-term savings and investments. From building an emergency fund to creating long-term financial security, planning and executing your plan will allow you to hit the mark.

Of course, there are a bunch of other important details — tax planning and legal documents both come to mind. The key is to get started today. Figure out where you are and where you want to be.

In a nutshell, a financial plan is an assessment of where you are and strategies to help you address your shortfalls and achieve your financial goals. The USAA Financial Readiness Score may be just what you need to get started. It's almost like a financial GPS.

Steer your finances toward your goals.

Input your information, and within 10 minutes, get your score and personalized Action Plan.

Looking for financial route guidance?

We'll help navigate you toward your goals.

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MANFRED "FOKKER" RIETSCH

Fighter Pilot Extraordinaire

Story by Mike Hoeferlin
Photos courtesy of
Col Frank McDuffee, USMC (Ret)

Since Marine aviation began in 1912, the Corps has produced some incredible fighter pilots and some very interesting characters. Perhaps none were more flamboyant, prolific and proficient as Manfred "Fokker" Rietsch, the iconic and Teutonic "mad German."

Rietsch, who flew more F-4 Phantom II missions in Vietnam than any other pilot, commanded the largest Marine aircraft group (MAG) ever to go to war. He graduated from and was the first Marine to be selected as an instructor at the Navy's famous Fighter Weapons School, more commonly known as "Top Gun." His accomplishments—before, during and after his 26-year Marine Corps career—are remarkable, and his fabled reputation in the Marine Corps fighter pilot community is unparalleled. When fighter pilots get together, the name "Fokker" is sure to come up. It is not surprising that the word most often used to describe Manfred Rietsch is "legendary."

Manfred "Fokker" Rietsch was born during World War II in Germany in the area formerly known as West Prussia. After the war, Rietsch and his mother and sister found themselves in Russian-occupied East Germany. Rietsch's mother was fluent in five languages and worked for the Russian occupiers as an interpreter and "community liaison" between the Russian communists and the local German populace. She detested the communists, even more so when, in 1947, Rietsch's father died in a Polish prison camp "under suspicious circumstances." It was time to escape to West Germany, so they quietly slipped across the border one night and sought refuge. Manfred was 5 years old. They kept going west and eventually ended up in Minneapolis, Minn., courtesy of a local church that sponsored them.

After graduating from the University of Minnesota, Rietsch had a chance "convincing and compelling 'leadership session' " with the commanding officer of the local Marine Air Detachment, which included a discussion about the upcoming war in Southeast Asia against communist forces. "I 'signed up' [and] got my citizenship in January 1966 and reported to Quantico [Va.] for Officer Candidates School in March," he said.

After OCS it was off to flight school where he earned his coveted wings of gold. Next, he underwent training in the F-4 Phantom II at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, N.C., before reporting to Chu Lai Air Base in Vietnam, with Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 314, the "Black Knights."

"The wingman, both pilot and RIO, were yelling, 'Fokker, you're on fire! Eject! Eject! Eject!' Instead, "Fokker shut the engine down and calmly said, 'I'm going to try to land it.' "
—Col Richard Kindsfater, USMC (Ret)

The Launching of a Legend

While still in high school, Manfred Rietsch (rhymes with beach) worked full-time on the "graveyard" shift at the Minneapolis airport servicing private and corporate airplanes. "[I] spent a good part of my earnings to get a private pilot's license," he said.

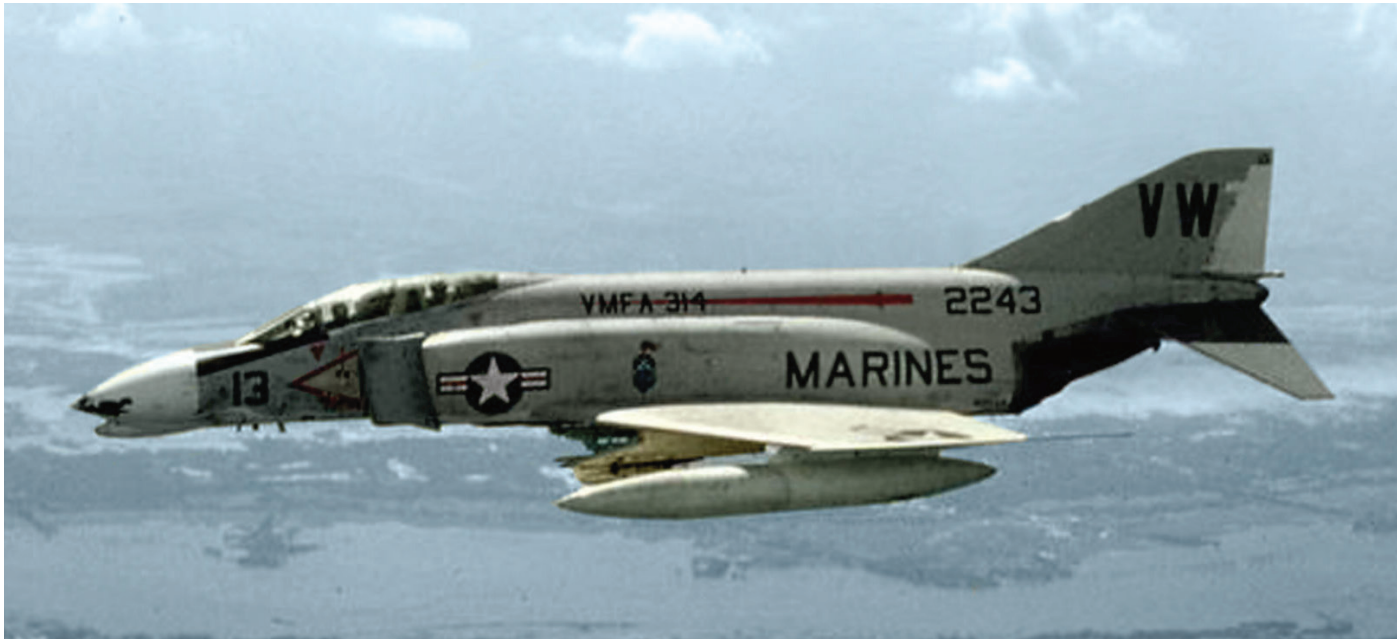
"I arrived in Vietnam with about 105 hours in the F-4. … As a lieutenant I was ready for the chance to fly fighters in combat. … It doesn't get any better than that." Rietsch, who usually flew at least two hops per day, amassed a remarkable 653 combat sorties, more than any other Phantom pilot.

Many of the missions were incredibly dangerous, often at night and/or in horrible weather conditions, but Rietsch and his radar intercept officers (RIOs) who flew in the backseat and operated various electronic systems, including radar, radios, navigation and electronic countermeasures, earned a reputation for putting bombs and rockets on target and close to the front lines to support Marines on the ground. Rietsch twice voluntarily extended his tour in Vietnam. "I loved combat flying

Manfred von Richthofen
"The Red Baron"

The Meaning Behind the Call Sign

"One of my heroes was Manfred von Richthofen. He flew Fokkers, so I picked it as my call sign," Manfred Rietsch said. Manfred von Richthofen was the feared and famous World War I German fighter pilot known as "The Red Baron" who flew aircraft manufactured by Fokker Flugzeug-Werke GmbH. The word Fokker "also had a little risqué innuendo," Rietsch added.



Fokker Rietsch flew the McDonnell Douglas F-4 Phantom II with VMFA-314 in Vietnam, and after twice extending his tour, he amassed hundreds of combat sorties—more than any other Phantom pilot.

and flew at every opportunity, even volunteering for some of the more challenging night missions in Laos," he said.

For his service in Vietnam he was awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross and 53 Air Medals. More importantly, however, was the knowledge that he and his RIOs saved the lives of countless Marines and allies. And his skills as a fighter pilot were honed to almost perfection.

On his fifth combat mission over North Vietnam, Rietsch recalled, "We were the second section after a USAF F-4 section … FAC [forward air controller] cleared in the USAF section, lead rolls in, drops his bombs, and gets shot at by dozens of the guns from the villages, but he pulls out. Wingman rolls in, lots of AAA [anti-aircraft artillery] and poof, he explodes in midair. No chutes. This was a real 'attention-getter' for me." Citing "absurd rules of engagement and getting people killed unnecessarily because they were not allowed to take out the gun emplacements in the villages," Rietsch said he "vowed that if I ever was in a position of leadership in a war, I would not allow stupidity to get my guys killed."

And, he did just that years later during Operation Desert Storm.

A fellow fighter pilot, with more than 400 combat missions in Vietnam, Major General Michael P. Sullivan, USMC (Ret), remembered, "When he wasn't flying, he spent 18 hours a day/night in the squadron taking care of our maintenance enlisted Marines and flying test hops or doing engine run-ups. The troops loved him." MajGen Sullivan added, "Fokker is a legend in his own time; he's known and loved the world over by fellow fighter pilots, and nobody ever forgets his great contribution to Marine aviation. … He had a great reputation in the air and on the ground."

Colonel Richard Kindsfater, USMC (Ret) and Col Frank McDuffee, USMC (Ret) were RIOs who served with Rietsch. In Vietnam, they each flew about 200 combat missions with the famous Fokker. They formed tightly knit teams dedicated to saving Marines' lives on the ground and their own lives in the air. They succeeded at both.

Kindsfater recalled: "One time we took off from Chu Lai … when our left engine suddenly catastrophically exploded [and] everything aft of the wings was enveloped in a gigantic fireball. … The wingman, both pilot and RIO, were yelling, 'Fokker, you're on fire! Eject! Eject! Eject!' "

Instead, "Fokker shut the engine down and calmly said, 'I'm going to try to land it.' We declared an emergency, circled around, dropped gear, flaps and hook and rolled into the MOREST [mobile arresting] gear, midfield. … I'm still amazed the still-smoking aircraft didn't break in half when we hit the gear." Both

Col Frank McDuffee, USMC (Ret) was one of the many RIOs who flew with Rietsch. McDuffee said the Corps has "been deeply enriched … [by] this extraordinary Marine."

Members of VMFA-314's GA (German American) Club, including Rietsch, back row, far right, gather for camaraderie and sea stories during the Vietnam War. Rietsch was one of the founding members of the club, which was formed when they discovered that many of the squadron's junior officers were of German descent. All were welcome, regardless of ancestry, into the non-sanctioned social club.

aviators debriefed and prepared for their next mission.

When Kindsfater rotated back to the United States, Frank McDuffee took his place in the backseat of Fokker's Phantoms and helped to perpetuate the growing fame of "the mad German." Almost a half-century later McDuffee recalled, "I have been honored to have shared cockpits with a true patriot, fierce warrior, skilled tactician, selfless leader and forever-loyal friend. The traditions of our Corps have been deeply enriched by the persona of this extraordinary Marine."

He earned a Master of Science degree in systems management from the University of Southern California and subsequently was selected to be the Marine Corps' first Top Gun instructor pilot. "Top Gun instructor selection is somewhat of a fraternity selection process," Rietsch said. "After you attend the course, the staff will vote whether you would be a suitable future instructor. I guess I got a 'thumbs up.' "

Major Rietsch's next assignment was with VMFA-212 "The Lancers" at MCAS Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, where he ended up serving as executive officer for Lieutenant General Jefferson D. Howell, USMC (Ret), who was then a major. "Manfred was a pilot through and through and had built an almost legendary reputation as a Top Gun instructor. … The young pilots eagerly flocked to his side. He was loud, flamboyant and charismatic," LtGen Howell remembered. "He backed up this reputation with incredible flying skills and the ability to fight the F-4 to its maximum capacity. He said that he would do everything in his power to help make our squadron the very best one of its kind in the Marine Corps [and] he did just that."

LtGen Howell added, "Manfred could not stand to have anyone get more hops than him during any given month. He always managed to outfly everyone else.

"Occasionally, when visiting squadrons would visit for dissimilar ACM [air combat maneuvering] training, Manfred, in the middle of the brief, would pull out a piece of bloody raw meat and would chew on it with blood dripping from his mouth while offering a piece to the visitors. Out of another pocket, he would bring out a handful of coffee grounds and chew on them. This, of course, would be done with his heaviest German accent. It was intimidation to the highest order." Rietsch's unique and unpredictable behavior served him well, and his legend continued to expand.

After a three-year tour in Norway as the NATO air operations officer on the staff of the Commander, Allied Forces Northern Europe, LtCol Rietsch returned to MCAS El Toro in 1984 and took command of the "Grey Ghosts"; now flying the F/A-18 Hornet, VMFA-531 became one of the top squadrons in the Marine Corps and, in 1985, the Marine Corps Aviation Association named it their "Fighter Squadron of the Year."

"Manfred, in the middle of the brief, would pull out a piece of bloody raw meat and would chew on it with blood dripping from his mouth while offering a piece to the visitors."
—LtGen Jefferson D. Howell, USMC (Ret)

Top Gun

When his record-setting tour in Vietnam ended, the indomitable Captain Rietsch went to VMFA-531 "The Grey Ghosts" at MCAS El Toro, Calif., where he continued to excel as a fighter pilot. As his career progressed, he attended Amphibious Warfare School at Marine Corps Base Quantico and was selected to go to the Navy's Fighter Weapons School, Top Gun, at Naval Air Station Miramar, Calif.

"Wine for My Men For We Fly at Dawn"

Adding to the mystique of Fokker Reitsch, MajGen Sullivan recounted, "My famous Fokker quote was when he had his squadron up in Las Vegas to participate in [mock combat] Red Flag exercises, and he took his pilots into a bar downtown and said to the bartender with his German accent, 'Wine for my men for we fly at dawn.' " Those present said it was a "classic" example of Fokker's profound panache, swagger and aplomb. He backed up his bravado with superior flying skills and audacious leadership characteristics.

"He [Rietsch] worked us very hard, and we became very good fighter pilots," said LtCol Chuck Magill, USMCR (Ret), then a junior officer in VMFA-531.

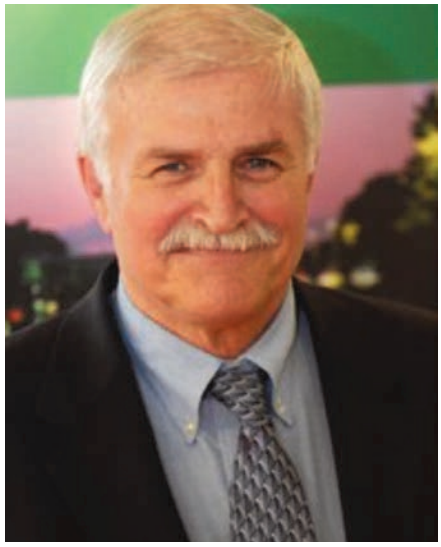
Magill remembers his CO as being incredibly competitive, demanding, fair

and, above all, a superior teacher and leader in the air and on the ground. "He was a great commanding officer, and we all admired and revered him, particularly the enlisted troops," Magill said. "He was the best Marine fighter pilot I have ever known or known of. … He's a national icon." (Some years later during Operation Desert Storm, Magill was on an exchange tour with the U.S. Air Force flying the F-15 Eagle when he downed an Iraqi MiG-29. He was the first, last and only Marine since Vietnam to record an air-to-air victory.) *[Editor's note: Read more about Chuck Magill in the May 2015 issue of* Leatherneck*, "Desert Storm Marine Shoots Down MIG."]*

After turning over command of the Grey Ghosts, LtCol Rietsch graduated from the Air Force's senior professional military school, the Air War College, at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala. He then did a tour in the Pentagon as military assistant and Marine Corps aide to the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

Desert Shield/Desert Storm

In 1990, Rietsch returned to El Toro to take command of the air component for the 7th Marine Expeditionary Brigade—MAGs 11 and 70. "I was notified within 36 hours of the invasion of Kuwait that we were going [to Sheik Isa Air Base, Bahrain]." During the war, MAG-11 aircraft flew more than 16,400 hours on more than 7,500 combat missions and expended more than 17 million pounds of ordnance while effectively destroying countless enemy targets and protecting coalition troops on the ground. Rietsch set the example and inspired his Marines and sailors, adding, "We didn't lose a single life or aircraft during that campaign."



After retiring from the Marine Corps in the early 1990s, Fokker Rietsch became a successful businessman. Today, in his third career, he is a rancher in Wyoming.

Rietsch flew 118 combat air patrols during Operation Desert Shield and 66 combat missions during Desert Storm, an unusually high number for a senior officer. According to the Air Force Air Command and Staff College's Gathering of Eagles Foundation, "This is believed to be the most combat sorties flown by any pilot during the conflict." Because of his hard work, superior flying and exemplary leadership, he was awarded six more Air Medals and the Order of Bahrain, 2nd Class. In July 1991, he brought a victorious MAG-11 home to El Toro.

In 1992, the unforgettable and famous Fokker retired from the Marine Corps. Having flown thousands of hours in their aircraft (Phantoms and Hornets), he was hired by McDonnell Douglas, St. Louis, Mo., and spent most of his time in the Middle East. After a few years, he relocated his family back to Laguna Beach, Calif., where they had maintained a home on a hill overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

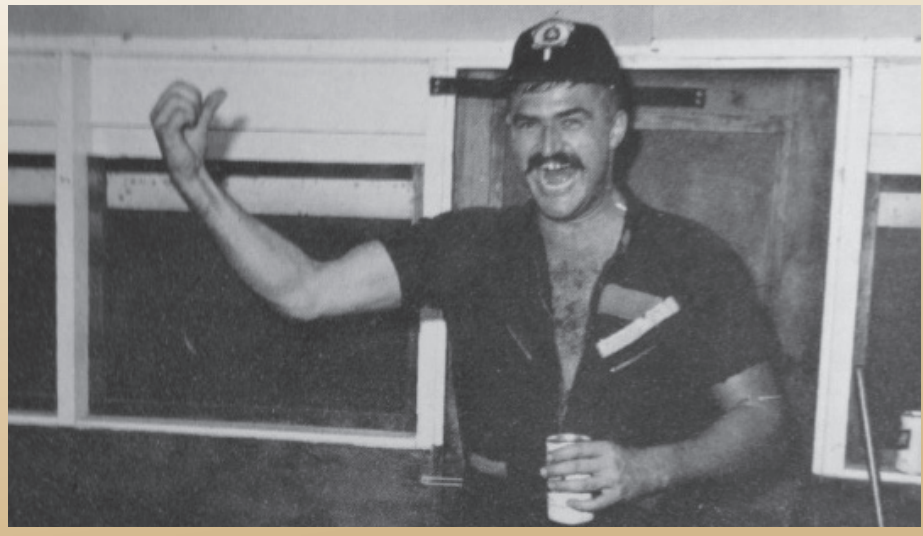
As with flying, Rietsch found that he had the natural instincts and an acute acumen for success in the business world. For years, as an entrepreneur and utilizing, in part, some of the leadership traits he developed and practiced in the Marine Corps, he founded, ran and/or sold various multimillion dollar companies. He was extraordinarily successful, but something was missing. Not content to merely "ride into the sunset," he sat on his ocean-view patio one day and pondered "what next?"

Why Wyoming?

"I got fascinated with Wyoming reading Wild West stories as an 11-year-old in Germany," said a contemplative and reflective Rietsch. "So I thought, 'I'm going to Laramie.' " And so he did. Fokker found his 12,000-acre cattle spread, the Tally Ho Ranch, and for the time being is content with being a gentleman—albeit hard-working—rancher with about 750 Red Angus cattle. "We have about 70 miles of fence to maintain, and we need to keep the water flowing," he said of his ranch. "It's a full-time job." The transition from fighter pilot to businessman to rancher seems to have worked splendidly for the remarkable Manfred Rietsch—the famous Fokker—a true legend in Marine Corps aviation.

Author's bio: Mike "Skate" Hoeferlin once commanded at the platoon and company levels in the First Marine Division and later flew helicopters in the Third Marine Aircraft Wing.

The "Black Knights" of VMFA-314 were stationed at Chu Lai Air Base in the Republic of Vietnam during Rietsch's tour.



Rietsch's swagger and charismatic personality coupled with his exceptional flying skills made him a legend in the Corps' aviation community.

We—the Marines

Compiled by Sara W. Bock

2dMarDiv Celebrates 75 Years; Thanks Community for Faithful Support

■ Active-duty and veteran Marines and sailors joined distinguished guests and friends of the Second Marine Division for a parade in downtown Jacksonville, N.C., Feb. 6, to celebrate 75 years of faithful service to the nation and the division's partnership with the local community.

The division was established Feb. 1, 1941, at Camp Elliott, Calif. Following the outbreak of World War II, Marines and sailors of 2dMarDiv went on to see action on Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Saipan, Tinian and Okinawa. During the years after WW II, the unit continued its legacy in several conflicts, operations and wars.

The parade, with more than 5,000 Marines and sailors participating, is believed to be the largest in Jacksonville history and began at Montford Landing Road and proceeded through East Railroad Street past City Hall before ending at Riverwalk Crossing Park.

"It's an honor to be out here standing in front of such a fine group of Marines who are dedicated to service," said Captain Marcial Garcia, commanding officer of "India" Battery, 3d Battalion, 10th Marine Regiment. "I think the parade had a great turnout and the city of Jacksonville was very receptive of our Marines."

Marine Corps veterans, many of whom served with 2dMarDiv, lined the streets and truly embodied the service's motto, Semper Fidelis.

"Over the years, I have seen a lot of changes for the better," said Gunnery Sergeant Raymond Byrnes, USMC (Ret), who served in the Corps from 1959 to 1979. "During my time in the division and other commands, I remember going around the world, from Cuba to Vietnam. I would do it again in a heartbeat."

Many of the veterans in attendance agreed that although there have been many changes in the past 75 years, today's Marines remain as steadfast as ever.

"It was a really unbelievable parade and one of the biggest Marine parades that I've ever seen," said David DiPaola, a former captain who served from 1976 to 1983. "The division has seen some downsizing, but I don't see any less enthusiasm in these Marines than I did back when I was still in. I think of the [esprit de corps] and the camaraderie that Marines still show. Semper Fi."

The parade route concluded at Riverwalk Crossing Park, where Marines, sailors, families and friends gathered for games, food and other activities. Division units presented static displays of vehicles and equipment for the community to explore, ranging from tanks to artillery weapon systems.

"There are a lot of members of the Second Marine Division that still live in the local area, and they were out here today," Garcia said. "It's important to honor your heritage as well as the community in which you thrive in."

CPL JOEY MENDEZ, USMC

More than 5,000 Marines and sailors with 2dMarDiv march out the gates of MCB Camp Lejeune, N.C., during the division's 75th anniversary parade, Feb. 6.

CPL JOEY MENDEZ, USMC

A Marine veteran claps proudly as the Marines of 2dMarDiv march through downtown Jacksonville, N.C., Feb. 6.

CPL JOEY MENDEZ, USMC

A family proudly displays the Marine Corps colors as they watch the 2dMarDiv parade, Feb. 6. The parade was part of a 75th anniversary celebration that honored the faithful service of 2dMarDiv Marines and sailors and thanked the local community for its support.

The 75th anniversary celebration began Feb. 4, with a memorial service honoring the men and women of 2dMarDiv who were killed or missing in action from WW II to Operation Enduring Freedom. After the service, the division honored the legacy of its subordinate units with a battle color re-designation and individual awards for excellence. The celebration concluded with a free public concert by the 2dMarDiv band.

Cpl Paul S. Martinez, USMC

Ambassador Kennedy Visits Iwakuni-Based Marines

■ Ambassador Caroline Bouvier Kennedy, the U.S. ambassador to Japan, made her first official visit to Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, Jan. 28.

The visit allowed the ambassador to gain a better understanding of MCAS Iwakuni's community and witness the ongoing transformation of the air station through a multitude of construction projects, which costs more than a billion dollars a year, driven by the Defense Policy Review Initiative.

"Certainly, visiting Japan has given me a real understanding of what we have invested here—how strong and important our alliance is," said Kennedy.

The ambassador first visited the station's air traffic control tower for a bird's-eye view of the ongoing construction.

She then visited leathernecks with Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron (VMGR) 152. While at the squadron's hangar, Kennedy viewed a KC-130J Super Hercules and learned about the multiple capabilities of the aircraft in the Pacific theater. She commended the Marines on their efforts in supporting and fostering better relations between Japan and the United States.

"It's nice to see a government official come down—take time out of her day—to come speak with the Marines and tell us how important the mission that we are doing is for the United States of America," said Gunnery Sergeant Michael Forest of VMGR-152.

"The U.S.-Japan alliance is the cornerstone of the future," Ambassador Kennedy said to the Marines. "I hope you all realize the choices you are making and how proud of you the embassy is—to work with all our colleagues in the military on a daily basis. Thank you all for your service."

After spending time with Marines of VMGR-152, Kennedy visited the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force's Air Rescue Squadron 71.

Sgt Antonio Rubio, USMC

CPL NICOLE ZURBRUGG, USMC

Ambassador Caroline Bouvier Kennedy, U.S. ambassador to Japan, meets with VMGR-152 Marines during her first official visit to MCAS Iwakuni, Japan, Jan. 28. Kennedy had previously visited the Marine bases on Okinawa in February 2014.

Leadership Conference Includes Discussion of Program's Future

■ The Marine Corps trains its military personnel to exude a multitude of traits and characteristics in order to be effective warfighters, whether they are deployed to foreign countries or in garrison. One of the most basic yet most important traits a Marine must display is the ability to be a leader. The Squad Leader Development Program (SLDP) is one of the newest approaches the Corps uses to professionalize, grow and sustain leadership in the infantry community.

Leathernecks with First Marine Division gathered for an SLDP conference at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., Jan. 20. The conference was designed to promote the program and discuss some of the changes it has gone through for the new fiscal year.

The program stems from direction provided by General Joseph F. Dunford Jr., during his tenure as 36th Commandant of the Marine Corps, to provide "better trained, educated and matured squad leaders to enhance Marine infantry battalions' capabilities in order to provide a force more capable of operating in complex, distributed environments."

The SLDP provides accepted infantry Marines with the guaranteed opportunity to take part in advanced training courses and required professional military education courses. Once accepted into the program, Marines can choose from two paths: They can elect to stay in the operating forces or they can serve in a special duty assignment as a combat instructor.

"We are the only [military occupational specialty] to have this opportunity," said Master Gunnery Sergeant Bruce Knapp, the 1stMarDiv operations chief. "SLDP gives you the opportunity to open up your brain and leave your comfort zone. This program is one of the reasons why we are the best-trained organization."

Knapp added that without the "right quality" noncommissioned officers and staff noncommissioned officers to fill the necessary leadership billets that the Marine Corps fighting force requires, our readiness and effectiveness as the nation's rapid response force diminishes. Overall, the SLDP ensures that small unit leaders are given not only the tools required to operate at a high level, but also enough time in a unit to walk their squad through an entire deployment cycle.

The program has gone through numerous changes since its inception, most of which help entice Marines to take full advantage of the opportunities presented. The main changes made to the program were in regard to the two career route options.

The option guaranteeing infantry Marines the opportunity to stay in a deployable battalion allows them to reenlist or extend their contracts for as little as 18 months or as long as 60. The combat instructor option requires Marines to reenlist for at least 48 months, but 30 or more of those months will be served on a special duty assignment before returning to the operating forces.

Either career track will earn selected Marines the MOS of infantry squad leader.

Corporals selected for the program earn an automatic promotion to sergeant, and all participants are guaranteed a spot in the competitive Small Unit Leaders Course and Sergeants Resident Course. They can also collect cash bonuses, sometimes as much as double the going rate for a regular infantry reenlistment.

Since the program presents Marines with the opportunity to become more experienced leaders and ultimately progress their careers, the selection process is very stringent.

"In the Marine Corps, you either lead, follow or get out of the way," said Chief Warrant Officer 5 Vincent Kyzer, the division gunner. "We don't want the bottom 10 percent; we want the best. We want the superstars who are the most capable."

After being accepted into the program,

CPL DEMETRIUS MORGAN, USMC

CWO-5 Vincent Kyzer, the 1stMarDiv gunner, speaks about the SLDP to leathernecks of 5th Marines, 1stMarDiv, at MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., Jan. 20. The SLDP builds small unit leadership and provides Marines the opportunity to further their careers.

Marines must complete all the designated training courses while continuing to uphold and maintain Marine Corps leadership standards.

Overall, SLDP presents Marines with the chance to not only improve their own careers, but also to gain the experience and tools to mold their subordinates into better leaders for the future and become reliable small unit leaders that commanders can depend on.

"When I was a lieutenant, guys like you helped me [get] here today," said Lieutenant Colonel Rafael Candelario, the Fifth Marine Regiment executive officer, to the NCOs who attended the conference. "Sergeants and corporals who later became staff sergeants and gunnies all started out where you guys are right now. … You Marines have a lot of potential, and this program can help you reach it. I would ask you to look at what you have to offer the Marine Corps and what the Marine Corps has to offer you. They offer a lot if you accept it."

Cpl Demetrius Morgan, USMC

LCPL ROBERT GONZALES, USMC

A PROMOTION TO REMEMBER—Cody R. Gannon, a mortarman with "Bravo" Co, 1st Battalion, Second Marine Regiment, is meritoriously promoted to sergeant on Invasion Beach on the island of Iwo Jima, Japan, the site of the Corps' legendary battle in the Pacific during WW II. As soon as they learned that the Second Marine Division Meritorious Sergeant Board had selected Gannon, the Marines in his unit planned a surprise promotion ceremony during their Feb. 2 visit to the island. The company was forward deployed to the Pacific as part of 3dMarDiv. "Being promoted there was life changing," said Gannon, who added that he looks forward to being able to tell his children and grandchildren about it one day.

2d MAW Air Traffic Controller Guides Aircraft to Safe Landing

■ Hunched forward in the dark radar room of air traffic control (ATC) at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, N.C., Corporal Justin McDaniel focused on the small greenish symbol displayed on his radar screen and listened carefully to the disembodied voice on his headset. The voice reached through miles of dark night skies from the tight cockpit of an AV-8B Harrier from Second Marine Aircraft Wing. The pilot needed help.

Returning from a mission on Dec. 1, 2015, the pilot suddenly found himself without one of the primary features necessary for a safe return to the air station. His Harrier's navigation system was "inop"—a problem that was compounded by low visibility due to weather and lack of daylight. He was, for all practical purposes, flying blind.

This was just the sort of situation that pilots and air traffic controllers constantly train for and one of the reasons that the two share a special relationship. The pilot's first job is to fly the plane, regardless of the situation. The controller's first job is to help keep pilots safe in the air, whether by keeping them spaced appropriately to avoid collisions, or by guiding them through situations where the extra set of electronic eyes can make an important, even critical, difference.

According to Gunnery Sergeant Louie Cruz, the air traffic control radar chief with Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, the pilot had declared a state of emergency and required ATC guidance to safely land the aircraft. McDaniel's actions in response were the product of extensive training and confidence in his own skills.

Like his fellow air traffic controllers, McDaniel communicates with civilian and military pilots as they navigate through the air station's 9,145 square miles of airspace. Additionally, he provides verbal guidance to pilots to assist with safe landings during training and emergency landing procedures. McDaniel also is responsible for training junior Marines on methods and procedures they must know as basic air traffic controllers.

"I joined the Marine Corps to deploy and help as many people as I can," said McDaniel. "I have not yet had the opportunity to deploy, but I have been given the opportunity to assist many Marines with their training and during times of distress."

According to Cruz, McDaniel has aided pilots in landing in both inclement weather conditions and during equipment failure. On Dec. 3, 2015, he was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal for his quick and precise problem-solving skills, which led to the safe landing of the AV-8B Harrier that had experienced nav-

CPL NEYSA HUERTAS QUINONES, USMC

Cpl Justin McDaniel communicates with a pilot over the radio at MCAS Cherry Point, N.C., Dec. 3, 2015.

CPL NEYSA HUERTAS QUINONES, USMC

LtCol Jeremy Gettings, left, presents Cpl Justin McDaniel with a Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal during an award ceremony at MCAS Cherry Point, N.C., Dec. 3, 2015. McDaniel's quick thinking and precise problem-solving skills led to the safe landing of an AV-8B Harrier that had experienced navigational equipment failure.

igational equipment failure two days earlier.

"Corporal McDaniel took on the responsibility in a calm, but precise manner," said Cruz. "His relaxed tone while handling the situation helped the pilot make calm and logical decisions without panicking and diverting from protocol. The pilot had experienced a blackout of his navigational equipment under low visibility and relied on McDaniel's turn-by-turn directions to guide him directly over the runway to a safe landing."

If an ATC Marine fails, lives could be on the line. Confidence in the extensive training the Marines receive and the dedication to their practice are traits McDaniel has maintained and shared with his fellow Marines, said Cruz.

"The Marine Corps has allowed me to give back to others and live up to the beliefs I carry," explained McDaniel. "My grandfather taught me to never be afraid to give the shirt off my back to someone and walk away. He is the biggest role model in my life, and I carry his teachings with me in what I do both in and out of the Marine Corps."

Although McDaniel's active-duty service will come to an end in 2016, he has applied to continue assisting U.S. military and civilian aircrews as a contracted civilian air traffic controller. His uniform may change, but McDaniel still will be one of the calm voices aviators rely on when they need a guiding hand.

Cpl Neysa Huertas Quinones, USMC

Crazy Caption Contest

Winner

LCPL PAUL PETERSON, USMC

"If we hurry, we'll be first in the chow line."

Submitted by
Calvin C. Carl
Burdett, N.Y.

This Month's Photo

CPL UNIQUE B. ROBERTS

(Caption) _____

_____

Name _____

Address _____

City/State _____ **ZIP** _____

4-16

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 e-mail it to us. Send your submission to *Leatherneck* Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134, or e-mail it, referencing the number at the bottom right, to leatherneck@mca-marines.org. The winning entry will be published in two months.

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PHOTO BY GYSGT TOMMY R GORDON, USMC

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Passing the Word

Compiled by Sara W. Bock

As PCS Season Nears, Corps Announces New Policy For Move-Related Expenses

Summer is the busiest season for permanent change of station (PCS) moves for military personnel, and Marines with orders should take note of a new policy that was released Jan. 1. According to Marine Administrative Message (MARADMIN) 001/16, Marines undergoing a PCS must use their government travel charge card (GTCC) for all expenses related to the move.

This policy replaces travel advances and protects Marines from being charged interest or overdraft fees on their personal accounts.

"The main reason why we are doing this is because it makes moves more efficient and more cost-effective," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Laura Brossman, the orders section officer in charge for Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C. "Most of the rest of the Department of Defense has already transitioned to it, and they have been using it for a while."

The process begins when a Marine receives PCS orders. The Marine will log onto Marine Online (MOL) and complete an outbound interview. Once the Marine has confirmed that he is in possession of a GTCC, the card will be activated 10 days prior to the date the Marine is scheduled to detach from his current unit. The card will deactivate 15 days after the approved report date. The Marine will then submit a travel voucher upon checking in to the new unit.

Marines undergoing a permanent change of assignment (PCA) also will complete an outbound interview on MOL but will not use the GTCC for the transition.

"The biggest difference is that everything is automated now," said Captain Leslie Harkness, the agency program coordinator (APC) in charge of oversight for the Second Marine Division's GTCC program.

"Before, Marines would have to go print out their web orders, go to the [Installation Personnel Administration Center (IPAC)] …, they would have to do all this stuff via paper, and it would take a lot of extra time … to do the paperwork, and to have the advance sent to you. … This makes the process much more seamless and smooth."

CPL MICHELLE REIF, USMC

A Marine watches a video that describes the details of MARADMIN 001/16, which states that all PCS travel expenses will now be paid using the government travel charge card.

Harkness highlighted other benefits of the policy change, such as Marines receiving customer support from Citibank and their unit APCs and not being charged interest on their personal accounts during the PCS transition. Using the card would not negatively impact the Marine's credit—the money would be immediately available, negating the need to wait for a travel advance. Additionally, the Marine will be in a mission-critical status during the move, meaning he will not receive any bills or overdue notices until he checks in to his new unit.

"It will make it easier for the Marine to not have to pay out of pocket for things in their PCS travel," said Harkness. "It's going to help the younger Marines especially."

Brossman emphasized the importance of keeping all purchase receipts and keeping track of statements through the Citibank website.

The credit limit on the GTCC will be set based on the estimated cost of that Marine's travel entitlements. Some of the authorized charges to the card include transportation expenses, lodging, meals, and expenses paid with a dislocation allowance such as carpet cleaning or utility deposits. The card is not authorized for personal purchases such as uniform items or auto repairs.

Use of the GTCC for personally procured moves—formerly known as do-it-yourself (DITY) moves or for PCA moves—is not authorized in connection with this policy.

The Corps has been transitioning to the outbound interview module for a couple years. IPAC Camp Lejeune is one of the last to undergo the change.

"Hopefully with the units and the IPAC working together, we can make it as smooth as possible," said Brossman, who added that March 1 was the targeted date for all units to receive training and to transition.

Harkness said Marines should contact their administration section to receive guidance or ask questions. IPACs and unit APCs also can provide additional assistance.

For more detailed information about the process, Marines can watch a video explaining the MARADMIN by visiting https://youtube/V7WMkMVX8GQ.

Cpl Michelle Reif, USMC

DOD Extends ASYMCA Contract

In February the Department of Defense announced a one-year extension to the Armed Services YMCA Military Outreach Initiative.

The contract with ASYMCA was set to expire in March 2016 and will now continue until March 16, 2017.

"We are thrilled our servicemembers and military families will continue to have this important resource for another year," said Rosemary Williams, the deputy assistant secretary of defense for military community and family policy. "The Department of Defense is steadfast in its commitment to support all military servicemembers and their families, in particular to those who serve in geographically dispersed assignments," she added.

The partnership between DOD and ASYMCA offers no-cost membership and respite childcare services to eligible servicemembers and their families during times of deployment and to those geographically dispersed, officials said.

The Defense Department's contract with ASYMCA for the Military Outreach Initiative will continue to offer access to no-cost fitness and childcare, Williams said. These services will remain uninterrupted for eligible members and families until the new contract end date, she noted.

"This initiative is especially valuable for those living in areas distant from a military installation, allowing them to access services in their own communities," Williams said.

For more information about ASYMCA and eligibility for the Military Outreach Initiative, visit www.asymca.org/programs/ymca-dod-military-outreach-initative/.

DOD News

NFL Players Tour MCB Hawaii

Players from the National Football League visited Marine Corps Base Hawaii on Jan. 28. Organized by Marine Corps Community Services, the purpose of the players' visit was to interact with military personnel and tour the base.

The group, which included NFL staff; Cedric Peerman of the Cincinnati Bengals; Tyler Lockett of the Seattle Seahawks; and Eric Davis, a former player for the San Francisco 49ers, was greeted by base leaders at the Klipper Golf Course and then visited Marines of the explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) unit, as well as servicemembers with Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron (VMU) 3 and Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron (HMH) 463.

During their visit with the EOD Marines, the players were given a hands-on lesson about improvised explosive devices and the dangers of dealing with the explosives. The Marines also gave live demonstrations, utilizing miniature explosives and an ordnance disposal robot, and provided the players with an opportunity to don bomb suits. Throughout the duration of the visit, servicemembers had the chance to take photos and have footballs autographed.

LCPL JESUS SEPULVEDA TORRES, USMC

Above: Capt Robert Steinhauser, left, shows NFL running back and special teamer Cedric Peerman of the Cincinnati Bengals around the cockpit of a Cobra attack helicopter at MCB Hawaii, Jan. 28.

Below: Former NFL cornerback Eric Davis of the San Francisco 49ers autographs a child's hat at a meet and greet at MCB Hawaii, Jan. 28.

LCPL JESUS SEPULVEDA TORRES, USMC

After they left the EOD Marines, the NFL players went to Hangar 102 for a meet and greet with the Marines and sailors of Marine Aircraft Group 24, First Marine Aircraft Wing, and their families. By the time they arrived, the Marines already were waiting in line with footballs and cameras in hand, eager for the chance to acquire autographs and take photos with the players.

Lance Corporal Madison Bass, an embarkation and logistics specialist with MAG-24, was one such Marine. She said the players' visit was a big surprise and she was very happy about the chance to meet them.

"I've always gone to the games, but I've never had a chance to meet any of the players," said Bass. "Growing up, my family has always loved [football] and it's one of my mother's favorite sports. Her birthday is actually right around the corner, so I figured I could get her an autographed football to add to her collection."

Chief Warrant Officer Pablo Dominguez, the maintenance and materials control officer with HMH-463, said it was a really good visit, and he could see the effect it had on the Marines of "Pegasus."

"It was very beneficial for the squadron," said Dominguez. "These guys needed to know they are also supported by people outside of the Marine Corps. These are people some might idolize, people you would normally only see on a television screen—and they were here, interacting with the Marines and letting them know that they're supported and cared for."

Bass said the NFL players' visit helped raise the Marines' spirits and it was a unique way to bring people together.

LCpl Jesus Sepulveda Torres, USMC

Navy Surgeon Puts Life on the Line To Help Save Marines in Combat

LCDR Richard Jadick, right, receives a Bronze Star with combat "V" in April 2006, from LtCol Mark Winn, the commanding officer of 1/8.

Story by CWO-4 Randy Gaddo, USMC (Ret)
Photos courtesy of
CDR Richard Jadick, MC, USN (Ret)

"In some ways, I had been preparing for Fallujah for most of my life. From my earliest days, I had wanted to join the military and I had wanted to be a doctor. Every step of my training … contributed something to the success our medical team had in Iraq, from my experiences as a communications officer with the Marine Corps to my background in trauma medicine and my several deployments as a Navy medical officer with Marine units."

–CDR Richard Jadick, MC, USN
In "On Call in Hell: A Doctor's Iraq War Story"

When he was in middle school, Richard Jadick identified with "Hawkeye" Pierce, the wise-cracking but highly skilled combat surgeon on the 1980s TV series "M*A*S*H"; later, Jadick found himself virtually walking in Hawkeye's combat boots.

The road that Jadick took in life was certainly not well-traveled. He started his career as a Marine and became a Navy surgeon who was decorated for valor in the Iraq War, earning a Bronze Star with combat "V" at the second Battle of Fallujah.

"Growing up, I knew I wanted two things—to be on the medical side and I wanted to go to war," reflected the Slingerland, N.Y., native. While living in the bucolic suburbs outside of Albany, N.Y., Jadick remembers good living with lots of woods to run around in. Like so many adolescents, he admired G.I. Joe, Marines and John Wayne.

"I watched all kinds of war movies," recalled Jadick, whose father was a Citadel (Charleston, S.C.) graduate who served two years in the Army Reserve.

As a high school senior, Jadick, the captain of the football and wrestling teams at his school, applied to the United States Military Academy at West Point, N.Y. "I got my senator's approval; I spent three days at the academy as familiarization to what I'd experience there, and I was ready to start the summer after graduation," he recalled. However, his depth perception did not meet the academy's standards and they turned him down. Their loss was the Marine Corps' gain.

"I didn't think I'd be going to college, so I went to talk with the Marine recruiter at school," he said. He hoped his depth perception wouldn't deter the Marines.

"I just wanted to be a part of the best that was out there. The Marine recruiters were always the best, the most professional, and their uniforms looked so much better than the others."

The day he went to talk with the enlisted recruiter, one of the officer recruiters was there and told Jadick he could apply for a Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) scholarship to get a college degree and serve as an officer in the Marine Corps. "So I applied, and a month later he called me and said I'd been accepted," Jadick said.

The Beirut Bombing

That was in 1983. "I'll never forget October 23, 1983," he recalled, the date that terrorists bombed the barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, killing 220 Marines, 18 sailors and three soldiers. "I was in the dorm. I had just signed a Marine ROTC agreement for school and four years in the Marines after that, and when I saw that in the paper, I thought, 'What did I get myself into? What does this mean about who I am?' "

Most of the Marines killed that day were in 1st Battalion, Eighth Marine Regiment. One of those killed was the battalion surgeon, Navy Lieutenant John Hudson. Jadick would later serve in 1/8, known as the "Beirut Battalion," in Iraq as battalion surgeon.

He attended Ithaca College, and he went through the six-week Officer Candidates School (OCS) "Bulldog" program in the summer of 1986 between his junior and senior years.

He said he didn't have a clear idea as to exactly what he was getting into when he went to OCS, but remembered that the physical demands were as tough as the mental requirements.

"I'll never forget having one candidate fall out of a run in the first morning of PT [physical training] for being a heat casualty, and he was gone before we got

back from evening chow, bags packed and rack rolled," he recalled. Jadick estimated about 60 percent of the company was prior enlisted and thus in good shape. "I came there in pretty good shape, but about 30 percent of the company dropped."

His journey through OCS, although ultimately successful, was not without snags. One occurred at the course designed to see how candidates in leadership positions handled problems. "I got flagged at the problems course when I had no idea how to handle the problem given to me, and I asked the fire team what they thought—big mistake," he said, noting that he got "screamed at for having my whole team killed by bad decision-making. I remember thinking how I may never make it through, so I just worked harder."

He did succeed at OCS, graduated from college with a bachelor's degree in biology and pinned on his second lieutenant bars in May 1987. He proceeded to The Basic School (TBS) to prepare for duty as a company grade officer.

For him, TBS was similar to OCS, "with some freedoms and for [him], maybe too many freedoms," he said. "On mess night we did the usual carousing and 'carrier quals' and then some middle-of-O'Bannon Hall fighting, which led to three of us getting caught." He had to see the TBS commanding officer, Navy Cross recipient Colonel Terry Ebbert, to receive his nonpunitive letter of caution and then "paint O'Bannon Hall for the rest of [his] free time at TBS."

He became a Marine Corps communications officer and began the first of his seven years in the Corps.

"At that point, I didn't expect to stay in the military more than four years," he said. "It was going to be an adventure, and I was going to run with it." However, he said that the military kept offering him incentives to stay that he couldn't turn down.

His path led him to deploying units and eventually to Marine Air Support Squadron 1, Marine Air Control Group 28 at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, N.C. In 1990, his unit received the call to go into the first Gulf War, Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. He was ready to deploy when another more experienced officer was sent instead of him. That was not part of his plan; he was expecting to go to war.

Swallowing his disappointment, Jadick continued to march toward his goal to be in the medical field. "I took a joint billet at the MEPS (Military Entrance Processing Station) as the adjutant and testing officer, and at the same time, I was getting myself ready for medical school," he said.

Medical School and a Return to the Marines

Again, the military made an offer he couldn't refuse. The Navy, experiencing a severe shortage of doctors, introduced him to the idea of a Navy scholarship; he liked it. He paid for the first year of school. The Navy picked up the tab on the remainder.

He left the Marine Corps after seven years' service and started at the New York College of Osteopathic Medicine at Long Island under the Navy's program. He graduated in 1997 and did his internship in surgery at the Bethesda Naval Hospital in Bethesda, Md. (now known as Walter Reed National Military Medical Center).

LCDR Richard Jadick, center, with HM1 Rick Lees and HMC Russ Folley after Jadick received his award for his exemplary performance as the battalion surgeon for 1/8. Jadick's previous experience as a Marine communications officer served him well when the battalion deployed to Fallujah, Iraq.

"All I wanted to do was trauma surgery," Jadick said, not realizing at the time that his skills would someday save lives on the battlefield.

"All I wanted to do was trauma surgery," he said, not realizing at the time that his skills would someday save lives on the battlefield.

Although he had left the Marine Corps, he didn't leave his fellow Marines. After his internship, he had the choice to go "blue side," staying primarily in the Navy's ship- or shore-based units; or "green side," serving directly with Marines.

"I was the first guy up there volunteering for green side," he said. "I told them I wanted to be with an infantry unit that deployed. I was afraid someone else would get it before me." However, at that point, the line to be in a deploying unit was short and included only him. There wasn't anybody else asking.

"When I was in the Marines, I just wanted to get on one of those cruises someplace warm. Instead, I always got the cold-weather training—whatever happened to the sands of Iwo Jima?" he joked. "So I decided to try and get it another way."

Jadick finally got his warm-weather cruise as battalion surgeon for 3d Bn, 6th Marines on a "Med Cruise," with ports of call in places such as Egypt, Jordan and Israel.

He started his residency in urology at Bethesda, but the program closed in 2001 before he completed it. The following year he became a battalion surgeon with 1/8, the ground combat element of the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit, finally going to war in Iraq and also participating in the noncombatant evacuation operation in Liberia.

He later became the 4th Marine Brigade surgeon in 2003, but a few months later he got "kind of bored, so [he] mentioned to the general [he] worked for that [he] knew 1/8 was going back to Iraq, and they

Using a converted Army APC as a combat ambulance during the Battle of Fallujah, Jadick and his corpsmen transported wounded Marines to the battalion aid station.

were having trouble finding a battalion surgeon, and maybe [he] could do it." The general agreed and orders quickly were cut, even though it meant sending him to a more junior billet.

Jadick said, "But in my opinion, it was a promotion because there is nothing better in the world than being a battalion surgeon. It's the respect; it's lots of intangibles, but I had to go home that night and explain to my wife that I had orders. I didn't tell her until much later that I had sort of volunteered for it."

His wife, Melissa, a pediatrician he had met while he was in medical school, was nine months pregnant with their first child, and she delivered just five days before he shipped out for Iraq. "I was fortunate to be there for our daughter's birth," he said. "Lots of guys are overseas when their children are born."

He explained that 1/8 normally deployed with two surgeons, but at that time he was it. Fortunately, "I had a strong enlisted crew led by Master Chief Russ Folley, who was great. He had it pretty well locked on." A second surgeon joined them later.

Having served in 1/8 previously, Jadick knew many of the staff and most of the line corpsmen. Plus, his Marine background enabled him to work as part of the team.

"I think 'in Marine,' even now," he said. "Five paragraph order, mission, execution, the things we learned in Basic School, the planning, what things we'd need to worry about as a support force—it all came into play as we were getting ready to go into Fallujah."

By this time he had already solidified his opinion that the battalion aid station needed to be closer to the fighting. Navy policy placed the battalion aid station in the rear. "It's better to be up front; you have to stop the bleeding," he said. "Everybody talked about the 'golden hour,' but if someone gets shot, and they're bleeding badly, you don't have an hour, you have maybe five or 10 minutes."

He again credits the leadership skills learned as a Marine, the ability to clearly communicate with his corpsmen, to train them and actually run drills as keys to success. "Downtime is training time, that's what I'd learned, so we trained as much as we could."

He and his staff actually had been working for some time on the concept of a forward aid station. He also credits his knowledge of Marine jargon and operations as crucial to working harmoniously with the battalion staff, to know exactly how Marines think. "They don't have to think about the logistics of moving a patient, but I do, so I would explain to them that having wounded on the line ties up a fire team or a squad protecting them, so the quicker I can get the wounded stabilized and headed to the rear, the sooner the Marines can get back into the fight."

Leading from the front was another Marine trait he brought with him. Normally, the battalion surgeon is in the rear at the battalion aid station, "But if your most experienced asset is in the rear, you're going to lose Marines up front because you can't get them out fast enough and corpsmen don't have as much medical experience. If I'm up front, the corpsmen are more confident because I'll be there to help them if they need it."

Jadick and his staff actually had been working for some time on the concept of a forward aid station. He also credits his knowledge of Marine jargon and operations as crucial.

In his book, "On Call in Hell: A Doctor's Iraq War Story," Jadick describes his part in the Battle of Fallujah: all the combat, the carnage, the near-misses, including the two rocket propelled grenades that ricocheted off the ambulance while he was in it (both duds) or the snipers who gunned for him and his corpsmen as they worked.

"I had a job to do, and the Marines had a job to do, and I just trusted them and they trusted me," he said.

Operation Phantom Fury

He did his job exceptionally well, applying his Marine Corps training and ethos to the task of handling casualties in one of the most important battles of the Iraq War. Named Operation Phantom Fury, it was a joint American, Iraqi and British offensive waged during November and December 2004.

On Nov. 8, 2004, as the 1/8 battalion surgeon, Jadick was the senior medical officer as the battalion perched on the line of departure, awaiting the signal for the attack to begin. Jadick and his team of 54 corpsmen and his assistant battalion surgeon were responsible for the medical care of about 1,000 Marines and attached military personnel.

Line charges detonated right on time, and Jadick noted: "The intense force of the shock wave, followed immediately by the sound wave, shakes you from the inside out, rattling through your body. … These sounds were the unofficial starting pistol for the Battle of Fallujah."

The somber estimate going into the battle was that 30 to 40 percent of battalion Marines would be killed or injured during the fighting. Jadick and his medical team's mission was to save as many of them as possible.

At first the injuries coming into the battalion aid station (BAS), as near the front as possible but still "in the rear," were relatively minor, but Jadick sensed that it would get worse. When a Force

Recon corpsman was reported injured with a sucking chest wound, in an area far from an extraction point, Jadick's Marine Corps training and instincts kicked in.

He turned to the Weapons Platoon commander who had armed humvees on standby and said, "We've got a man down, and I can't go in on my own." It was all he needed to say. "I don't think I was even done saying it by the time he responded, 'Roger that!' and got his guys ready to roll."

Typically, a battalion surgeon would have remained at the BAS and awaited the delivery of the wounded patient. Jadick could have sent a senior corpsman, but when he climbed into the platoon commander's vehicle, it was Marine leadership from the front that was propelling him. "A leader has to be willing to take the same risks he's asking his men to take," he said. "I had seen sucking chest wounds before, and they hadn't. I figured I'd be in and out in 15 minutes."

As he traveled through the town, which was darkened because the power had been cut prior to the attack, with the sound of rockets and small arms echoing around him, he remembered thinking, "What the hell am I doing?" Through his seven years in the Corps and multiple deployments, "This was my first real battle, my first real casualty call, and I hadn't expected to be in the thick of it quite so soon. I began to realize I hadn't really thought through my trip into the city too carefully, but, 'Guess what, jack---? It's a little too late now!' "

Jadick said he encountered a moral dilemma he hadn't anticipated. As he set out with the Wpns Co Marines on foot through the city's narrow alleyways armed only with a 9 mm pistol, "I felt like the guy who brought a knife to a gunfight," he recalled.

When a Marine asked him to cover a corner as they advanced, he hesitated. "My job was to be there for the wounded, not to shoot people," he said. "But right then, my job as I saw it was to get to my patient—that was the only way I could keep him alive. I was clear in my own mind that if someone was shooting at me, I would shoot back." He pulled his pistol and covered the corner as the platoon passed by.

They got to the wounded corpsman and loaded him into an ambulance. As Jadick climbed in to care for him on the way back to the BAS, a radio call came in from a line company with two wounded needing urgent evacuation. His wounded corpsman was stable, so Jadick made the call to go get the other two injured men.

Taking fire from AK47s, rockets and RPGs, the Vietnam-era Army ambulance raced to the front line escorted by armed weapons platoon vehicles. As they reached the scene of fighting and the back hatch of the ambulance dropped down, Jadick recalled, "I was on the knife's edge. … I had never wanted anything so badly as I wanted to stay inside that vehicle. … Every neuron in my body screamed it—stay inside, stay inside, stay inside."

He remembered thinking he was moving slowly, but the weapons company commander told him later that he jumped right off and rolled into action. Under fire, he and his team got the wounded loaded and back to the BAS.

During the six weeks of the battle, Jadick and his crew would go to the front again and again to retrieve casualties, saving as many lives as possible. But in the end, 21 Marines with 1/8 would die between June 2004 and January 2005. Jadick and his team, however, are credited with saving an estimated 50 or more wounded men who otherwise would have perished. For that, and his personal valor under fire, he was awarded the Bronze Star with combat "V."

The battalion surgeon and the senior corpsman of 1/8, LDCR Richard Jadick, left, and HMC Russ Folley, right, and their team of 54 corpsmen saved dozens of Marines during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Returning Home

He came home from combat and within 30 days of returning started his 100-hour-a-week residency. He credits that schedule with not having time to dwell too much on the carnage he experienced in Fallujah. He was happy to be home with his family, alive and in one piece, and wasn't thinking about any medals. The Bronze Star was sent to one of his professors, a naval reservist, who arranged for him to have it presented at the Second Marine Division headquarters at Camp Lejeune, N.C.

"Just being around those Marines and corpsmen was reward enough," said Jadick, who was the subject of a *Newsweek* cover article a year after returning. But he credits his crew for his success. "I could not be more proud of being around a group of warriors—professional, tough warriors with as strong an ethos as you'd ever want to see in your life."

Jadick retired from the Navy in 2013 after 23 years' service and took a position at the Newnan Hospital in Georgia to build a robotics program for them. "I came in with the same thought process I have with everything else in my life—five paragraph order, it fits whatever you're doing in life," he said.

A year later he was offered the chief of surgery position, and his Marine ethos once again came to the forefront. "If you come to work early, work hard and take care of the people who work for you, then you're taking care of your patients and that's a Marine Corps philosophy. Make sure the junior Marines get through the chow line first—take care of the people who pack your parachutes."

Author's bio: CWO-4 Randy Gaddo, USMC (Ret), a Leatherneck *contributing editor, was a combat correspondent as an enlisted Marine and later a public affairs officer. He retired from active duty in 1996 and now operates his own writing-based business, RGCommunications, and is a freelance photojournalist.*

In the Highest Tradition

Compiled by Nancy S. Lichtman

Silver Star Awardee Says All Raiders Would Have Done the Same Thing

Staff Sergeant Robert T. Van Hook, critical skills operator, 2d Marine Raider Battalion (MRB), Marine Raider Regiment, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command, was awarded the Silver Star during a ceremony at Stone Bay on Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., Jan. 15, for his actions in Afghanistan.

Van Hook was nominated for the award following a 2013 deployment to Herat Province, Afghanistan, with 2d MRB where he served as an element leader.

It was during an operation on Aug. 14, 2013, that Van Hook organized a hasty ambush on 10 insurgents, wounding two and killing four. He continued the fight, leading an attack on an enemy-held building with hand grenades and small arms, killing another insurgent and detaining two others.

Van Hook said the team excelled that day because of how thoroughly they prepared for the mission.

"We train like we fight," said Van Hook. "Plans from time to time become worthless; however, the planning process is unforgiving. Once you have done the planning process correctly, and you've identified all your contingences and rehearsed them to muscle memory, that's when you're successful on the battlefield."

Van Hook's actions during the ambush and the assault on the building were enough to earn recognition, but his fight that day wasn't over.

According to his citation, during a skirmish later that day, Van Hook manned an MK19 machine-gun position which had been abandoned, directing enemy fire away from friendly forces.

"His effects on the enemy caused them to focus their efforts back to his position, targeting him with a rocket propelled grenade and machine gun fire which resulted in his wounding and temporarily rendering him unconscious," reads the citation. "Despite his wounds affecting his ability to walk, he continued to direct fires on the enemy while under enemy fire; aggressively led his element; and ultimately played a pivotal role in coordinating 120 mm mortar danger close suppressive fires for aerial medical evacuation during approach into a hot landing zone."

SGT DONOVAN LEE, USMC

SSgt Robert T. Van Hook received the Silver Star for his heroic actions as an element leader with 2d Marine Raider Battalion in Herat Province, Afghanistan, Aug. 14, 2013.

Despite what many consider heroic actions, Van Hook remains humble and said any of his MARSOC counterparts would have done the same thing.

"Any Raider could have been switched out with me and done the same exact thing," said Van Hook. "A Raider isn't going to let anybody down, not the brothers that went before him, not the Marine beside him. He might have done it differently, but he would have got the job done."

Major General Joseph L. Osterman, Commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command, presented the medal to Van Hook during the ceremony and spoke about his character.

"As a commander, I'm just incredibly appreciative that we have men of [his] caliber that are amongst our ranks," said MajGen Osterman, adding that the MARSOC culture is one of quiet professionalism. Van Hook said he accepts the award on behalf of the men he served with at the time, and for those who continue to serve.

"Walking past the Memorial Wall to receive this award in front of the crowd that will be there is an extremely humbling experience," said Van Hook, a day before the ceremony. "This award isn't given to me; it's given to my team."

Sgt Donovan Lee, USMC

Corpsman Awarded Silver Star

Hospital Corpsman Second Class Alejandro Salabarria, with 2d Marine Raider Battalion (MRB), Marine Raider Regiment, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command, was awarded the Silver Star during a ceremony at Stone Bay, Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., Feb. 5, 2016, for his actions in Afghanistan.

Salabarria joined the Navy in December 2008 with the goal of becoming a corpsman serving at an infantry unit. However, his first orders directed him to Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C.

Salabarria took an interest in special operations. He attended the Basic Reconnaissance School and the Army Basic Airborne School before receiving orders to 3d Bn, Ninth Marine Regiment at Camp Lejeune. As he was preparing for deployment with the Scout Sniper Platoon, Salabarria jumped on the opportunity to attend the Special Operations Combat Medic Course in Fort Bragg, N.C. Upon graduation, he received orders to 2d MRB.

"From all of his training, he was basically a junior (SARC, special amphibious reconnaissance corpsman), which was exactly what we needed on the team," said a critical skills operator with Marine Special Operations Team 8214, Marine Special Operations Company F.

Salabarria checked into the team in 2013 and, from the start, he set himself apart.

"Most corpsmen stay in their bubble ... but Sal was always the guy who wanted to go out and be a CSO [critical skills operator] before he was a corpsman," said a Raider, "which was great because

it's hard to instill that aggressiveness in someone."

In June 2014, the team deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. It was nearing the end of their deployment, on Sept. 15, 2014, that the team was caught by enemy fire.

"We were headed to the [landing zone], and what caught my eye was that off to my right there was one guy praying. No one else was praying, just this one individual," said the Raider.

The team was dropped off on the landing zone and split into two groups for the flight, one team staging to the north, the other to the south. Because an aircraft wasn't expected to land for several hours, the teams took a tactical pause to adjust their gear. When dark settled over the LZ, they came under attack.

"It's funny that I heard it because we were a fair good distance away, but it was clear as day. I heard, 'What the [expletive],' and it almost sounded like a flash-bang went off, and then just rapid fire," the Raider continued.

A rogue shooter had fired an M203 round into the LZ before circling around and firing off an automatic weapon into the groups of gathered Raiders and commandos. "I immediately hit the deck. I thought 'Sal' was right next to me. He wasn't. I don't think he even hit the ground. I think he just ran."

Salabarria had grabbed his medical kit and taken off running toward the center of the LZ where someone was yelling in pain. He explained that he could only see muzzle flashes and the outlines of people, so he followed the sound of the cries for help. Salabarria first came across the foreign interpreter who then directed him to the team SARC. The senior corpsman had been struck by rapid fire in his arm and leg, shattering the upper part of his shin bone.

SGT LIA GAMERO, USMC

MajGen Joseph L. Osterman, Commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command, presents HM2 Alejandro Salabarria with the Silver Star on Feb. 5, 2016. Deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Salabarria used his own body to protect an injured corpsman while engaging an enemy combatant Sept. 15, 2014.

"I checked him over real quick, and that's when I noticed that we were directly getting shot at," said Salabarria. "At that point, I laid on top of [the team SARC], told him not to move, and I shot at [the shooter] until he went down."

"Stories go that other commandos were shooting, that our guys were shooting," said the Raider. "But from my perspective, it was a gunfight between two people."

For his "bold initiative, undaunted courage, and complete dedication to duty," Major General Joseph L. Osterman, Commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command, presented Salabarria with the Silver Star. He was joined by the surgeon general of the Navy, Vice Admiral C. Forrest Faison III, and teammates from 2d MRB.

"I think anybody on that team, given the

CPL DIAMOND N. PEDEN, USMC

PURPLE HEART PRESENTATION—Sgt DeMonte R. Cheeley was presented the Purple Heart medal by BGen Terry V. Williams, commanding general of Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C., and Eastern Recruiting Region, Jan. 26, at a ceremony in Chattanooga, Tenn.

Cheeley received the Purple Heart for injuries he sustained during a July 16, 2015, attack in Chattanooga at the Armed Forces Career Center where he works. An investigation conducted by the FBI and the Naval Criminal Investigative Service determined the attack had been inspired by a foreign terrorist group; therefore, Cheeley is eligible for the Purple Heart.

opportunity, would have done the same thing. It just happened to be me that did it," said Salabarria.

Sergeant Charles Strong lost his life during the attack. His family attended the ceremony as guests of honor, along with the family of Captain Stanford H. Shaw III, who was a part of the "Raider 7" lost in 2015. Capt Shaw was the officer who first submitted Salabarria for the award.

"[This medal] is more for Capt Shaw and Sgt Strong than anything," said Salabarria. "It's all for them."

Sgt Lia Gamero, USMC

No Better Friend: Marine Recognized For Heroism in Senegal

Sergeant Matthew A. Sprankle, a mortarman with Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force Crisis Response-Africa (SPMAGTF), was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal for saving a local man from drowning in Dakar, Senegal, last August.

Sprankle received the Navy and Marine Corps Medal, the highest non-combat decoration awarded for heroism by the Department of the Navy, from Major General Niel E. Nelson, commander of U.S. Marine Corps Forces Europe and Africa, at Morón Air Base, Spain, Jan. 26.

"You couldn't ask for a finer tribute to [SPMAGTF] than the ceremony for Sgt Sprankle," said MajGen Nelson. "[His actions] really put a fine touch on SPMAGTF's capabilities. They do everything, and they also have some fantastic Marines in their ranks."

Sprankle recalled the ordeal on Aug. 28, 2015, in Senegal.

SGT KASSIE L. MCDOLE, USMC

MajGen Niel E. Nelson, Commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Europe and Africa, presents Sgt Matthew A. Sprankle with the Navy and Marine Corps Medal aboard Morón AB, Spain, Jan. 26, 2016. Sprankle saved a local man from drowning during training in Senegal, Aug. 28, 2015.

"I was out to eat one night with a bunch of the other guys and it started to get dark and then we heard some screaming from the water. … So we went to check it out and it just happened to be [someone] struggling to stay afloat," Sprankle said. "I noticed there was actually another local national that tried to go out there and get him, and he made it about halfway and just decided to turn around and go back, so I was just like, 'Alright, well I guess I've got to go get him.' So I just grabbed the buoy and hopped in and swam out there, stuffed it in his chest and drug him back."

Sprankle was in Senegal to conduct partner-nation training with the Senegalese military and had actually been conducting swim assessments with Senegalese military personnel.

"I had just finished [Marine Corps Water Survival Training] about a month before that, so I'd been swimming constantly for a solid three weeks; my conditioning was good. I also had all the information that I needed as far as what to do in certain situations so it definitely paid off," Sprankle said.

Sprankle also said that his actions may have played a small part in improving the partnership between the Marines and the Senegalese.

"Word got to the U.S. ambassador and even the Senegalese military; it definitely helped strengthen our relationship with them because I was willing to risk my life to save somebody in a foreign country that I didn't know."

While extremely appreciative of the award, Sprankle explained that his actions are simply indicative of the bond he has formed with his team on deployment.

"I don't really do anything for awards. I really don't. It's not really something that I've ever been big on. I do stuff for other people, like my Marines; that's really what I care about more than anything."

The Marines are postured in Europe in support of U.S. Africa Command and conduct theater security events with partner nations in Africa, improving capabilities and maintaining relationships with host-nation militaries and communities.

1stLt John McCombs, USMC

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COL JOHN FOLSOM, USMCR (RET)

Smoke the Donkey

Marines Befriend "The Luckiest Donkey in Iraq"

By Cate Folsom

The colonel, for once, was speechless.

He had been working for weeks to track down a certain sheik in the middle of Iraq. Now retired Marine Corps Col John Folsom had finally succeeded. That's why, one Saturday in October 2010, he had driven across town in Omaha, Neb., to the home of Isaam, an Iraqi expatriate who had volunteered to talk to the sheik on Folsom's behalf since the sheik's English was no better than Folsom's Arabic. The colonel had what he thought was a simple request: Can we please have our donkey back?

The sheik's response startled both Folsom and Isaam: Certainly you can have the donkey. For $30,000.

This obviously wasn't just any donkey. It was Smoke the Donkey, who held a special meaning to the colonel and many other Marines who had served at or passed through Camp al Taqaddum in 2008 and 2009. The Marines had befriended, fed and sheltered this donkey after he strayed onto their sprawling camp. Smoke, in turn, had offered the Marines and others his friendship, loyalty and a way to connect with family back home during their long deployments. Brigadier General Juan Ayala called Smoke "the luckiest donkey in Iraq."

Folsom had no intention of paying $30,000 for Smoke. But he wasn't giving up, either.

Folsom had no intention of paying $30,000 for Smoke. But he wasn't giving up, either. Smoke, after all, was a Marine, and Marines don't leave Marines behind.

The First TQ Donkey

Smoke's story had begun two years earlier. Folsom, a reserve colonel, was assigned in July 2008 as camp commandant for First Marine Logistics Group (MLG) at Camp al Taqaddum (TQ), near Fallujah. A few weeks after arriving, he was talking to the MLG commanding general, BGen Robert R. Ruark, after an ops-intel briefing. BGen Ruark showed Folsom a video about a donkey that had strayed onto TQ. A security camera had immortalized the predicament of several Marines as they chased the donkey around and around, trying to capture it and remove it from camp. Someone copied the footage, cranked up the speed and overlaid it with "Yakety Sax," the theme song from "The Benny Hill Show." Dubbed "Herbert the Donkey," the video became a YouTube phenomenon.

BGen Ruark thought it was hilarious. "The next time there's a donkey on the

base, you ought to catch it," he told Folsom.

Things had definitely settled down since Folsom's first deployment to Iraq in February 2005. In that 12-month stint, he first served as the Second Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward) liaison officer to II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward). In October 2005, he was reassigned as air boss at Camp Korean Village at ar Rutbah, near the borders of Jordan and Syria. As senior officer with the 2d MAW, Folsom coordinated the efforts of Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron (HMLA) 167—made up of two Marine AH-1W Cobras and a UH-1N Huey gunship, which were used for close air support.

He also worked with a detachment from a Marine wing support squadron, MWSS-274. During his four months there, Folsom and his Marines oversaw 48 medevac missions.

But by 2008, U.S. forces had turned the corner in al Anbar Province. Combat operations were still under way, and casualties were still being transported regularly to the base surgical unit. But gone were the continual rocket attacks launched at Camp al Taqaddum that had marked his 2005 deployment. Now the only gunfire he heard was occasional ceremonial shots into the air to mark weddings and special occasions in nearby Habbaniyah.

Marine Sergeant Accomplishes the Mission

When the general suggested catching a donkey, the colonel considered it as good as an order and turned over the mission to Sergeant Juan Garcia, roadmaster of Camp al Taqaddum. After concluding this wasn't some joke, Garcia didn't hesitate. "Yes, sir," Garcia told him. Weeks later, on Aug. 24, Folsom awoke to loud braying. He walked outside his quarters that Sunday morning and saw a donkey tied to a eucalyptus tree. The young jack was small and terribly thin, with a pronounced black cross on his back that extended across his shoulders and from his mane to the base of his tail. He peered plaintively up at the colonel with a kind of a "here I am" look.

Folsom, a lifelong animal lover, looked down at him and grinned. Looks like I've got myself a donkey, he thought. But he had no way of knowing that this was the beginning of a beautiful and highly unlikely friendship. It was one that would last for years, defy war and distance, overcome bureaucratic hurdles, and ultimately create an international celebrity out of the little donkey with the black cross on his back.

Folsom tied him up in the shade of a tree outside his office, and the news quickly spread about "the colonel's donkey." One Marine after another stopped by to pet the donkey, feed him an apple and pose for a photo. Folsom converted an empty embarkation box into a food trough and talked the chow hall manager into donating stale hamburger and hotdog buns for meals. Later Folsom paid an Iraqi merchant to bring hay from Fallujah.

1ST MLG

With the aid of federal agencies, travel experts and his fellow Marines, Col John Folsom worked diligently to ensure the donkey he befriended in Iraq in 2008 was brought back to the U.S.

Where "Smoke" Came From

During the evenings, the Base operations section Marines liked to relax on a deck outside headquarters. They met to drink "near beer," grill a burger, have a smoke and swap stories. The donkey soon became a regular—Folsom tied his rope to the deck railing so he could socialize. About a week after the donkey arrived, the Marines were relaxing on the deck. One man was smoking a cigarette. Between puffs, he rested his arm on the deck railing. Suddenly, the donkey strolled up, snatched the cigarette from his hand and calmly chewed up the whole thing—paper, filter, burning tobacco, and all. The Marines roared. And suddenly, the little donkey had a name: Smoke.

His fame spread. Smoke received a health inspection from Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Bostick, commander of the Army's 43rd Medical Detachment Veterinary Service, stationed in Balad. A Navy doctor produced a two-page memo about Smoke's attributes as a therapy animal. Folsom filed it in case anyone raised a stink about General Order Number 1, which banned pets and mascots from U.S. military establishments in the war zone. No one ever did. In fact, whenever a VIP visited Camp al Taqaddum, the base tour included an introduction to Smoke. He even met the 34th Commandant of the Marine Corps.

Just before Christmas, Smoke was working the crowds at a USO show when he came face to face with General James T. Conway. Smoke, sporting a

Smoke's Marine caretakers used innovation to ensure the donkey was well-cared for. A corral was built from scrap lumber and an embarkation box was used as his trough. The chow hall provided stale food for his meals. (Photo by Col John Folsom, USMCR (Ret))

COURTESY OF COL JOHN FOLSOM, USMCR (RET)

Smoke the Donkey wore his specially designed blanket emblazoned with the 1st MLG crest during the Camp al Taqaddum Freedom Walk on Sept. 11, 2008.

pair of doggie reindeer antlers, was on his best behavior.

On many of those occasions, Smoke wore a red blanket Folsom had made for him. It sported the 1st MLG crest, displaying the numeral 1, superimposed with "MLG"; the eagle, globe and anchor; a fighting lion; and a symbol of waves, roads and air. Across the top: "1st Marine Logistics Group." Along the bottom: "Victory Through Logistics." Then there was the colonel's motto, which underscored the hustle of logistics units to supply combat units with the food, supplies and other support they needed to survive and fight: "Kick Ass."

Smoke wasn't left tied to a eucalyptus tree forever. The Marines collected some scrap lumber, gate hinges and a latch and built him a nice corral. When the weather turned rainy that autumn, they built him a snug A-frame shelter.

Several Marines helped out with Smoke, but Folsom was his primary caregiver. He devised several donkey games. Sometimes they played hide-and-seek among the abandoned Iraqi air base buildings. Other times, it was "king of the hill": Smoke raced to the top of an earthen bunker, surveyed his "kingdom," and then raced down again to greet the colonel.

Becoming More and More Popular

On Smoke's daily walks, soldiers and Marines invariably stopped to say hello, pet him and pose for photographs, many of which made it back to their friends and family. Children back home loved hearing about the donkey. They even sent Smoke cards and letters, sometimes addressing their mail simply to "Smoke the Donkey" or sometimes "Shrek's Donkey," confusing him with the Disney character. Other donkey lovers sent horse treats or books about donkey care and training. A civilian contractor's grandfather gave him a red pony halter, and a lieutenant colonel's wife made Smoke a blanket with the Democratic Party emblem. The inscription made even Folsom, a staunch Republican, chuckle: "Democrats make better lovers. Who ever heard of a nice piece of elephant?"

The Marine Corps could always use a good-news story, he argued. Right? Wrong. The colonel at PP&O wasn't about to sanction a donkey drop.

As the 1st MLG prepared to return to Camp Pendleton, Calif., in early February 2009, Folsom became concerned. He wasn't sure the 2d MLG Marines would want to tend to a donkey. He e-mailed Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center in Bridgeport, Calif., which agreed to take in Smoke if Folsom could get him there. He also contacted Sen. Mike Johanns, R-Neb., whose staff was willing to lend support. The veterinary staff agreed to accompany Smoke on an overseas flight.

All was looking good for Smoke's future until Folsom contacted Plans, Policies and Operations at Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps. That's when the plan hit a big bureaucratic roadblock. A senior officer at PP&O listened to Folsom explain what a wonderful public relations move it would be to ship Smoke the Donkey to the States. The Marine Corps could always use a good-news story, he argued. Right? Wrong. The colonel at PP&O wasn't about to sanction a donkey drop. Case closed.

Although they didn't realize it, these two colonels were replaying a chapter from Marine Corps history. In 1952, the Fifth Marine Regiment was in Korea when it also adopted an equine: the famous Sgt Reckless. First Lieutenant Eric Pedersen, platoon commander of the Recoilless Rifle Platoon, Antitank Company, wanted a horse to haul the 24-pound, 75 mm shells for the antitank weapon. Pedersen paid $250 for "Flame," a Mongolian racehorse, from a young Korean in Seoul. The Marines renamed her Reckless, the nickname for the recoilless rifle.

Reckless showed courage and determination time after time on the battlefield. Her bravery became the stuff of articles in *Leatherneck* magazine, and books about Reckless are still being published today.

After the fighting in Korea ended, LtCol Andrew Geer vowed to get Reckless to the United States. He appealed to Headquarters Marine Corps, but since Reckless wasn't government property, Geer was told that no federal funds could be used to transport her. Reckless eventually made it to California—but not through the aid of HQMC. Fast-forward about 50 years to Col Folsom and Smoke. Just like the 5th Marines, he didn't want to leave this beloved comrade behind. He even had a job waiting for Smoke in California. But, like LtCol Geer decades earlier, he couldn't get HQMC to see his vision.

Getting Back to the United States

Folsom rotated home to his family and civilian job in Omaha, and Smoke stayed behind. Folsom had to be satisfied with assurances that the 2d MLG would look after the donkey. In August 2010, with retirement looming, he began reflecting on his long and colorful career, from a shipboard deployment to Beirut with Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 165 in September 1983 to tours of duty in Iraq after 9/11. As he thought about all the Marines he had served with, he began to wonder: Where was Smoke?

He eventually tracked down BGen Ayala. As commanding general of 2d MLG, Ayala had championed Smoke at TQ. But he had left Iraq in July 2009 and told Folsom the donkey had been turned over to a local sheik. Folsom's sense of mission clicked on: He was determined to find Smoke and bring him to America. It was a mission that turned into a saga.

Folsom spent weeks putting out feelers for the sheik. Finally, on Oct. 9, 2010, he learned that the sheik was trying to reach him. That was when he visited Isaam. They called the sheik, who wanted an outrageous $30,000. After working past that obstacle, the sheik eventually turned over the donkey free of charge. Folsom enlisted the aid of a foreign correspondent and local Iraqis to find Smoke on the sheik's property.

After the unwilling donkey was finally caught, a U.S. animal advocacy group embraced the task of reuniting him with Folsom. But it took an international team and the aid of the U.S. Embassy to get the donkey out of Iraq. Turkey reluctantly let Smoke cross the border, but getting him out of Turkey proved even tougher. In a series of maneuvers that would have impressed Graham Greene, Folsom enlisted the aid of seemingly everyone from the U.S. State Department to the Agriculture Department, U.S. and German travel experts and, of course, the Marines. At one point he even flew to Istanbul, Turkey, to personally take part. "Our Donkey in Istanbul" finally headed to the United States.

Here, Smoke's life was again transformed. He palled around with polo ponies, raised money for less fortunate donkeys, provided mental health support for servicemembers and, just by being himself, brought joy and inspiration everywhere.

Smoke lived in Omaha for a year and a half before developing acute peritonitis, an abdominal inflammation. He died in August 2012. Folsom struggled with his grief at losing his battle buddy, but eventually decided he wanted to continue Smoke's legacy of service. He adopted a young female donkey through the wild burro adoption program run by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management and named her Hope.

COL JOHN FOLSOM, USMCR (RET)

Even 2d MLG's commanding general, BGen Juan Ayala, visited Smoke, whom he called "the luckiest donkey in Iraq."

COL JOHN FOLSOM, USMCR (RET)

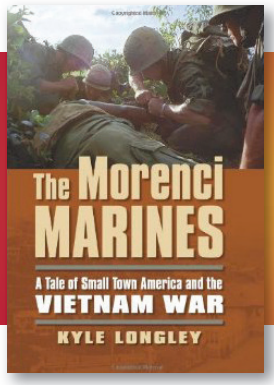
GySgt Lance Robinson, right, was one of the many Marines aboard Camp al Taqaddum who enjoyed Smoke's visits.

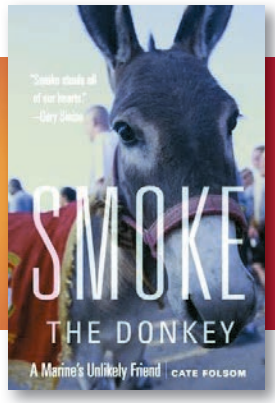
Editor's note: See page 63 for a review of the book "Smoke the Donkey: A Marine's Unlikely Friend," by Cate Folsom.

Author's bio: Cate Folsom is a longtime editor at the Omaha World-Herald. *During more than 35 years at the newspaper, she has edited several award-winning efforts, including a yearlong analysis of a mass shooting at a local shopping mall, the attempted recall of the Omaha mayor, systemic flaws in state prison sentencing calculations and embedded coverage of the National Guard troops in Afghanistan. She currently is the deputy editorial page editor. She and her husband have two children.*

Books Reviewed

Unless otherwise noted, these books may be ordered from *The* MARINE *Shop*. Subscribers may use members' prices. Include $5.99 for shipping. Virginia residents add 6 percent sales tax; North Carolina residents add 7 percent. Prices may change. Make check or money order payable to: MCA, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134, call toll-free: (888) 237-7683, or shop online at www.marineshop.net.





THE MORENCI MARINES: A Tale of Small Town America and the Vietnam War. By Kyle Longley. Published by University Press of Kansas. 368 pages. Softcover. Stock #0700621105. $20.66 MCA Members. $22.95 Regular Price.

Although she queried the Navy a month earlier in reference to a newspaper report that one of her sons had been killed when his ship received three torpedo hits and sank, Mrs. Alleta Sullivan was startled when she answered her doorbell in Waterloo, Iowa, to find three solemn uniformed naval officers standing on the front porch. It was precisely 7 on the cold morning of Jan. 12, 1943.

The year before, almost to the very day, her five boys, George, 27, Francis, 26, Joseph, 22, Madison, 23, and Albert, 20, had enlisted together to avenge the death of Bill Ball, their sister's fiance, who had been killed during the attack on Pearl Harbor. Their only condition for signing up was that they wanted to serve together in whatever ship designated. After considerable debate, the Navy leadership in Washington, D.C., relented, and the five brothers were assigned to USS *Juneau* (CL-52), a light cruiser which had gone under on Nov. 13, 1942.

Slowly, gravely, with cap in hand, the senior officer, a lieutenant commander, said quietly, "We have news about your boys."

Frank F. Sullivan, father of the Sullivans' sailor-sons, emerged half-shaved from the bathroom, asking apprehensively, "Which one?"

After a heartrending moment, the officer replied slowly, "I'm sorry, sir, all five."

The five Sullivans, the five Bixby boys of Boston lost in the Civil War, and the four Borgstrom brothers killed separately within a month in 1944 were all patriotic young men who went to war when their democracy needed them. Like so, so many others, they couldn't come home when they wanted to.

In 1965, nine equally brave, patriotic Americans, teenagers in a small Arizona copper mining town with a population of a little more than 5,000, graduated together from Morenci High School and enlisted as a group in the Marine Corps on Independence Day in 1966. Within the year, they were deployed to Vietnam. Only three returned.

Their story, so meticulously and incandescently portrayed by author Kyle Longley, is the subject of "The Morenci Marines: A Tale of Small Town America and the Vietnam War." Especially heartwarming and heartbreaking all at once are foreboding statements from the six who were killed. Bobby Dale Draper, 19, foresaw his future: "I'm not coming back." Stan King, 21, wrote of his final resting place: "I have my grave all picked out in Clifton Cemetery, I love those beautiful red hills." Alfred Van Whitmer, 21, thought of his father: "Dad, I'm increasing my life insurance. I'm going to pay off our place for you." Larry J. West, 19, was realistic: "There's no way for me. I've come close to it a number of times. I won't be back." Jose Moncayo, 22, cautioned his mother: "Mom, don't cry when they bring my body home." Clive Garcia, 22, consoled his mother: "Mom, your eyes are swollen in the photo we took together. Don't be sad. Someone who loves me will bring me home—a grunt, a grunt like me."

Longley writes, "They were a diverse group, Latino, Native American, Caucasian, who went through boot camp together, salvaging each other when in trouble, always together in San Diego. After receiving their specialties, they deployed separately to their stations, but always stayed in touch. Their combined stories are representative of how rural communities give the toughest, hardest-nosed, to the war effort. It's part of the sense of sacrifice that Arizona has made for the America."

Leroy Cisneros, one of the three who returned home safely, adds, "We were American high-school teens just trying to keep up the traditions of our fathers and grandfathers who served. Don't let my six buddies be forgotten. They all died doing something they believed in."

"Morenci Marines" is a stirring tribute to all who fight, one way or another, and who are prepared to lay their lives down for friend and country. Theirs is a story that has very special meaning to those who are serving or served, whether in the Corps or not.

The five Sullivan brothers, 75 years later, have had two destroyers, a museum wing, an elementary school, a park, a convention center and a major motion picture, "The Fighting Sullivans" (1944), named after them.

Must the Morenci band of nine Marines wait that long for the USMC and our nation to acknowledge their intractable loyalty?

Don DeNevi

Author's bio: Don DeNevi, a scriptwriter and author of more than 30 books, frequently reviews World War II books for Leatherneck.

SMOKE THE DONKEY: A Marine's Unlikely Friend. By Cate Folsom. Published by Potomac Books. 288 pages. Stock #1612348114. $22.46 MCA Members. $24.95 Regular Price.

Smoke the Donkey earned his name for stealing a lit cigarette from one of the Marines who watched over him. Indeed this little Iraqi donkey was a charming, resourceful and beloved character.

Lieutenant General Robert R. Ruark commanded the First Marine Logistics Group in al Anbar Province, Iraq, from 2008 to 2009. After seeing a video of Marines trying to wrangle a loose donkey on base, the general made this offhanded comment: "We should have our own donkey." This set in motion a most unlikely chain of events that would bring one tiny donkey to the United States and earn him a place in Marine history and lore.

One Sunday morning in 2008, Colonel John Folsom awoke to the alarming sound of a donkey's bray. Folsom, then commandant of Camp al Taqaddum, beheld a small gray donkey standing outside his quarters. Only 3 feet tall, weighing less than 200 pounds, the animal had an intelligent look about him. Having grown up on a farm, the colonel was a sucker for animals. With no inkling of the significance of the moment, the colonel and the donkey began their most unlikely friendship.

Feeding the donkey was only the beginning of the challenges ahead for the Marines. Green grass in Iraq, as you can well imagine, was at a premium. So, what in fact, might this donkey eat? Where would he be lodged, and what effect would this small hoofed creature have on their base? These and many new questions quickly came in to focus. Army veterinarians were called upon, and thankfully, the donkey passed his medical exam and nobody got kicked. Internet searches revealed some wisdom about the care and nurture of their four-legged guest. It turns out that donkeys are intelligent and trainable, but there still were lessons to be learned about donkey training and, of course, some equally important equine behavior modification techniques.

Not surprisingly, the little donkey quickly became one of the star attractions on the base. However, many problems quickly arose. Rules against adopting pets as mascots or possessing domestic or wild animals were skillfully avoided by designating Smoke the Donkey a therapy animal. Off-duty Marines hastily constructed an adequate corral, and the base's new therapy mascot settled in at his new home. Not surprisingly, the little donkey provided a morale-boosting distraction for the troops at the base.

Smoke quickly learned to open doors in his quest to find any unclaimed candy available. Additionally, Smoke became the focus of e-mail and Facebook communications with the folks back home. Soon Marines' families started sending the donkey various presents. Visitors to the base requested to meet the now celebrated little donkey.

As Col Folsom's rotation period drew near, the idea of taking the donkey back to the States began to take shape. After all, the Marine Corps' celebrated Korean War horse SSgt Reckless returned to the United States with her Marines and became renowned in both song and story. Why not this little donkey? Easy to do one might think, but successfully moving a donkey out of Iraq, through Turkey and on to the U.S. was a monumental challenge. Veterinarian bills, transportation arrangements, quarantines, documents, paperwork and even bribes would be necessary. The delicate nuances of donkey diplomacy were learned and relearned. When all hurdles were successfully passed, it had taken several months to get Smoke into the "land of the free."

Smoke became a successful therapy/learning donkey for both children and veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. All the friendly and loveable traits that served Smoke so very well in the past, now served him well when making new friends while influencing many "always grateful" people. Smoke marched proudly in the 9/11 10th anniversary parade held in New York Cty. New York, as it turned out, would be the biggest apple little Smoke would be allowed to munch.

A joy to read, "Smoke the Donkey" was written with loving care by Folsom's wife, Cate, a journalist and the longtime editor of the *Omaha World-Herald.* The foreword was written by LtGen Robert R. Ruark, military deputy for the office of the undersecretary for personnel and readiness.

Sadly, the brave little donkey died 15 months after he moved to Nebraska. Col Folsom fittingly spread some of Smoke's ashes over the grave of SSgt Reckless. To this very day, Smoke's legend lives on in Facebook. He is listed prominently by Mother Nature Network as one of the "Seven Famous Military Mascots." Not too shabby for this donkey, his colonel, and the Marines and children whose lives he touched.

Robert B. Loring

Author's bio: Readers will recognize Marine veteran "Red Bob" Loring as a frequent Leatherneck *reviewer, who has had more than 100 book reviews published in the magazine.*

In Memoriam

Compiled by Nancy S. Lichtman and Savannah Norton

"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, units served in, dates of service and, if possible, a local or national obituary. Allow at least four months for the notice to appear.

Col Eugene S. "Gene" Asher, 87, of Atlanta, Ga. He was a rifle platoon leader during the Korean War. He was a city of Atlanta boxing champion four times, and in 1949 he became the Georgia Lightweight Golden Gloves Champion. He later worked as a sportswriter.

His awards include two Purple Hearts.

BGen Maurice C. Ashley Jr., 90, in Stuart, Fla. He was a Marine who served during WW II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War. He enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserve in 1943. During the next two years, he attained the grade of platoon sergeant, and after completing 7th Platoon Commanders Class at MCB Quantico, Va., he was commissioned a second lieutenant and served on Guam.

At the end of WW II he was released from active duty. He returned to active duty in 1949 and received a regular commission.

During the Korean War he participated in combat operations as a tank platoon leader, company executive officer and tank company commander with 1st Tank Bn, 1stMarDiv.

In 1968, he was assigned to 1stMarDiv in South Vietnam, serving in several billets, including commanding officer of 1st Tank Bn and regimental executive officer of 5th Marines.

His awards include the Silver Star; three Legions of Merit, one with combat "V"; the Bronze Star with combat "V" and two Purple Hearts.

Thomas M. Baranski, 73, of Lynn, Mass. He was a Marine who served in tank units during the Vietnam War.

Everett T. Boersma, 92, of Grand Rapids, Mich. He was a Marine in WW II and received the Purple Heart. He was in the movies "Gung Ho" and "Guadalcanal Diary."

Cpl Robert J. Bonin, 93, of Lynn, Mass. During WW II he was a Marine artilleryman in the South Pacific. He also served in the Marshall Islands and the Philippines, including the Battle of Leyte Gulf.

Roy F. Brightman, 89, of Braintree, Mass. He was a member of the 4thMarDiv and saw action during the Battle of Iwo Jima. He was a past president of the 4thMarDiv Association of New England.

1stSgt William J. Driver, 93, of North Little Rock, Ark. He was a Marine who served for 25 years, seeing action in WW II, Korea and Vietnam.

Sgt James C. Dukes, 92, of Sonoma County, Calif. He enlisted in March 1941 and was discharged in 1945. He was with 1st Bn, 8th Marines on Guadalcanal. He reenlisted in 1950 for the Korean War.

Sgt Mark C. Fleener, 55, of Tehachapi, Calif. He served from 1978 to 1982, and his last duty station was Okinawa. He later was employed as a yardmaster for Union Pacific Railroad.

SSgt Joan E. (Walter) Gerichten, 83, of Kernersville, N.C. She was on active duty from 1954 to 1961 and in the Marine Corps Reserve from 1974 to 1987. She was married to a Marine and had two sons who retired as field grade Marine officers.

COURTESY OF WILLIAM S. GERICHTEN

SSgt Joan E. (Walter) Gerichten

GySgt Raymond A. Griego, 84, of Albuquerque, N.M. He was a veteran of the Korean War who saw action during the Chosin Reservoir campaign.

Cpl Charles C. Hall, 90, of Chandler, Texas. He was a Marine who served in the Pacific during WW II.

James C. Hatten, 93, of Grampian, Pa. He was a Marine veteran of WW II who served in the Pacific. He received the Purple Heart.

LCpl Lavona Laverdierre, 76, of Moline, Ill. She served in the Marine Corps from 1957 to 1960.

David G. Paul, 86, in Albuquerque, N.M. He enlisted at age 16 and served briefly during WW II. During the Korean War he saw action during the Inchon landing and the Chosin Reservoir campaign. He was a member of the New Mexico Chapter of the Chosin Few.

Cpl Alfred J. Peaches, 90, in Flagstaff, Ariz. He was a Navajo Code Talker, serving from 1943 to 1946. He was with the 29th Marines, 6thMarDiv and saw combat on Okinawa, Saipan, Guadalcanal and Iwo Jima. He also served during the Korean War.

"The Navajo people have lost another warrior that defended freedom and the American way of life during World War II," said Russell Begaye, the president of the Navajo Nation.

MSgt George "Ken" Peters, 101, of Millbrook, N.Y. He was a Marine Raider with the 1st Marine Raider Bn, "Edson's Raiders." He fought on Tulagi and at the "Bloody Ridge" on Guadalcanal. He also saw action on New Georgia and New Caledonia.

Raymond H. Piper, 95, of Liverpool, N.Y. He was a Marine WW II veteran who served with the 3dMarDiv at the Battles of Guadalcanal and Iwo Jima. He received the Purple Heart. He also worked for the Liverpool Police Department for 25 years and retired as the police chief in 1984.

GySgt Harold Rector, 79, of Odenton, Md. He was a Marine who served for 21 years, which included a tour as a drill instructor at MCRD Parris Island, S.C. After his retirement he worked for NSA for 20 years.

SSgt Russell K. Rutan, 89, of Nampa, Idaho. He served in WW II from 1945 to 1947. Immediately following boot camp he was shipped to Okinawa. He was with Co E, 2d Bn, 22d Marines, 6thMarDiv

for the final week of that battle. He then served with the occupation forces in China. After the war he returned to his hometown where he spent the rest of his life as a farmer and rancher.

Vernon Ryckeghem, 89, of Moline, Ill. He enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1944 and served in the Pacific. He later was recalled to active duty during the Korean War.

He was a captain in the Moline Fire Department, where he worked for 26 years.

Kenny Sailors, 95, in Laramie, Wyo. He was a basketball star at the University of Wyoming, having led Wyoming to the 1943 NCAA Championship and been named National Player of the Year, when he left school to enlist in the Marine Corps that year. He served in the South Pacific for two years.

After the end of WW II, he returned to the university and the basketball team and once again earned All-American honors. He played professional basketball with the Basketball Association of America, which later became the National Basketball Association, when the league was in its infancy. He is credited with developing the jump shot.

After retiring from the NBA, he became a licensed hunting and fishing guide.

Cpl David G. Scanlan, 78, of Upper Nyack, N.Y. He was a Marine who served from 1956 to 1958.

Gerald R. Smigiel, 82, of Central Islip, N.Y. He was a Marine who served during the Korean War.

Jack A. Stevens Jr., 45, of Knoxville, Tenn. For six years, he served in the Marine Corps Reserve.

Maj John "Keith" Wells, 94, of Wheat Ridge, Colo. He was a student at Texas A&M before joining the Marine Corps during WW II. He was selected for Officer Candidates School after which he completed parachute training. He was deployed to Guadalcanal with the 1st Marines in December 1943. After that he was given command of 3d Plt, Co E, 2d Bn, 28th Marines, 5thMarDiv. He was awarded the Navy Cross for his actions on Iwo Jima.

According to his citation, he was ordered to attack across open terrain and dislodge the enemy from a series of strongly defended pillboxes and blockhouses at the base of Mount Suribachi. He "placed himself in the forefront of his platoon and, leading his men forward in the face of intense hostile machine-gun, mortar and rifle fire, continuously moved from one flank to the other to lead assault groups one by one in their attacks on Japanese emplacements. Although severely wounded while directing his demolition squad in an assault on a formidable enemy blockhouse whose fire had stopped the advance of his platoon, he continued to lead his men until the blockhouse was destroyed."

After the war, he remained in the Marine Corps Reserve until retirement in 1959. He earned a degree in geology from Texas Tech University and went into the oil business. He was an Eagle Scout who later became an active volunteer with Boy Scouts of America, earning the Silver Beaver Award for his efforts.

Ernest Yazhe, 92, of Salt Lake City, Utah. He was a Navajo Code Talker who served from 1942 to 1946. He saw action on Guam and Okinawa.

"If it were not for our Navajo Code Talkers, our freedom as we know it today would be severely impacted. The Navajo Nation and the greater United States owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Code Talkers such as Ernest Yazhe. His service will not be forgotten," said Russell Begaye, the president of the Navajo Nation.

Sgt Jordan Ziniewicz, 26, of Kingston, Pa. He served from 2008 to 2013. He was a radio repairman with Service Co, 9th Communications Bn, 1stMarDiv, MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif.

SOUND OFF

[continued from page 7]

tember 1975. There was never any real mention concerning hearing protection during all that time. I also suffered a head injury when a booby trap simulator literally blew up in my face. It caused a traumatic injury to my forehead, and I have experienced ringing in the ears ever since.

I transferred to the Active Reserve as a first lieutenant in 1979, after spending two years in the air wing. During my entire active duty, on each physical form, I noted that I had a loss of hearing. When I was promoted to captain, that required a physical. I was initially disqualified because of my hearing loss, as the doctor in Baltimore thought that I was a recruit. When I explained that this was a promotion physical, I was passed.

Many times during my civilian life I had been turned down for employment due to my poor hearing. Those jobs included firefighter and police officer.

After my retirement, my hearing was so bad that I had to seek the assistance of hearing aids. I have purchased two sets over the years, each of which cost me $5,000 out of pocket. I also was not aware of the VA for assistance. With records in hand, I took their tests and was denied.

I just don't know what else to do short of getting a lawyer to investigate this situation. I am on a fixed income and can't afford hearing aid replacements. I don't fully understand why I was denied benefits as my records clearly show the injury and the constant loss of hearing.

Maj Roy W. Hamilton, USMC (Ret)
1970-92
Greenville, S.C.

In reference to Joe Gabrielli's hearing aid letter, I, too, had a similar problem. Even though my DD-214 indicated I served in an artillery regiment, 10th Marines, I offered photos of my shooting the automatic weapons without hearing protection because they were developed 10 years after my release from active duty.

Two years ago a friend who served in another branch received hearing aids.

I reactivated my name in January 2016 and received an outstanding pair of hearing aids from the VA in Albuquerque, N.M. The service and treatment was excellent.

Yesterday, Feb. 2, I went in for an adjustment, and a former Marine had me in and out in less than an hour. That includes waiting-room time.

Paul E. Rockhold
Belen, N.M.

Training at Pohakuloa

I enjoyed the piece in the January issue, "In Every Clime and Place," about the training at Pohakuloa.

In the early 1960s I was with Company C, 1st Battalion, Fourth Marine Regiment stationed at Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii. We trained up there for two-week periods, usually went over in LSTs, but flew back. We spent most of the time out on the lava rock in training. We did have Quonset huts, and the shower tent was just that with a wood catwalk to stand on. Water was always cold. We always finished with this march, 41 miles, down to Hilo.

Ralph McClure
Greeley, Colo.

Medal of Honor Recipient Col William E. Barber

The picture on page 48 of the January issue in "Corps Connections," showing the statue of Colonel William E. Barber, caught my attention. Col Barber and many members of the Orange County Chapter of the First Marine Division Association are Korean War veterans.

In early 1990, the city of Irvine, Calif., constructed a large recreational park next to City Hall. Col Barber's name was suggested since he was a resident of the city. He lived in another section of the city and

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I rarely saw him. A discussion between the five members of the city council arose as they had never named a park for a living person. It was finally decided in favor of Col Barber. A dedication date was set, and many members of our chapter were in attendance. There were also four Marines from out of state who were on the hill with Col Barber's company.

Col Barber was not in attendance due to ill health. His son was present for the ceremony. A plaque containing the citation for Col Barber's Medal of Honor was read by an official. The plaque was then presented to Col Barber's son.

I approached his son and requested to look at the plaque. Something had caught my attention during the reading. I handed back the plaque and thanked him and wished a fast recovery for his father. I caught the eye of the official and motioned with my head for her to follow me. We moved off some distance and I informed her that the plaque said South Korea instead of North. She quickly retrieved the plaque and said some changes were required. She would personally deliver the plaque to Col Barber.

A few days later it occurred to me that a larger plaque was installed on a monument in the park. I drove to the park, and my inspection confirmed that the same mistake had occurred. I walked over to City Hall and was lucky enough to find the same official in one of the hallways. She smiled and then suddenly changed expressions. She said "What?" I explained that they made the same mistake on the larger plaque. She was not happy, however, and thanked me for the effort.

So we have a park in the western region of the country and a statue in the eastern region. Like two bookends supporting one of the greatest Marine battles of our time.

SSgt Donald F. MacDermott
Murrieta, Calif.

MGySgt Ron Keene Retirement

I just read in the February *Leatherneck* of Master Gunnery Sergeant R.R. Keene's retirement.

Semper Fi, Master Gunnery Sergeant. You answered several of my questions I sent to the magazine. Take care and have a great retirement.

Mike Skorich
Leesburg, Fla.

COURTESY OF ED ARMENTO

Marine veterans of the Korean War gathered on July 4, 2015, in West Liberty, Ky., to honor the memory of Col William E. Barber, who received the Medal of Honor for his actions during the Battle of Chosin Reservoir.

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Reader Assistance

Edited by Sara W. Bock

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 e-mail to s.bock@mca-marines.org, or write to Reader Assistance Editor, *Leatherneck* Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134.

Reunions

• **Marine Corps Combat Correspondents Assn. (Conference and Annual Training Symposium)**, Aug. 21-27, Fredericksburg, Va. Contact Jack Paxton, (352) 748-4698, usmccca@cfl.rr.com.

• **East Coast Drill Instructors Assn. (Parris Island Chapter)**, April 21-24, Parris Island, S.C. Contact SgtMaj Kenneth D. Miller, USMC (Ret), (828) 499-0224, www.parrisislanddi.org.

• **West Coast Drill Instructor Assn. (SgtMaj Leland D. "Crow" Crawford Chapter)**, Sept. 15-18, San Diego, Calif. Contact Gregg Stoner, (619) 884-9047, greggstoner22@aol.com, or CWO-3 Chip Dykes, USMC (Ret), (760) 908-2322, www.westcoastdi.org.

• **8th & I Reunion Assn.**, July 14-17, Arlington, Va. Contact Maj John Marley, USMC (Ret), (703) 799-4882, jm1967a15@verizon.net, www.8thandi.com.

• **Marine Corps Counterintelligence Assn.**, Sept. 8-11, Camp Lejeune, N.C. Contact Ralph "Buck" Wheaton, (304) 947-5060, buckmccia@frontier.com.

• **USMC Bulk Fuel Assn.**, April 28-May 1, Charleston, S.C. Contact Howard Huston, (609) 432-4027, (609) 927-3857, hhust61@aol.com.

• **The Chosin Few**, Aug. 16-20, San Diego, Calif. Contact LtCol J.P. White, USMC (Ret), (760) 727-7796, chosin50@roadrunner.com.

• **Subic Bay Marines**, Aug. 30-Sept. 3, Boston, Mass. Contact John Laccinole, (818) 591-8916, johnlaccinole@aol.com.

• **MCAS Nam Phong, Thailand ("The Rose Garden")**, May 12-15, San Diego, Calif. Contact Richard Koehnen, (619) 840-2335, richkoe@cox.net.

• **3d and 4th Defense Bns (Solomon Islands, WW II)**, Sept. 14-17, Billings, Mont. Contact Charles Buckley, (510) 589-5380, ceb39reunion@gmail.com, or Sharon Heideman, (512) 638-2075, sharon_heideman@yahoo.com.

• **BLT 2/4 and BLT 2/26 Amtrac Plts (RVN, 1967-69)**, June 2-5, Quantico, Va. Contact Gene Cox, 5802 N. 30th St., Phoenix, AZ 85016, (602) 840-6262, capteecox@aol.com.

• **1/3 (all eras)**, Aug. 23-28, San Antonio, Texas. Contact Don Bumgarner, (562) 897-2437, dbumc13usmc@verizon.net.

• **1/5 (1986-92)**, May 6-8, Macomb, Ill. Contact Scott Hainline, (309) 351-2050, ptimfi@yahoo.com, or see Facebook page: 1/5 USMC Reunion.

• **3/26 (RVN, 1966-70)**, Aug. 24-28, San Diego, Calif. Contact Tony Anthony, (619) 286-3648, ltcoltony@aol.com, www.326marines.org.

• **B/1/5 and C/1/5 (RVN, 1966-67)** are planning a reunion. Contact SSgt Jim Proulx, USMC (Ret), (904) 343-4850, bertojoto1@gmail.com.

• **G/2/5 (all eras)**, Sept. 28-Oct. 2, Cincinnati, Ohio. Contact Martin Steinbach, 7395 Kirby Dr., Burlington, KY 41005, (513) 623-9594, martinsteiny@aol.com.

• **I/3/7 (all eras)**, April 27-30, Myrtle Beach, S.C. Contact Dennis Deibert, 6007 Catherine St., Harrisburg, PA 17112, (717) 652-1695.

• **Btry A, 1/11 (RVN)**, April 15-19, Herndon, Va. Contact Peter Van Ryzin, (540) 347-3267, vanryzin1@hughes.net, www.a111reunion.com.

• **Btry K, 4/13 (RVN)**, May 18-22, Quantico, Va. Contact Tom Gafford, (434) 546-0774, tomgafford@gmail.com.

• **1st 8-Inch Howitzer Btry**, Sept. 7-11, San Diego, Calif. Contact Greg Ladesich, 25382 Via de Anza, Laguna Niguel, CA 92677, (949) 249-3525, GPL0812@att.net, www.rpdsquared.com.

• **"Bravo" Co, 4th CEB, 4thMarDiv (Desert Storm, 25th Anniversary)**, May 13-14, Roanoke, Va. Contact Steve Garman, P.O. Box 748, Salem, VA 24153, stevegarman7@gmail.com.

• **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.

• **American Embassy Saigon (RVN, pre-1975)**, Sept. 4-7, Portland, Ore. Contact MSgt Gus Tomuschat, USMC (Ret), (804) 693-3007, saigongunny@yahoo.com, www.saigonmac.

• **Parris Island Brig Guards (1976-79)**,

Summer 2017, Beaufort, S.C. Contact Ken Haney, 26420 Highway 49, Chase City, VA 23924, kenhaney79@gmail.com.

• **TBS, Class 5-62**, Sept. 29-Oct. 2, Nashville, Tenn. Contact Denis W. Retoske, (714) 287-0706, dwrlawyer@gmail.com, tbsclass562@gmail.com.

• **TBS, Co F, 6-79**, is planning a reunion. Contact LtCol Tom Conners, USMC (Ret), (919) 303-2697, (919) 418-5757, tconners3@yahoo.com.

• **TBS, Co E, 5-86**, June 16-19, Quantico, Va. Contact Pete Gill, (423) 502-8963, peteandjonigill@hotmail.com, or Kevin Ainsworth, (212) 692-6745, kainsworth@mintz.com.

• **Plt 98, Parris Island, 1948**, is planning a reunion. Contact SSgt Jim Proulx, USMC (Ret), (904) 343-4850, bertojoto1@gmail.com.

• **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 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 4035, "Papa" Co, Parris Island, 2000**, is planning a reunion. Contact Tammy (Manyik) Epperson, (571) 451-7263, tammy.epperson@gmail.com.

• **VMA(AW)-242 (RVN)**, May 1-4, Gettysburg, Pa. Contact Bill Mellors, 4000 Emmitsburg Rd., Fairfield, PA 17320, 242reunion@gmail.com.

Ships and Others

• **USS *Hornet* (CV-8/CV/CVA/CVS-12)**, Sept. 13-18, Portland, Ore. Contact Sandy Burket, P.O. Box 108, Roaring Spring, PA 16673, (814) 224-5063, hornetcva@aol.com, www.usshornetassn.com.

• **USS *Inchon* (LPH/MCS-12)**, May 15-19, Warwick, R.I. Contact David F. Fix, 131 Waypoint Dr., Lancaster, PA 17603, (717) 203-4152, ussinchon@gmail.com, www.ussinchon.com.

• **USS *John R. Craig* (DD-885)**, Sept. 20-25, Nashville, Tenn. Contact Jerry Chwalek, 9307 Louisiana St., Livonia, MI 48185, (734) 525-1469, jermail@ameritech.net.

• **USS *Ranger* (CVA/CV-61)**, Sept. 28-Oct. 1, Charleston, S.C. Contact George Meoli, (203) 453-4279, uss.ranger@yahoo.com.

• **USS *Ticonderoga* (CV/CVA/CVS-14/CG-47)**, May 19-23, Las Vegas, Nev. Contact Floyd Frank, (702) 361-6660, papacva14@aol.com.

Mail Call

• Capt Tom Rutherford, USMC (Ret), 1193 Fox Trl., Prescott, AZ 86303, (928) 277-1553, tomnjudy@cableone.net, to hear from anyone who was present during **Operation Taylor Common, RVN, December 1968**, and witnessed his actions as platoon sergeant of **1st Plt, "Echo" Co, 2/1**, on Christmas Eve.

• John J.V. Cook, 300 Earlington Rd., Havertown, PA 19083, (610) 853-3932, to hear from or about **Capt Bob WRAY**, who served as the **CO of C/1/1 during the Korean War**.

• CWO-3 Chip Dykes, USMC (Ret), (760) 908-2322, www.westcoastdi.org, to hear from **present and former drill instructors** interested in becoming members of the **West Coast Drill Instructor Association, SgtMaj Leland D. "Crow" Crawford Chapter** (no dues or fees).

Wanted

Readers should be cautious about sending money without confirming authenticity and availability of products offered.

• Marine veteran Richard Battagliola, (516) 496-2426, rbattagliola@gmail.com, wants a **recruit graduation book for Plt 228, Parris Island, 1954**.

• Linda Carter, 6833 Poplar Ln., Dublin, VA 24084, carterlynn82@gmail.com, wants a **recruit graduation book for Plt 273, Parris Island, 1957**.

• Rodney Young, (317) 496-8157, rod473687@sbcglobal.net, wants a **recruit graduation book for Plt 294, San Diego, 1966**.

• Derrick Tucker, (916) 296-5311, dtucker052@gmail.com, wants a **recruit graduation book for Plt 1024, San Diego, 1978**.

Saved Round

Compiled by Nancy Lee White Hoffman

USMC

A STRONG BOND—In 1965 in the Republic of Vietnam, Cpl John A. Heffelfinger, right, a Third Marine Division leatherneck, consoles this young Vietnamese girl by telling her a story. The 4-year-old was "adopted" by Navy Corpsman Robert P. Dionne after he treated her for an eye infection. Dionne later was killed in the line of duty, but the little girl, who wore the dog tag that "Doc" gave her, would continue to return to the medical aid station hoping to find her American friend.

April 2016

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